

Jews, Judaism, and Anti-Semitism in the Arab Media

“Anti-Semitism” refers to extreme hatred for, discrimination against, and prejudice towards Jews.¹ It is based on stereotypes about Jews, a falsely held belief that Jews are a “race” instead of an ethnic group,² and/or hatred for Jews due to their religious beliefs and/or ethnicity.³ Throughout history, this kind of animosity towards Jews has proven itself to be a cancer on many societies around the world. In fact, the societies residing or located in the Middle East were, and still are, extreme examples of what happens when anti-Semitism is taken to such a dangerously high level that it actually becomes an integral part of a society’s religion and culture. The consequences of this are dire, for today, efforts to create peace and harmony between Muslims and Jews, especially over the issue of the ongoing Arab-Israeli Conflict, have been nearly fruitless in the face of Islamic anti-Semitism. This paper examines several key questions:

- 1) How did anti-Semitism manage to seep its way into the Islamic faith and create the kind of turmoil between Muslims and Jews that is seen today throughout the globe?
- 2) Were there warning signs, in antiquity or otherwise, that indicated

¹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “ANTISEMITISM.” Accessed September 16, 2012.

<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007691>

² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “ANTISEMITISM.” Accessed September 16, 2012.

<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007691>

³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “ANTISEMITISM.” Accessed September 16, 2012.

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dangerous times to come?

3) What were some of the consequences of the founding of Islam from antiquity

to the present day, especially with regards to the treatment of Jews in various regions throughout the Middle East?

To answer these questions, we have to travel back in time to over 2000 years ago, back to an age before Islam was originally founded...

The Founding of Islam

The founder of Islam was Mohammed, who was born in the Saudi Arabian city of Mecca in the year 570AD.⁴ Back then, the population of this city consisted of Arabs who were polytheistic and who engaged in various pre-Islamic pagan rituals, especially at the Ka'bah, a building in Mecca that served as a place of worship during those times.⁵ It was against this background that the story of Islam began.

One day, in 610 A.D., according to Islamic belief and texts, Mohammed was visited by an angel known as Gabriel, from whom he received his first divine revelation.⁶ This revelation entailed Gabriel transmitting words to Mohammed that would later be incorporated into the Qur'an, the Holy Bible of Islam. Whether or not these were the exact circumstances were surrounding this event, it is clear that this was a

⁴ Pg. 8 – Gilbert, Martin

⁵ Red Ice Creations. "The Mysterious Black Stone of Kaaba – Worship of a Meteorite?" Accessed September 16, 2012.

<http://redicecreations.com/article.php?id=17158>

⁶ ReligiousTolerance.org: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance. "Islam: Introduction, Part 1." Accessed October 8, 2012.

http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_intr.htm

turning point for Mohammed, for he was now convinced that he had been ordained a Prophet. As such, he believed that he had the task of converting his fellow countrymen from worshippers of Arabian paganism and polytheism into followers of his own religion, a faith that, he believed, contained various doctrines that were based on what was stated to him by Gabriel. This religion would eventually become known as “Islam”.

Unfortunately for Mohammed, his new faith clashed with that followed by many citizens of Mecca at the time due to its monotheistic message. He therefore faced massive opposition and persecution by nearly everyone around him, except for the small group of converts he did manage to convert to Islam by this point in time. This opposition prompted him and his followers to flee Mecca and travel to Medina (i.e. Known as Yathrib in those days.) in 622 A.D., a region where he believed he would be able to find a much larger number of people willing to convert to his newly created religion...or so he thought.

Medina Before 622 A.D.

Up to this point in our story, Medina was a thriving city inhabited by both Jews and Arabs alike. In fact, Jews had been living there for over five centuries before Mohammed’s arrival in 622 A.D. and they even constituted the majority of the city’s population.⁷ Additionally, they organized themselves into many different tribes, three of which were the most important of them all, namely the Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nadir, and Banu Qurayzah. Meanwhile, Arabs had been residing in Medina since the fifth century when they migrated there from the southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Just like their Jewish neighbors, they organized themselves into tribes, of which two were the most important:

⁷ Pg. 9 – Gilbert, Martin

Pg. 9 – Stillman, Norman

the Banu Aws and the Banu Khazraj.⁸

The relationships shared amongst the Jews and Arabs of Medina were mixed at best. On one hand, the Jews were highly respected for being skilled jewelers, craftsmen, metal workers, and growers of high-quality dates.⁹ On the other hand, a long struggle for political dominance that eventually developed amongst the Jewish and Arab tribes of Medina prompted the forging of alliances in order to maintain an upper hand against opponents. Rather than being formed along ethnic or religious lines, however, these alliances were created along tribal lines.¹⁰ For example, while the Jewish Nadir and Qurayzah tribes joined with the Arab Aws tribe to form one alliance, a second alliance was forged consisting of members from the Jewish Qaynuqa tribe and the Arab Khazraj tribe.¹¹ The political struggle these two alliances had with one another continued even up to the point of Mohammed's arrival in Medina.¹²

However these alliances fought against one another, it was clear that there was admiration and respect, not hatred, by the Arabs towards the Jews of Medina for their contributions towards maintaining the welfare of residents within that city. (i.e. As mentioned earlier, that is, being skilled jewelers, craftsmen, metal workers, and agriculturalists.) The antagonism was reserved for tribal politics, but it was directed towards other tribes, not individual ethnic groups. In other words, up until 622 A.D., there did not seem to be any irrational hatred exhibited by the Arabs of Medina towards its Jewish residents based on religious or ethnic terms,¹³ but that was all about to change...

⁸ Pg. 9 – Stillman, Norman

⁹ Pg. 9 – Gilbert, Martin

¹⁰ Pg. 9 – Stillman, Norman

¹¹ Pg. 9 – Stillman, Norman

¹² Pg. 9 – Stillman, Norman

¹³ Pg. 9 – Stillman, Norman

Turning Point

Mohammed and his followers arrived in Medina upon the invitation of the city's Aws and Khazraj tribes.¹⁴ They requested that Mohammed receive the job of Medina's chief magistrate, which he did. Now, he was a high-ranking public/judicial officer in charge of arbitrating various intertribal disputes that could erupt amongst the city's various Jewish and Arab tribes. Despite this, Mohammed's position in Medina was still very shaky at best, for not only was he not in great financial circumstances at the time, but not every person in Medina was a wholehearted supporter of him and his new religion just yet. He therefore decided to write up a military pact with the residents of Medina, a document known as the Constitution of Medina,¹⁵ which stated the following:

“Jews who follow us shall be given aid and equality; they shall not be oppressed, nor shall aid be given to others against them. The Jews are one community with the Believers, but they shall have their own religion as Believers have theirs. There shall be mutual aid between Jews and Believers in the face of any who war against those who subscribe to this document, and mutual consultations and advice. Mutual aid would be given by the Believers and Jews against any who attack Medina. If the Jews are called upon by the Believers to make peace, they must comply; and if the Believers are called upon by the Jews to make peace, they must agree, except in the case of a holy war.”¹⁶

Whether or not this was in fact the exact wording of this document, Mohammed also

¹⁴ Pg. 9 – Stillman, Norman

¹⁵ Pg. 11 – Gilbert, Martin

Pg. 11 – Stillman, Norman

¹⁶ Pgs. 11-12: Gilbert, Martin

tried to win converts by incorporating certain aspects of Judaism into Islam. For example, like Judaism, he forbade Muslims from eating pork, set aside Friday as a day of worship, established a practice of circumcision that was similar to that of Judaism, set aside a period of fasting for the Islamic Day of Atonement, and required Muslims to pray three times a day. By adopting all of these traditions and practices, Mohammed attempted to make the claim that “his revelations were the continuation of Judaism and Christianity” and that “earliest Islam was the development and even improvement on the prior faith, Judaism”.¹⁷ After all, in his opinion, he must have felt that since there were so many similarities between Islam and Judaism now, why should there be any ideological and/or religious conflict between worshipers of the two faiths?

Mohammed believed that he was giving the Jews a second chance to redeem themselves after they disobeyed Moses. “They denied God’s signs and worshiped the golden calf as Moses was coming down with the tablets of stone, inscribed with the Ten Commandments. (i.e. Chapter 7, verses 145-156 of the Qur’an.) Verses 156-157 imply that someone better than Moses (and Jesus) is here to guide them rightly. Muhammad declares what is lawful and unlawful and commands people to do right and forbids them to do wrong.”¹⁸ Those verses, as stated in chapter 7 of the Qur’an, are written as follows:

(7:156) "I shall ordain My mercy for those who are conscious of God and pay the prescribed alms; who believe in Our Revelations; (7:157) who follow the Messenger— the unlettered prophet they find described in the Torah that is with them, and in the Gospel—who commands them to do right and forbids them to do wrong, who makes good things lawful to

¹⁷ Answering Islam. “Muhammad and the Jews.” <http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/jews.htm>

¹⁸ Answering Islam. “Muhammad and the Jews.” <http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/jews.htm>

them and bad things unlawful . . . “¹⁹

Mohammed felt that the “unlettered Prophet” mentioned in these verses was him due to a divine revelation he had about it while he resided in Mecca.²⁰ He claimed that he was a better prophet than Moses and Jesus because, in his mind, they both failed to guide their followers down the proper paths they should take.²¹ Additionally, he claimed that he could do a better job than Moses and Jesus with regards to keeping his followers from disobeying him. In other words, Mohammed was so unbelievably arrogant that he thought that a few divine revelations and some tweaks in his own religion would make converts out of the Jews of Medina. He even believed that he should not only be compared to Jesus and Moses in terms of status as a Prophet, but he also felt that he was better than both of them.

The Jews of Medina were not people that could be easily swayed by would-be Prophets like Mohammed and they gave this man a heavy dose of reality. Not only did they reject his claims and his religion altogether, but they even pointed out the fatal flaws in his arguments that they believed had stripped him of his credibility as a genuine Prophet like Jesus or Moses.²² The reasons for why he was rejected were varied, but here are just a few:

1) Mohammed was not a Jew. This was significant because the Jews were not accustomed to following leaders who were not Jewish.²³

¹⁹ Answering Islam. “Muhammad and the Jews.” <http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/jews.htm>

²⁰ Answering Islam. “Muhammad and the Jews.” <http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/jews.htm>

²¹ Answering Islam. “Muhammad and the Jews.” <http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/jews.htm>

²² Pg. 11 – Stillman, Norman

²³ Answering Islam. “Muhammad and the Jews.” Accessed October 10, 2012. <http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/jews.htm>

2) To the Jews, Mohammed could never be their new prophet because their last Hebrew prophet, Malachi, had died over a thousand years earlier and a new prophet could only be ordained with their return to Zion, a term that refers to Palestine as a Jewish homeland and the main symbol of Judaism itself.²⁴

3) Mohammed was not fully educated in the Torah. In fact, “though he had picked up some elements from the Scriptures, in bits and pieces, which were circulating around Arabia along the trade routes, his knowledge was confused. It is possible that one or two Jewish converts who had a certain level of knowledge in the Torah coached him, as well. Whatever the case, it was not hard for the Jews to contradict him.”²⁵

4) Opposition to Mohammed by the Jews of Medina became even more staunch upon Mohammed’s victory over his own Quraysh tribe in the Battle of Badr in 624 A.D. That battle began when an Arab-Jewish poet named Ka’b ibn-Ashraf wrote anti-Islamic verses that encouraged the Quraysh tribe to turn against Mohammed. Although they were large in number, the members of this tribe ended up being no match for Mohammed and his followers and were soundly defeated. Mohammed’s overall power and prestige in Medina may have been strengthened as a result of this victory, but, again, it also served to strengthen opposition towards him amongst the Jews of Medina. In fact, Ka’b ibn-Ashraf fled to Mecca in order to write even more anti-Islamic verses to urge the Quraysh tribe to avenge its fallen comrades. Meanwhile, the Jewish Qaynuqa tribe joined forces with the Quraysh tribe most likely in order to strengthen the Qaynuqa tribe’s) position against Mohammed and his followers.²⁶

²⁴ Pg. 12 – Gilbert, Martin

²⁵ Answering Islam. “Muhammad and the Jews.” Accessed October 10, 2012.
<http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/jews.htm>

²⁶ Pg. 12 – Gilbert, Martin

If Mohammed thought that now was a good time to try to get the Jews of Medina to accept him as a full-fledged prophet, they taught him that there was such a thing as letting one's ego get the better of oneself. "O' Mohammed, you seem to think that we are your people. Do not deceive yourself because you have encountered a people (i.e. The members of the Quraysh tribe who Mohammed defeated at Badr.) who have no knowledge of war and got the better of them; for my God if we fight you, you will find that we are real men!"²⁷

Mohammed was stunned by the Jews' attitude(s) towards him.²⁸ He truly believed that Medina's Jewish population would accept him and subsequently convert to Islam.²⁹ When that did not happen, he became extremely angry with them as a result of their rejection of him and his new faith. This was a significant turning point for Mohammed because he was an extreme narcissist who believed that his religion was the correct one and his "revelations" were true.³⁰ As a result, he also felt that what the Jews were citing to contradict him must be false, but he could also have been of this opinion due to the common Christian accusation that the Jews had corrupted the text in their own Scriptures.³¹ Whatever the case may have been, Mohammed began a war against the Jews of Medina, a war that would later spread throughout the Middle East and have devastating ramifications for both Jews and Muslims alike.

Mohammed's War Against the Jews

From the time that Mohammed was rejected by the Jews of Medina, things started

²⁷ Pgs. 12 – 13: Gilbert, Martin

²⁸ Pg. 13 – Gilbert, Martin

²⁹ Pg. 10 – Stillman, Norman

³⁰ Pg. 12 – Stillman, Norman

³¹ Pg. 12 – Stillman, Norman

going downhill regarding his relationship with them. He decided to remove them from the city entirely and did so on several different occasions as explained below:

1) Expulsion of the Banu Qaynuqa: took place in 624 A.D., shortly after the battle at Badr. According to Muslim folklore, a Jew committed a humiliating prank upon a Muslim woman that led to fighting, leaving one Jew and one Muslim dead as a result. Mohammed attempted to step in and arbitrate, but the Qaynuqa did not want his arbitration and subsequently barricaded themselves inside their fortress. They then attempted to call for support amongst Mohammed's Arab opponents, but to no avail. Not even the Nadir and the Qurayzah tribes went to assist their tribal brethren. Before any of these parties could change their mind, Mohammed acted fast by having his followers attack the Qaynuqa's fortress. Left on their own to face Mohammed's forces, the Qaynuqa did not stand a chance and they eventually surrendered. The Qaynuqa were subsequently kicked out of Medina by Mohammed and his followers.³²

2) Expulsion of the Banu Nadir: occurred due to a series of events starting with the assassination of Ka'b Ibn Ashraf in Medina in 625 A.D. on Mohammed's orders. Incensed by the slaying of one of their most prominent tribesmen, the Banu Nadir, under the leadership of their chieftain, Huyayy ibn Akhtab, allied themselves with Abu Bara, a Bedouin chief who was yet another opponent of Mohammed. At the subsequent Battle of Uhud on March 23rd, 625 A.D., the Banu Nadir won a staggering victory over Mohammed and his followers, killing over 65 Muslims and twenty-two Meccans.³³

³² Pgs. 13 – 14: Gilbert, Martin

³³ Pg. 14: Gilbert, Martin

In spite of this victory, however, the Nadir lost Abu Bara, who defected over to Mohammed's side after the battle. Then, in 626 A.D., Mohammed attempted to negotiate a truce with the Nadir, but they refused to negotiate with him. As if to demonstrate their resentment towards Mohammed in the most extreme way possible, the Nadir attempted to assassinate him, but they failed. It was after this failed assassination attempt that Mohammed demanded that the Nadir be expelled from Medina, but they chose to resist this eviction decree, counting on Abdallah ibn Ubayy and the members of the Qurayzah tribe to assist them. Astonishingly, neither of these so-called allies provided support to the Nadir, leaving them to face Mohammed on their own.³⁴

Mohammed chose to attack the Nadir on the Sabbath, a day on which this Jewish tribe could not and would not fight. Therefore, they ultimately surrendered to Mohammed's forces and were expelled from Medina.³⁵

3) Slaughter of the Qurayzah tribe: occurred due to a series of events that began with the Qurayzah tribe, led by Ka'b ibn Asad, forming an alliance with a group of Mohammed's opponents led by the Arab Quraysh tribe. Hearing of the creation of this alliance and fearing that his men would be outnumbered by it, Mohammed attempted to do whatever was necessary to sow dissent between the Qurayzah and Quraysh tribes in order to destroy this union in the long run. Eventually, one thing led to another until the alliance was broken, leaving the Qurayzah tribe to confront Mohammed alone. When Mohammed decided to subsequently attack the Qurayzah tribe, it was a hard-fought battle, with both sides giving it their all. Ultimately, Mohammed ended up being the victor.³⁶

³⁴ Pg. 14: Gilbert, Martin

³⁵ Pg. 15: Gilbert, Martin

³⁶ Pgs. 16-17: Gilbert, Martin

Most likely due to them hearing about the expulsion of the Nadir tribe from Medina, the members of the Qurayzah tribe believed that they would be given the same fate that the Nadir had been given. As such, they asked Mohammed if they could leave Medina on the same terms that he gave the Nadir tribe. If he agreed to this, his forces would have been allowed to confiscate the property of each member of the Qurayzah tribe. Additionally, each Jewish family that belonged to this tribe would have been expelled from Medina, either taking with them one camel-load of possessions, or nothing at all. This time, however, Mohammed wanted to make an example of his enemies in one of the cruelest ways imaginable.³⁷

In March 627 A.D., Mohammed stationed the Qurayzah tribesmen in a separate area from their women and children. Next, not only did he reject many pleas from members of the Aws tribe that the Qurayzah be shown mercy, but he also appointed Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, a devout Muslim who was chieftain of the Aws tribe at the time, as official arbitrator. This was significant because Sa'd was wounded and humiliated during the earlier siege of the Qurayzah and he was fighting on the side of Mohammed. Therefore, the outcome was predictable: a ruling against the Qurayzah of the worst kind. The men were to be killed, the women and children were to become slaves, and all of their possessions were to be divided amongst Mohammed's Muslim forces as spoils of war. Subsequently, not only was this judgment carried out in its entirety, but it left over 700 Jewish men of the Qurayzah tribe beheaded and thrown into freshly dug trenches while Mohammed looked on. Mohammed later justified what he had done by stating that the judgment of Sa'd upon the Qurayzah was given "according to the very sentence of Allah above the Seven Heavens". In other

³⁷ Pgs. 17-18: Gilbert, Martin

words, he defended his actions by saying it was all in accordance with the judgment of Allah himself with regards to the men, women, and children of the Qurayzah tribe.³⁸

At this point, Medina was almost, if not entirely, devoid of its once colossal and thriving Jewish population. However, that was not the end of Mohammed's conflict with the Jews, for his next target was the Jewish community of Khaybar, an oasis whose Jewish community consisted of, but was not limited to, Nadir Jews who had relocated here after being expelled from Medina in 626 A.D. Mohammed regarded the Jews of Khaybar as the Quraysh tribe's last potential Jewish ally against him. He must have believed this because of the animosity towards him that was most likely felt by the Nadir Jews in Khaybar, which all but guaranteed that they would one day ally themselves with the Quraysh tribe against him.³⁹

Mohammed attacked Khaybar's Jewish community in 628 A.D. and met stiff resistance by them. As a result, he had to conquer them slowly, fortress by fortress, until they eventually surrendered. In accordance with the terms of the treaty subsequently made between Mohammed and the Khaybari Jews, they could continue to reside on their properties and practice their religion however they pleased. However, in exchange for staying in Khaybar, these Jews had to turn over 50% of their annual date harvest to the Muslim community there.⁴⁰

With the defeat of the Jews of Khaybar, Mohammed no longer needed to worry about the chances of an alliance forming between Jews and members of the Quraysh tribe

³⁸ Pg. 18: Gilbert, Martin

³⁹ Pgs. 16-17: Stillman, Norman

Pg. 20: Gilbert, Martin

⁴⁰ Pg. 18: Stillman, Norman

anytime soon. Therefore, he was free to establish his absolute authority over the Jews residing in the central Arabian Peninsula in 629 A.D.⁴¹ One year later, he and his followers conquered Mecca and established that province as the center of worship for all Muslims. As for the Jews who resided in Mecca at the time, Mohammed responded to their rejection of him and his religion of Islam by declaring that all Muslims should pray towards Mecca instead of Jerusalem. In the eyes of the Muslim faithful, this one declaration helped distinguish Islam from Judaism even further, for while Jews prayed towards Jerusalem, Muslims would henceforth be praying towards Mecca.⁴² Now, Islam had been officially established as a new religion in the Middle East, one that was completely separate from Judaism.

Mohammed's Legacy

When Mohammed died in 632 A.D., he left behind a highly significant legacy, specifically the beginning of a new era with regards to how Muslims treated non-Muslims. First of all, the terms imposed on the Jewish community of Khaybar set the precedent for the codification and establishment of the jizya (i.e. A tax that non-Muslims had to be paid in exchange for residing in Muslim lands.) sometime after it received “divine sanction” in 630 A.D. with the revealing of verse 29 in chapter 9 of the Quran. This ordered all Muslims to fight against Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims “until they paid the jizya out of hand, and have been humbled.” In other words, non-Muslims were to be conquered by the Muslim faithful, be made into tribute bearers, and be humbled in a way that was in accordance with Allah’s judgment.⁴³

⁴¹ Pg. 23: Gilbert, Martin

⁴² Pg. 23: Gilbert, Martin

⁴³ Pgs. 19 – 20: Stillman, Norman

The primary purpose of the jizya was not as a means of obtaining revenue, but rather, it was a means of discrimination and humiliation. As Caliph al-Amin bi-Ahkam Allah, who ruled Egypt from 1101 to 1130 A.D., explained at one point, “the prior degradation of the infidels before the life to come – where it is their lot – is considered an act of piety. Such degradation was a divinely ordained obligation that was based on the words from the Koran: ‘until they pay the tax willingly and make their submission.’”⁴⁴ Basically, imposing the jizya was meant as a way of not just humiliating and discriminating against non-Muslims. It was also supposed to be removed if the non-Muslims in question chose to convert to Islam. The jizya was intended to be used as an incentive for people to convert to Islam, not just to degrade or discriminate against non-Muslims as a divinely sanctioned practice.⁴⁵

Furthermore, a great number of Mohammed’s divine revelations were extremely anti-Semitic and were written into the Quran for every one of Muslim faithful to see. Long story short, with reference to the Jews, the Quran stated, among other things, that the Jews were greedy, they corrupted their own scriptures, they loved to lie and deceive other people, and they relished at the pain they cause to other fellow human beings.⁴⁶ What was frightening about this was not merely the fact that the Quran mentioned all of these anti-Semitic concepts, but it was also the fact that the Quran, among other things, would be forever used as a basis for how the Arabs would treat their fellow non-Muslim neighbors in the Middle East. Putting two and two together, it would be easy to deduce that that was not

⁴⁴ Pg. 22: Gilbert, Martin

⁴⁵ Pg. 20: Stillman, Norman

⁴⁶ INFAD. “Jews as Depicted in the Qur’an.” Accessed September 16, 2012.
<http://infad.usim.edu.my/modules.php?op=modload&name...>

a good thing...

Jews in the Early Islamic Era

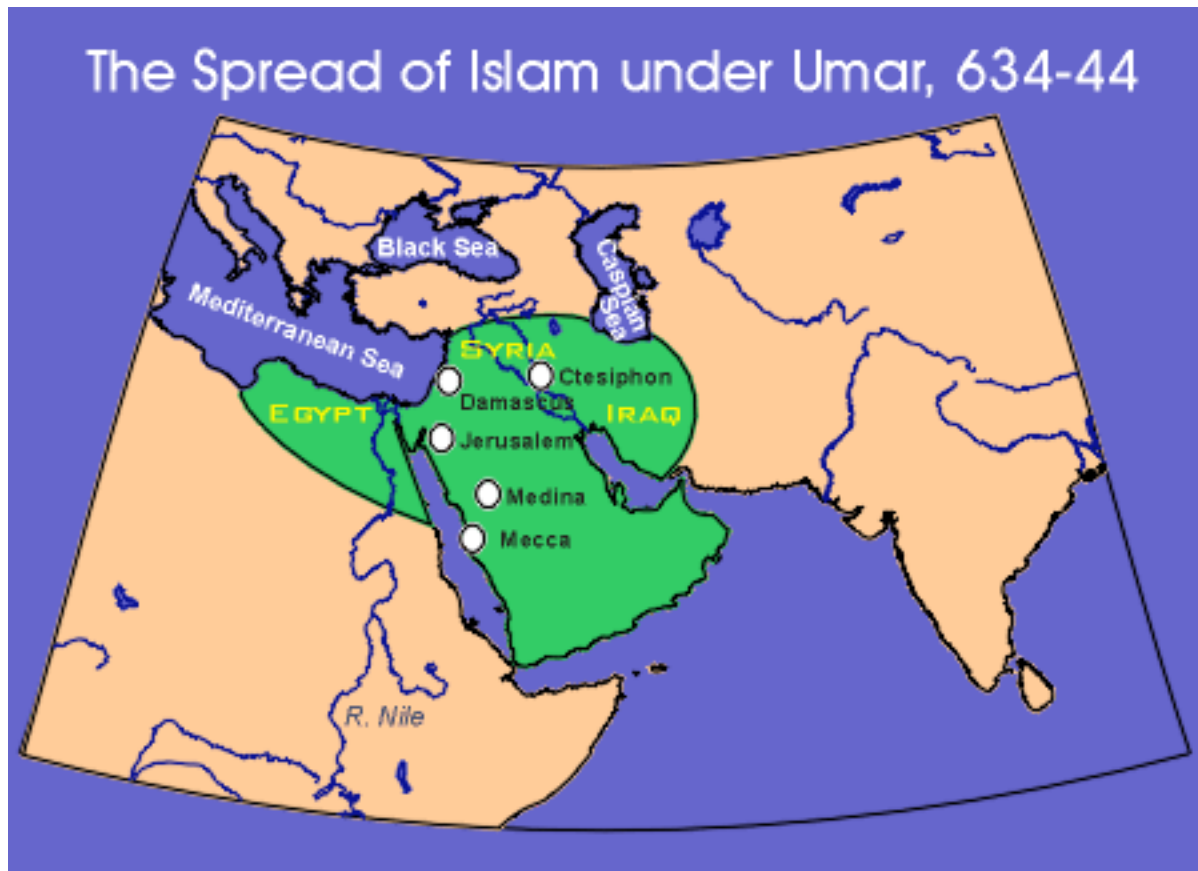
With most, if not all, of the Arab tribes in the Arabian Peninsula unified under the banner of Islam, Mohammed's successors, the Caliphs, went about spreading their influence beyond the region's borders. More specifically, they went about conquering areas to the northwest and northeast of the Arabian Peninsula. For example, under Caliph Umar I, who reigned from 634 to 644 A.D., Syria's capital city of Damascus fell to the Arabs in 635, followed by Iraq in 637, Jerusalem in 638, and the Egyptian province of Alexandria in 642.⁴⁷ Below is a map⁴⁸ that shows the extent of this Caliph's territorial escapades and how they altered the political landscape of the Middle East as a whole:

⁴⁷ University of Calgary. "The Islamic World to 1600: Umar(634-44)." Accessed November 15, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/caliphate/umar.html

⁴⁸ University of Calgary. "The Islamic World to 1600: Umar(634-44)." Accessed November 15, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/caliphate/umar.html



The rules regarding the treatment of non-Muslims in Muslim-dominated territories varied from region to region because there was no uniform set of rules and/or guidelines established for how the Arabs had to treat their new non-Muslim subjects. Sure, the Muslim conquerors had precedents to work with, including Sura 9:29 of the Quran (i.e. “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, even if they are of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya tax with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”⁴⁹) and the terms imposed by Mohammed on the Jews of Khaybar in 628 A.D., but these were merely precedents. No actual set of rules existed regarding, among other things, the form and the amount of the jizya and the kharaj (i.e. The tax that had to be

⁴⁹ TheReligionOfPeace.com. “Forced Conversion.”

paid by landowners and peasants in accordance with the overall productivity of the fields that were farmed and/or looked after by them.⁵⁰) The Arab conquerors were on their own when it came to devising such rules, which led to two interesting outcomes:

I) Taxes of various amounts were collected from every region the Arabs occupied without any distinctions being made between the sources of tax revenues.⁵¹ Simply put, the Arabs did not seem to care as much about from where the payments were coming from as long as they did receive payments at all.

II) The terms regarding how conquered peoples in specific territories were to be ruled varied depending on the conditions surrounding their surrender.⁵²

With regards to how Umar I treated his non-Muslim subjects, he treated them with a great amount of religious tolerance for his time. For instance, he allowed non-Muslims to practice whatever religion they desired, but only on the condition that they paid the annual jizya. This policy of religious toleration was implemented more out of practical necessity than actual generosity. Umar I did not want to cause a rebellion within his own empire when there were so many non-Muslims against a ruling Muslim minority. Additionally, he feared that attempting to convert his non-Muslim subjects to Islam would discourage them from living within his territories, thus depriving his empire's Treasury of much needed revenue from the payments of the jizya. It was most likely these factors, among other things, that prompted Umar I to refrain from promoting the proselytization of Islam within

⁵⁰ University of Calgary. "The Islamic World to 1600: Umar(634-44)." Accessed November 15, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/caliphate/umar.html

⁵¹ Pg. 25: Stillman, Norman

⁵² Pg. 25: Stillman, Norman

the territories the Arabs conquered.⁵³

When Umar's reign came to an end in 644 A.D., how non-Muslims were to be treated depended on the attitudes his successors had towards them. Some Caliphs ended up being tolerant towards non-Muslims while others were not. It was not until the reign of Umar II that the rules regarding the treatment of non-Muslims were formally codified and drafted. The document he drew up was the Pact of Umar, which stated that "dhimmis" (i.e. Non-Muslims who surrendered to Muslim domination by way of a treaty.) were protected in terms of their rights to freedom of religion, internal communal autonomy, and security of life and property.⁵⁴ However, this protection came with several conditions. For example, dhimmis:

- 1) Had to pay the jizya tax;⁵⁵
- 2) Could only ride donkeys instead of horses;⁵⁶
- 3) Had to place special signs or symbols on their clothing to indicate that they were not Muslims;⁵⁷
- 4) Were forbidden from teaching the Quran to their children;⁵⁸
- 5) Could not practice their particular faiths publicly nor convert other people to them. However, if their children desired to convert to Islam, they were allowed to do so;⁵⁹

⁵³ University of Calgary. "The Islamic World to 1600: Umar(634-44)." Accessed November 15, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/caliphate/umar.html

⁵⁴ Pg. 31: Gilbert, Martin

⁵⁵ Pg. 32: Gilbert, Martin

⁵⁶ Pg. 32: Gilbert, Martin

⁵⁷ Pg. 32: Gilbert, Martin

⁵⁸ University of Calgary. "The Islamic World to 1600: Umar(634-44)." Accessed November 15, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/caliphate/umar.html

⁵⁹ University of Calgary. "The Islamic World to 1600: Umar(634-44)." Accessed

6) Could not employ Muslims;⁶⁰

7) Were forbidden from serving in Muslim courts as witnesses in legal cases that involved Muslims;⁶¹

8) Could not inherit the property of other dhimmis who died. In other words, the dhimmi community could not obtain the property of dead dhimmis. Rather, the property belonged to Muslim authorities unless the heirs to it could prove that they had a legitimate right to it under Islamic, or Sharia, law;⁶²

9) Could not marry Muslim women, but Muslim men *were* permitted to marry female dhimmis;⁶³

10) Could not construct new places of worship nor repair any old ones without the permission of Muslim authorities. Furthermore, even if permission was granted to dhimmis to build a new place of worship, such a place could not be larger than a mosque in terms of height.⁶⁴

These were only some of the things listed in the Pact of Umar, but the general message was clear. If dhimmis wanted to reside within Muslim territories, they were going to have to live as a separate and autonomous community, and be treated as if they were inferior to Muslims. This kind of existence allowed for no social mobility whatsoever within

November 15, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/caliphate/umar.html

⁶⁰ Pg. 32: Gilbert, Martin

⁶¹ Pg. 32: Gilbert, Martin

⁶² Pg. 33: Gilbert, Martin

⁶³ Pg. 33: Gilbert, Martin

⁶⁴ University of Calgary. "The Islamic World to 1600: Umar(634-44)." Accessed November 15, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/caliphate/umar.html

the hierarchy of society under Muslim rule. Sure, dhimmis were guaranteed protection and security by Muslim authorities, but only at the cost of being severely discriminated against as a separate community, isolated from the rest of society.

Not everything was so black and white, however, for the amount of rigor involved in the enforcement of the Pact of Umar's various rules depended on the attitudes that ruling Muslims had towards the dhimmis in the first place. While some rulers practiced religious tolerance and were not very harsh towards the dhimmis, others were the exact opposite. For example, if Caliph Umar I was the personification of a religiously tolerant and lenient Muslim ruler, Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, who ruled Egypt from 996 to 1021 A.D., was anything but. This man ordered the destruction of every synagogue and church throughout his empire, even in Jerusalem. As if that were not enough, he then gave his dhimmi subjects a choice: either convert to Islam or depart from every country that was under his rule at the time. It was only until a year before his death that he decided, out of the blue, to allow the dhimmis to rebuild their destroyed places of worship and continue practicing their own faiths.⁶⁵

Despite all of this persecution and protection that Muslim rulers imposed upon the dhimmis, there was yet another silver lining. Almost every Caliph felt the need to utilize the expertise of Jews for the kingdom's sake and therefore, Jewish physicians, clerks, and administrators were employed by the Caliphs. Even Caliphs who strictly enforced dhimmi laws were no exception. For instance, one Jew who was employed to a high government position was Ubaidallah ben Yahya, who served as Caliph Ja'far al-Mutawakkil's (847-861 A.D.) Vizier from 850 to 861 A.D.⁶⁶ This was significant because a Vizier was the name

⁶⁵ Pg. 38: Gilbert, Martin

⁶⁶ Pg. 37: Gilbert, Martin

given to the highest-ranking official in the Caliph's entire kingdom. In other words, the position of Vizier was equivalent to that of a provincial governor or chief minister,⁶⁷ so it was evidently an extremely big deal to be a Vizier in those days, more so if one was Jewish given the time-period. (i.e. Back then, there was rampant anti-Semitism as the basis for how the Byzantine Empire treated its Jewish subjects, so for a Jew to serve as a high-ranking government official must have been extremely radical in the eyes of the world outside the Caliph's Islamic kingdom.) What's more, Yahya's son served as Vizier as well, but this time, to Caliph Ja'far al-Muqtadir (908-932 A.D).⁶⁸

What made the employment of Ubaidallah ben Yahya as al-Mutawakkil's Vizier even more shocking was how it stood in complete contrast with his rigorous enforcement of dhimmi laws. For example, while he ruled as Caliph, he ordered dhimmis to level their graves with ground, forbid Jewish children from reading Arabic, and place wooden images of devils somewhere on their houses.⁶⁹ Surely no one would have ever suspected that this man who strictly enforced dhimmi laws would employ a Jew in a high-ranking government position.

How could the Caliphs get away with employing Jews in this manner when dhimmi laws restricted this? Well, they apparently tried to justify what they were doing by saying that "certain Jews were employed to carry out orders (tanfidh) without any personal initiative (tafwid)."⁷⁰ This attitude shows how even Caliphs who strictly enforced the dhimmi laws as laid out in the Pact of Umar often made the masses suffer while granting

⁶⁷ Dictionary.com. "Vizier." Accessed November 20, 2012.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/vizier?s=t>

⁶⁸ Pg. 37: Gilbert, Martin

⁶⁹ Pg. 36: Gilbert, Martin

⁷⁰ Pg. 37: Gilbert, Martin

great privilege and opportunity to a few others, even dhimmis, amongst them.⁷¹

Many dhimmis suffered greatly in contrast to the few others who were employed by the Caliphs. For example, with regards to the jizya tax, Jewish scholar Shlomo Goitein stated that this tax helped contribute to the extreme amount of “poverty and privation experienced by the masses”, especially when one took into account “their persistent lack of cash, which turned the ‘season of the tax’ into one of horror, dread, and misery.”⁷² Albert Hourani, a leading scholar of Islamic history, stated that the relationship between Muslim rulers and their dhimmi subjects “was not strengthened by a moral bond.”⁷³ In other words, “even if it was a peaceful and stable relationship, there was a sense in which Christians and Jews lay outside the community; they could not give the ruler the strong and positive allegiance which should come from an identity of beliefs and purposes.”⁷⁴ Finally, historian Bat Ye’or points out that during the six centuries after Mohammed’s death, the demography in the lands conquered by the Arabs changed dramatically so that “the Arab-Muslim minority developed into a dominant majority, resorting to oppression in order to reduce the numerous indigenous populations to tolerated religious minorities.”⁷⁵ Basically, dhimmis were persecuted and discriminated against to the point that they lived in poverty and privation. They lived in a separate autonomous community, ostracized by the rest of society. What this did was provide no motivation for the dhimmis to support their Muslim ruler(s) except when it would benefit themselves and/or their dhimmi community in general to do so. There was no alliance based on beliefs or ideals, but rather, it was based

⁷¹ Pgs. 37 – 38: Gilbert, Martin

⁷² Pg. 34: Gilbert, Martin

⁷³ Pg. 35: Gilbert, Martin

⁷⁴ Pg. 35: Gilbert, Martin

⁷⁵ Pgs. 35-36: Gilbert, Martin

on what one could do to benefit himself and/or one's family or community in general.⁷⁶ It was a society in which everybody cared about what one could do to benefit themselves and/or their own community(s), a self-centered society where everyone was out to do things only if they were in the interests of themselves or their own peoples.

Cordova

There was one shining ray of hope in the darkness that loomed over the relationship between Muslims and Jews in those days. That ray of hope took the form of Cordova, a city in Andalusia (aka. Southern Spain.) that ended up becoming an extremely vibrant center of Jewish life and culture starting in 756 A.D.⁷⁷ It all started under the reign of Abd al-Rahman (756-788 A.D.),⁷⁸ who allowed his Jewish subjects to participate in various major areas of society and government in general.⁷⁹ The results of this lack of active persecution were astounding, as described below:

I) Benefits accorded to Jewish financial life – despite having to pay the jizya tax, Spanish Jews did surprisingly well as Jewish traders and merchants. In fact, under the reign of Abd al-Rahman, Jewish traders not only brought in slaves for the Muslim army, but they also imported various items from Egypt, including pearls, dyes, medicines, etc. Furthermore, under the rule of Caliph Abd al-Rahman III (912-961 A.D.), Jewish traders became involved in Mediterranean maritime commerce, trading gold from Africa's west coast, silk from Spain itself, and metals and olive oil from the Mediterranean hinterlands at

⁷⁶ Pg. 35: Gilbert, Martin

⁷⁷ Pg. 41: Gilbert, Martin

⁷⁸ Pg. 40: Gilbert, Martin

⁷⁹ Pg. 40: Gilbert, Martin

various major ports, even the Italian seaports of Amalfi and Venice.⁸⁰

II) Rise of Jews to high-level positions in society under Abd al-Rahman III -

. **Moses ben Hanoch:** became the rabbi of a local Jewish community in Cordova.

After that, he founded a Talmudic academy there, marking the start of Talmudic learning in Spain.⁸¹

. **Hasdai ibn Shaprut:** - head of the Jewish community in Cordova.⁸²

. the Caliph's personal physician – eventually rewarded by Caliph Abd al-Rahman III for his services by having him become manager of Islamic Spain's Department of Customs (i.e. An administrative department that dealt with the taxation of ship coming into Spain from all Mediterranean ports.⁸³), main arbitrator internal disputes within Spain's Jewish community, and overall defender of Spain's Jewish community from its Muslim enemies.⁸⁴

. the caliphate's chief diplomatic adviser – fluent in Latin, a language often used in Christian diplomacy at the time. This fluency came in handy one day in 958 A.D. when Ibn Shaprut was called on to negotiate a treaty between the warring Christian kings of the Spanish provinces of Leon and Navarre. His efforts to make the two parties come together and sign a peace treaty met with complete success.⁸⁵

III) Benefits accorded to Jewish intellectual life - Spanish Jews contributed to the study of medicine, mathematics, poetry, botany, geography, and philosophy. Among these Jews were the following:⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Pg. 41: Gilbert, Martin

⁸¹ Pg. 47: Gilbert, Martin

⁸² Pg. 47: Gilbert, Martin

⁸³ Pg. 47: Gilbert, Martin

⁸⁴ Pg. 47: Gilbert, Martin

⁸⁵ Pg. 48: Gilbert, Martin

⁸⁶ Pgs. 40 – 48: Gilbert, Martin

- **Hasdai ibn Shaprut (915 - 970):** helped translate from Greek to Arabic a Byzantine manuscript entitled *De Materia Medica*, by a Greek author named Dioscorides, which was written over 400 years earlier. This was a highly significant achievement because medical remedies that were previously unknown due to the language in which they were originally written became translated into a language that was easier for people to understand, more specifically the residents of Islamic Spain. It was this translation of Dioscorides' literary work that completely transformed Cordova into one of the leading medical centers of the entire world during medieval times.⁸⁷

- **Menahem ben Sharuk (910 - 970):** completed the first ever Hebrew and Aramaic dictionaries and launched an intensive study of Hebrew grammar.⁸⁸

All periods of harmony inevitably fall into disharmony sooner or later, as was what happened when the "Golden Age" ended for the Jews of Spain in the early 11th century with the collapse of the caliphate that had been ruling the country from the island of Grenada all this time. Whatever the reasons for the collapse, the fact remained that Spain now lay wide open to invasion by would-be conquerors. Sure enough, Spain was conquered in 1055 A.D. by Muslim fundamentalists known as the Almoravides. They were a group of Berbers originating from North Africa, who had managed to dominate parts of Northwestern Africa by this point in time.⁸⁹ However, in 1147 A.D., the Almohades, Berbers who originated in Southern Morocco and were nearly as fundamentalist/puritanical as their enemies, the

⁸⁷ Pg. 48: Gilbert, Martin

⁸⁸ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour - Cordoba." Accessed November 18, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Cordoba.html>

⁸⁹ The Free Dictionary. "Almoravid." Accessed November 18, 2012.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Almoravids>

Almoravides, went to conquer Islamic Spain for themselves.⁹⁰ The result was the division of Spain into dozens of separate territories, each with their own specific ruler. Basically, from 1055 A.D. until 1213 A.D., Islamic Spain was transformed from a single country into a division of several different principalities that were all under the control of fundamentalist Berbers who enforced dhimmi laws more strictly than the Spanish caliphate did.⁹¹ As a result, despite still being able to work as jewelers, tailors, moneylenders, cobblers, and tanners, the Jews in this region had to wear clothing that distinguished them from their Muslim neighbors in accordance with the Pact of Umar.⁹²

The worst was yet to come, however, for the breaking up of Spain into different warring principalities thanks to the Berbers severely weakened the country militarily. This was significant because Spain was made more vulnerable to foreign invasion due to the disunity amongst the Berbers at the time. Sure enough, several different European countries seized the opportunity and began the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula (i.e. Present-day Spain and Portugal.) that would forever be known as the “Reconquista.”⁹³ Long story short, from the early 1000s to the year 1492 A.D., European Christians led by the

⁹⁰ The Free Dictionary. “Almohade.” Accessed November 18, 2012.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Almohades>

Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture. “The Jews in Islamic Spain: Al-Andalus.” November 18, 2012.

<http://www.sephardicstudies.org/islam.html>

⁹¹ Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture. “The Jews in Islamic Spain: Al-Andalus.” November 18, 2012.

<http://www.sephardicstudies.org/islam.html>

⁹² Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture. “The Jews in Islamic Spain: Al-Andalus.” November 18, 2012.

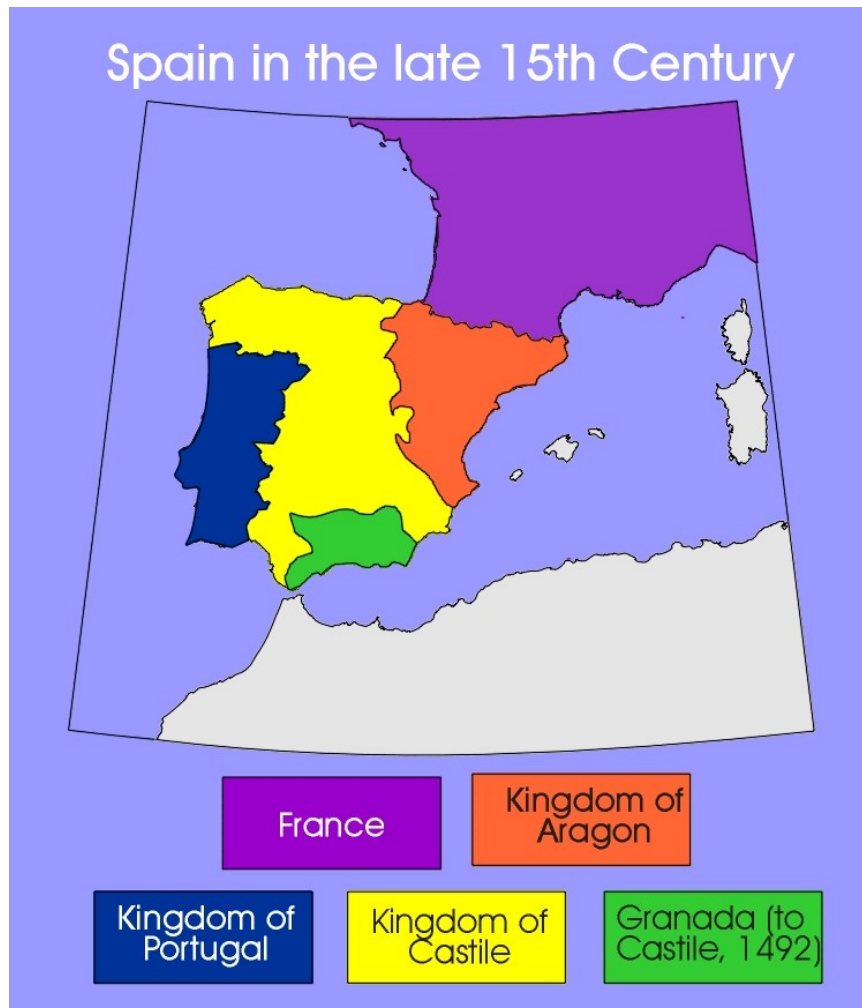
<http://www.sephardicstudies.org/islam.html>

⁹³ University of Calgary. “End of Europe’s Middle Ages: The Reconquista.” Accessed December 1, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/bluedot/recon.html

kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, among many others, slowly conquered territory after territory in the Iberian Peninsula until nearly the entire area was under their control.⁹⁴

Below is a map⁹⁵ that shows their progress:



To fully understand the consequences of the Reconquista for both Muslims and Jews alike, we must move backwards in time, for just a moment, to the year of 1478. By then,

⁹⁴ University of Calgary. "End of Europe's Middle Ages: The Reconquista." Accessed December 1, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/bluedot/recon.html

⁹⁵ University of Calgary. "End of Europe's Middle Ages: The Reconquista." Accessed December 1, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/bluedot/recon.html

Queen Isabella I of Castile (1474-1504 A.D.) had been married to King Ferdinand V of Aragon (1474-1504 A.D.) since 1469, a marriage that united their kingdoms together.⁹⁶ Subsequently, the couple became Queen and King of Castile respectively. In 1476, they both threw their support behind a now infamous policy known as the “Spanish Inquisition”.⁹⁷ Two years later, it received papal endorsement and it was officially enforced throughout the territories of Spain that had been conquered by Castile up to that point in time.⁹⁸

The Spanish Inquisition was a tribunal set up for people who did not believe in Christianity back then; people who were called “heretics”.⁹⁹ Unfortunately for those accused of heresy, it was anything but a fair and impartial tribunal. Defendants were repeatedly accused by tribunal officials of heresy and called upon to confess their actions. This often went on for hours and it was this psychological torture that was used to flush out confessions from defendants. Once they confessed, they were punished for their acts of heresy by being locked in a dungeon, or being subjected to physical abuse and torture. Even if these defendants somehow managed to reconcile with their local church and subsequently escaped further punishment, they had their property confiscated by the church and were forever banished from public life in general. Meanwhile, defendants who

⁹⁶ University of Calgary. “End of Europe’s Middle Ages: New Monarchies.” Accessed December 1, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/monarchies4.html#recon

⁹⁷ University of Calgary. “End of Europe’s Middle Ages: New Monarchies.” Accessed December 1, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/monarchies4.html#recon

⁹⁸ University of Calgary. “End of Europe’s Middle Ages: New Monarchies.” Accessed December 1, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/monarchies4.html#recon

⁹⁹ Jewish Virtual Library. “The Inquisition.” Accessed December 1, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Inquisition.html>

refused to confess their actions of heresy were treated more harshly.¹⁰⁰ They were actually burned at the stake and, if they did confess just before being set ablaze, were strangled to death as a so-called act of mercy.¹⁰¹

Such a horrific tribunal was being enforced not merely to root out non-Christians, but in order to enforce religious uniformity throughout the territories under Spanish rule as well.¹⁰² However, members of Spain's Muslim and Jewish communities suffered different fates at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition. Since enforcing the Spanish Inquisition on the Muslims did not work due to how strongly they held onto their faith, among other factors, severe restrictions were placed on their general ways of life.¹⁰³ As bad as this was, it was nothing compared to the treatment that the Jews received. Indeed, many of Spain's Jews were subjected to severe torture and brutality at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition. Unlike the Muslims, however, thousands amongst Spain's Jewish population did convert to Christianity.¹⁰⁴

Whatever the case, despite the sheer number of converts that Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand won amongst Spain's Jewish population, they feared that these converts had the potential to be vulnerable to influence by Jewish non-converts to Christianity.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Inquisition." Accessed December 1, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Inquisition.html>

¹⁰¹ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Inquisition." Accessed December 1, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Inquisition.html>

¹⁰² University of Calgary. "End of Europe's Middle Ages: New Monarchies." Accessed December 1, 2012.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/monarchies4.html#recon

¹⁰³ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Inquisition." Accessed December 1, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Inquisition.html>

¹⁰⁴ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Inquisition." Accessed December 1, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Inquisition.html>

¹⁰⁵ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Spanish Expulsion, 1492." Accessed December 1,

The belief was that these non-converts would be able to win the many converts Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand had obtained back over to Judaism.¹⁰⁶ It was this fear that prompted the official expulsion of Spain's entire Jewish resident population, which numbered over 200,000 back then.¹⁰⁷

So it turned out that Islamic Spain was only a temporary light in the darkness blanketing Jewish-Muslim relations. It serves as a case study for the life of Middle Eastern Jewry during the medieval period, demonstrating how living under Muslim rule, at the mercy of the attitudes of the ruling Caliphs, was not always a terrible choice to make when deciding whether to live under either Muslim or Christian rule. For instance, while Jews lived as dhimmis under Muslim rule, they may have faced discrimination and persecution at various levels depending on the attitude the ruling Caliph had towards them at the time, but they actually enjoyed religious freedom, communal autonomy, and security of life and property in accordance with the Pact of Umar. They did not have to face tribunals where they either had to confess acts of heresy or be subjected to extreme acts of torture and physical abuse, among other things. Instead, they were tolerated by the Muslims most of the time and were allowed to live out their lives in peace, albeit with restrictions set for them by the dhimmi laws. Still, it was a far better existence than what the Jews experienced under Christian rule...for the moment.

2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/expulsion.html>

¹⁰⁶ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Spanish Expulsion, 1492." Accessed December 1, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/expulsion.html>

¹⁰⁷ Jewish Virtual Library. "The Spanish Expulsion, 1492." Accessed December 1, 2012.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/expulsion.html>

Spread of anti-Semitism Through Commerce

The time in which European countries began interacting with the Middle East economically and/or militarily varied from country to country. What is certain is that these interactions only served to worsen the already unstable relationships between Muslims and Jews in the Middle East as they stood at the time. The example of France is a useful case study. Specifically, below is an examination of how France's commercial activities and missionary work in the Middle Eastern country of Syria helped contribute to the worsening of tensions between Muslims and Jews there and eventually, the entire Middle East in general.

Although Syria was not technically conquered by France until the early 20th century, French traders and missionaries were already visiting it periodically during the 1700s. This was significant because commerce not only meant the exchange of materials and currency, but it also meant the exchange of various ideas and opinions about society, and religion. Among the ideas being exchanged were numerous European anti-Semitic prejudices towards Jews in general, including what would prove to be one of the most dangerous and irrational aspects of anti-Jewish lore at that time: the blood libel. This was the idea that "Jews kidnapped and sacrificed Christian children", using the blood and/or skin of these children to make matzoh. Strangely, there were no detrimental effects on the lifestyle(s) of Syrian Jewry despite the circulation of the blood libel throughout Syria...at first.¹⁰⁸

It was a perfect storm, for Syria was a country consisting of not only Muslims and Jews, but Christians as well. Additionally, these Christians felt great hatred towards their fellow Jews due to pure anti-Semitism fueled by ancient anti-Jewish prejudices,

¹⁰⁸ Pgs. 104-105: Stillman, Norman

stereotypes, and folklore, among other things. Whatever the reason, it was the circulation of anti-Semitic ideas throughout Syria due to commerce with France that helped serve as the catalyst for an extremely crucial event in the history of Muslim-Jewish relations known as the “Damascus Affair.”¹⁰⁹ It took place on February 5th, 1840 when an Italian Roman Catholic friar and his native servant, both of whom resided in Syria’s city of Damascus at the time, mysteriously disappeared. Instead of a professional investigation being conducted with regards to this disappearance, French Consul Ratti-Menton (i.e. By the way, a consul is someone who is appointed by one country to look after its commercial interests and the welfare of its citizens who reside in another country.¹¹⁰) supported local Christians in Damascus in accusing their Jews of murdering the friar and his servant to extract their blood for the sole purpose of making matzoh with it. The result was chaos: riots spread throughout Damascus, subjecting the city’s entire Jewish community to mob violence. Even worse, several Jews were arrested, tried, and jailed for the murders of the friar and his servant even though these two so-called victims had never been officially found yet. As if that were not enough, the pasha (i.e. A provincial governor or some other high-ranking official in the Ottoman Empire; Syria was under Ottoman rule since 1512.¹¹¹) took approximately 63 children hostage in order to induce their parents into revealing the location of the blood belonging to the friar and the servant.¹¹²

All of this madness placed Damascus’ entire Jewish community in a state of utter

¹⁰⁹ Pg. 105: Stillman, Norman

¹¹⁰ Dictionary.com. “Consul.” Accessed November 20, 2012.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/consul?s=t>

¹¹¹ Dictionary.com. “Pasha.” Accessed November 20, 2012.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pasha?s=t&ld=1125>

¹¹² Pg. 105: Stillman, Norman

panic. Thankfully, it came to an end three weeks later when the combined efforts of the British and Austrian governments, along with a deputation (i.e. An individual or group of individuals appointed to represent or act for others.¹¹³) of British and French Jews, led to the release of all of the prisoners and hostages. The British and Austrian governments may have done their job by negotiating the release of these people from their imprisonment, but the deputation of British and French Jews continued their work by going even further. The deputation went to Constantinople/Istanbul, Turkey and, three months later, got the Turkish Sultan residing there to issue an edict that officially denounced the blood libel. In spite of these accomplishments, however, the investigation into the disappearance of the friar and his servant was never reopened and the case remains a mystery to this day.¹¹⁴

As horrible as the Damascus Affair was, it proved to be just the tiny cold that gradually escalated into a terrible widespread virus. In fact, blood libels started growing in number since 1840. For example, there was a blood libel in the Egyptian city of Cairo started by local Muslims instead of Christians, as well as others in Jerusalem and in miscellaneous villages in Lebanon. Localized persecutions by Muslim rulers against Christians, Jews, or both resulted from the massive number of blood libels, throwing nearly the entire Middle East into chaos.¹¹⁵

Worse still was the fact that French cultural influence played a role in the publishing and circulation of anti-Semitic literature amongst Syro-Lebanese Christians during the late 1800s.¹¹⁶ These literary works were merely translations of European tracts, but they were

¹¹³ Dictionary.com. "Deputation." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/deputation?s=t&ld=1125>

¹¹⁴ Pg. 106: Stillman, Norman

¹¹⁵ Pg. 106: Stillman, Norman

¹¹⁶ Pg. 107: Stillman, Norman

still very attractive to even the most educated of Arabs at the time.¹¹⁷ However, the influence of these works of literature was initially negligible due to the fact that modern anti-Semitism was still a new phenomenon in the eyes of many educated Arabs in those days.¹¹⁸ In spite of this, such literary works were more significant than they appeared to be, for they helped serve as “the foundation for a much more extensive literature of this genre”¹¹⁹, which would show itself in the 20th century.¹²⁰ After all, it was during this century that relations between Muslims and Jews grew even worse.

Founding of Modern anti-Semitism

Coming into contact with several major European powers (ex. Britain, France, etc.) exposed many residents of the Middle East to the kind of anti-Semitism practiced in Europe. Unfortunately, instead of being repulsed by this type of anti-Semitism, the Muslims and Christians of the Middle East came to accept all of the anti-Semitic ideas, opinions, and literary works coming at them from abroad and incorporate them into their own version of anti-Semitism. As a result, a new kind of Jew-hatred was created, one that was a fusion of both Middle-Eastern and European anti-Semitism. The era of Modern anti-Semitism had begun. Below is a discussion of how it all came about.

We will start with a significant piece of literature that continues to be an integral part of Muslim anti-Semitic ideology to this day, namely *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It was, in fact, a massive forgery created by the Russian secret police in 1897 and was made public in 1905.¹²¹ This document talked about a so-called Jewish conspiracy to take over

¹¹⁷ Pg. 107: Stillman, Norman

¹¹⁸ Pg. 107: Stillman, Norman

¹¹⁹ Pg. 107: Stillman, Norman

¹²⁰ Pg. 107: Stillman, Norman

¹²¹ The Skeptic’s Dictionary. “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” Accessed December 12, 2012.

the world, a plot that did not exist in the first place.¹²² The reason why *The Protocols* was published at all was to use the Jews as a scapegoat for the various problems that Russia was facing at the time, whether with regards to its economy or its military.¹²³ However, once the Muslims and Christians of the Middle East caught wind of this document by obtaining it through trade with Russia, among other methods, many of them believed that all of its contents were based on actual fact...or did they? Whatever the case may have been, The Protocols became yet another piece of anti-Semitic literature that entered the Middle East.

In the meantime, relations between Jewish and Muslim residents of the Middle East were put in jeopardy once again by the placement of Palestine under British rule after WWI. This event was extremely significant because it meant the end of the Ottoman Empire's control in that region and its replacement with European domination. Luckily, unlike the residents of Spain during its domination by the Christian empire of Castile in the late 1400s, the residents of Palestine under British rule did not have to suffer through any kinds of religious persecution whatsoever. That being said, the situation in that country was far from peaceful. In order to explain why, we must understand the overall situation in the Middle East during this time. It was the aftermath of WWI, the Ottoman Empire was just eliminated, many of the Ottomans' territories were taken by foreign powers, the systems of Caliphs and dhimmi laws that were in place for over a millennia were eradicated instantly, and the Christians and Jews of the Middle East found themselves suddenly free from dhimmi restrictions. By this point in time, the Muslims, who felt that the Ottoman

<http://skepdic.com/protocols.html>

¹²² The Skeptic's Dictionary. "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://skepdic.com/protocols.html>

¹²³ The Skeptic's Dictionary. "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://skepdic.com/protocols.html>

Empire lost its legitimacy as a ruling government once it granted dhimmis the same general rights as them within society, joined their fellow Christians in a secular bond, first a bond of Arabic culture followed by a bond of Arab nationalism.¹²⁴ Since the Jews were attracted to neither Arabic culture nor Arab nationalism, they became more isolated as an ethnic group than ever before as residents of the newly emerging Arab nations of the 1900s.¹²⁵

It was within this context that the Muslim Brotherhood came into existence. This organization was founded in Egypt in 1928 by a teacher and cleric named Hasan al-Banna. It began as an ordinary movement whose dream it was to implement moral reform in the wake of the secularization of Islamic society caused by the chaos that ensued in the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate. However, al-Banna's hatred towards Western modernity, among other things, eventually led him to reshape his movement's goals from simply restoring ancient Muslim values, traditions, and morals to restoring the system of the Islamic caliphate by force. This entailed waging a grand jihad (aka. A "holy war".¹²⁶) against the entire non-Muslim world. In essence, this meant the commission of acts of terrorism against non-Muslims wherever they happened to be. Apparently, preaching about these topics enabled al-Banna to attract a colossal number of followers to the Muslim Brotherhood.¹²⁷

It was during the Second Arab Revolt, (1936-1939) however, that al-Banna's

¹²⁴ Pg. 110: Stillman, Norman

¹²⁵ Pg. 110: Stillman, Norman

¹²⁶ Pg. 6: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012. <http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹²⁷ Pg. 6: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012. <http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

movement received the jolt of a lifetime. The conflict began when Haj Amin al-Husseini, whom the British appointed as Grand Mufti of Jerusalem back then and who just happened to be one of the leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood, incited the organization's followers to fight against both British authorities and Palestine's Jewish population. Peter Farmer, a historian and commentator on geopolitics, national security, and public policy issues, gives us an idea of some of the strategies the Muslim Brotherhood implemented during this conflict that helped unleash hell on their enemies. For example, al-Husseini "formed and headed a coalition of Muslim leaders called the Arab High Command (AHC), which demanded a series of strikes, boycotts of British and Jewish businesses, and similar measures. Thousands of Jewish farms and orchards were burned or otherwise destroyed, and many rural Jews had to flee to safer areas." Eventually, the AHC called an end to the strikes in October 1936 upon the threat of greater military intervention on the part of the British,¹²⁸ but these strikes were only one of the Muslim Brotherhood's tactics that were used against the them and the Jews in those days.¹²⁹

Additionally, it was during this conflict, that the Muslim Brotherhood grew into an even stronger organization than ever before. Not only did it consist of over 500,000 members by the end of the 1930s, but it also had more than 200,000 branches across the entire Middle East, including 38 branches in Palestine alone!¹³⁰ In addition, Hasan al-Banna

¹²⁸ Family Security Matters. "The Muslim Brotherhood, Part II – Haj Amin al-Husseini." Accessed November 28, 2012.

<http://www.familysecuritymatters.org/publications/detail/the-muslim-brotherhood-part-ii-haj-amin-al-husseini>

¹²⁹ Pg. 7: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹³⁰ Pg. 7: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

had radicalized the movement by this point in time in order to achieve his goal of waging global jihad and establishing Islamic control over all of humanity. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood now had trained fighters, secret assassination squads, stolen weaponry, and its members were given various missions from its leaders initiate all kinds of acts of terrorism and suicide missions against both the British and the Jews.¹³¹ As if this movement did not become dangerous enough, it managed to come into contact and ally itself with Nazi Germany, with which it shared a strong bond due to mutual interests. Both desired to conquer humanity, annihilate the Western powers, and exterminate every Jewish person in the world. Apparently, this partnership led to exchanges of ideas and opinions that resulted in Arabic translations of various Nazi German literary works, (ex. Mein Kampf.) along with the development of Nazi-style anti-Semitic political cartoons. Even more alarming was the fact that Hasan al-Banna himself developed political ties with both Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini during WWII, even going so far as to collect information on the movements of the British army for them.¹³²

Another thing that made the Muslim Brotherhood so dangerous was the influence on this movement of Nazi-style ideology, Nazi organization and administration, and Nazi propaganda. Thanks to Haj Amin al-Husseini's visits with various Nazi officials like Adolf Eichmann, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Heinrich Himmler, Adolph Hitler, and so on, he became exposed to knowledge about how the Nazis conducted their business in general. He then

¹³¹ Pg. 7: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹³² Pg. 8: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

spread what he learned across numerous parts of the Middle East, especially in Egypt and Palestine.¹³³ The results of these endeavors showed themselves at one point in the worst possible way:

“During the ‘Great Arab Revolt’ of 1936-9, which al-Husseini helped organize and which Germany funded, the swastika was used as a mark of identity on Arabic leaflets and graffiti. Arab children welcomed each other with the Hitler salute, and a sea of German flags and pictures of Hitler were displayed at celebrations. The identification was so strong that those obliged to travel through areas involved in the Palestinian revolt soon learned that it was prudent to attach a swastika to their vehicle to ward off attacks by Arab snipers. The Grand Mufti declared certain zones in Palestine to be ‘liberated’ from the Jews and British; and he mandated Shari’a – Islamic religious law. Christian as well as Muslim women were forced to veil themselves. Opponents were liquidated.”¹³⁴

In addition, David Meir-Levi also stated that during the Second Arab Revolt, both al-Husseini and Hasan al-Banna helped radicalize the Muslim Brotherhood during this time, although al-Husseini was the one who Nazified it:

“By 1938, Husseini fielded some ten thousand fighters, an active propaganda unit, and modern weapons, thanks in large part to Nazi money and military assistance.”¹³⁵

Despite this assistance from the Nazis, the Second Great Arab Revolt was ultimately put down by British authorities and al-Husseini went into hiding, but his story was far from over. Long story short, he instigated an unsuccessful coup against the Iraqi prime minister

¹³³Family Security Matters. “The Muslim Brotherhood, Part III – Hitler’s Imam.” Accessed November 28, 2012.

<http://www.familysecuritymatters.org/publications/detail/the-muslim-brotherhood-part-iii-hitlers-imam>

¹³⁴ Pg. 10: David Horowitz Freedom Center. “The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi.” Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹³⁵ Pg. 10: David Horowitz Freedom Center. “The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi.” Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

and regent in 1941, continued his work as a Nazi propagandist by broadcasting anti-Semitic messages to the Middle East from Berlin, created a Nazi military division of Croatian Muslim volunteers that later went on to murder over 90% of Bosnian Jewry.¹³⁶ Although this is not the entire story of Haj Amin al-Husseini, we have already gone through at least some of his contributions to the Nazification of the Muslim Brotherhood already, so let us move on to the icing on the cake: Sayyid Qutb.

Not only was Sayyid Qutb anti-Semitic and anti-Western, but he was also the author of what could be considered to be an important manifesto of Islamic fascist anti-Semitism, an essay entitled *Our Struggle Against the Jews*.¹³⁷ Millions of copies of this document were distributed throughout the Middle East,¹³⁸ which was significant considering how this helped introduce some dangerous ideological principles across the entire region, principles that were extremely anti-Semitic and reminiscent of Nazi-style ideology:

“Qutb declared in his seminal essay, “Our Struggle against the Jews,” it was crucial to understand that the Jew was the root of all the world’s evil. Picking up on the Nazi ideology he had ingested as a member of the Brotherhood, Qutb wrote that Jews were responsible for the world’s moral decay, and the West’s animalistic sexual depravity. It was the Jews who had created the anti-Islamic doctrines of atheistic materialism, godless socialism, and democratic individualism. The Jews, therefore, were the perpetual enemies of Islam.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Family Security Matters. “The Muslim Brotherhood, Part III – Hitler’s Imam.” Accessed November 28, 2012.

<http://www.familysecuritymatters.org/publications/detail/the-muslim-brotherhood-part-iii-hitlers-imam>

¹³⁷ Pgs. 13 -14: David Horowitz Freedom Center. “The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi.” Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹³⁸ Pg. 14: David Horowitz Freedom Center. “The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi.” Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹³⁹ Pg. 14: David Horowitz Freedom Center. “The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi.” Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

Furthermore, he became the Muslim Brotherhood's editor-in-chief of its weekly newspaper and head of its propaganda section in 1950. It was from these high-ranking positions within this movement that he provided a philosophical basis for its various goals:

"As he saw it, the confrontation between the secular West and the Muslim world was over Islam and nothing but Islam. The confrontation arose from the efforts by Christians (referred to as 'Crusaders' in his works) and world Zionism to annihilate Islam. The motivation for this ideological war, Qutb asserted, was that the Crusaders and Zionists knew that Christianity and Judaism were inferior to Islam. They needed, therefore, to annihilate Islam in order to rescue their own flawed and failed doctrines from the inevitable victory of Islam over the hearts and minds of the entire world. After all, 'Islam uber Alles' was an anthem decreed by Allah himself. It would happen, eventually. But first, Qutb said that the Muslim Brotherhood must 'open people's eyes' to the danger that modernity and western culture and Judaism and Zionism posed to Islam. And chief among the most dangerous of perpetrators of that threat were the treasonous Muslims who were corrupted by Western influences to the point where they could no longer be called Muslims."¹⁴⁰

Finally, Sayyid Qutb left behind 24 books that laid out a consistent message for his readers regarding his basic ideology, which almost mirrored that of the Muslim Brotherhood:

"The consistent message throughout his life's works can be described as an adaptation of fascism to Islamic society and governance: violent and uncompromising overthrow of secular insufficiently "pure" regimes; terrorism and armed revolution from the top down; imposition of his interpretation of Islam by force on all Arab peoples; and ultimately the entire world through jihad."¹⁴¹

To sum things up, there is doubt that contact with the Nazis not only radicalized the

¹⁴⁰ Pg. 14: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Pg. 15: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

Muslim Brotherhood to a certain degree, but also Nazified it and created a Nazi Germany inside the Middle East. The Muslim Brotherhood's ideology was ultimately adapted by various organizations throughout the years, including Hamas, Fatah, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Hezbollah, etc., etc., etc. In the present, this twisted ideology continues to hold strong amongst these and other anti-Semitic, anti-Western Muslim organizations. Al-Akhbar, the second largest state-controlled Egyptian daily newspaper in Egypt, stated in its April 2001 issue expressed statements that sum up the danger of the times we now live in:

"Our thanks go to the late Hitler who wrought, in advance, the vengeance of the Palestinians upon the most despicable villains on the face of the Earth. However, we rebuke Hitler for the fact that the vengeance was insufficient."¹⁴²

Be afraid Jews, be very, very afraid.....

Aspects of Modern-Day Anti-Semitism

Today, the anti-Semitism¹⁴³ existing in the Arab world continues to plague the Middle East in a wide variety of ways, including the following:

¹⁴² Pg. 16: David Horowitz Freedom Center. "The Nazi Roots of Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Jihad, by David Meir Levi." Accessed December 6, 2012.

<http://media0.terrorismawareness.org/files/NaziRoots.pdf>

¹⁴³ U.S. Department of State. "Defining Anti-Semitism." Accessed December 13, 2012.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2010/122352.htm>:

The US State Department defines anti-Semitism as including, but not limited to, holocaust denial, denial of the Jewish people's attachment to the Land of Israel (Temple denial), equating Israel/Zionism to Nazism and calling for the extermination of the State of Israel. However, it does not include criticism that would be leveled at any other nation-state in the world.

Anti-Semitic Television Shows – There are many popular television shows broadcast throughout the Arab world today that are filled with a colossal number of anti-Semitic themes, along with expressions of hatred for the Jewish State of Israel.¹⁴⁴ Among the themes presented in such television programming are “anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and anti-Israel plot lines.”¹⁴⁵ The following is a list of television shows that provide proof for this argument:

a) The Il Hukm Ba’d il Muzawla Candid Camera-style Show: This Egyptian television show “provokes irrational and blatantly anti-Semitic reactions from its audience.” In fact, some guests who were invited to appear on the show had “brutally beaten the staff after they were led to believe the staff members of the show were Jewish.”¹⁴⁶

b) Firqat Naji Attalah: This show, which is aired by the Muslim Broadcasting Company (MBC) across the entire Middle East, “depicts Israelis in classic anti-Semitic fashion”¹⁴⁷ and even tells jokes to the audience about the so-called “cheap Jew”.¹⁴⁸

c) Al-Ghalibun: This show, which is aired on a television channel operated by

¹⁴⁴ Arutz Sheva. “Ramadan Broadcasts ‘Rife with Anti-Semitic Themes.’” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158633>

¹⁴⁵ Arutz Sheva. “Ramadan Broadcasts ‘Rife with Anti-Semitic Themes.’” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158633>

¹⁴⁶ Arutz Sheva. “Ramadan Broadcasts ‘Rife with Anti-Semitic Themes.’” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158633>

¹⁴⁷ Arutz Sheva. “Ramadan Broadcasts ‘Rife with Anti-Semitic Themes.’” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158633>

¹⁴⁸ Arutz Sheva. “Ramadan Broadcasts ‘Rife with Anti-Semitic Themes.’” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158633>

Hezbollah (i.e. A Muslim terrorist group that is currently residing in Lebanon with ties to Iran.¹⁴⁹), “depicts Israelis as cruel invaders of Lebanon and glorifies terrorism against Israel.”¹⁵⁰

d) Ashab il-Sabt: This Egyptian television show “features an anti-Semitic professor, allegedly a specialist in Hebrew literature, who uses the show as a podium for propagating conspiracy theories from ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ and other hateful theories about Judaism.”¹⁵¹

What makes these kinds of television programs so dangerous is not merely the fact that they are spouting anti-Semitic banter, but rather, it is due to how often they appear on television networks across the Middle East. The more often anti-Semitic content is filtered into the minds of viewers, the more likely they will believe it. To paraphrase an old saying, if something is stated often enough, it will eventually become true in the minds of whoever hears it. Worse still, the number of Arabs and Muslims who watch anti-Semitic television shows like those listed above seem to skyrocket during Ramadan, the ninth month in the Muslim Calendar and a time of fasting from dawn until sunset every day throughout the duration of that month.¹⁵² Although the reason for this vast increase in the number of viewers is currently unknown, what is known is that at this rate, the Middle East will be

¹⁴⁹ Dictionary.com. “Hezbollah.” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hezbollah?s=t&ld=1125>

¹⁵⁰ Arutz Sheva. “Ramadan Broadcasts ‘Rife with Anti-Semitic Themes.’” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158633>

¹⁵¹ Arutz Sheva. “Ramadan Broadcasts ‘Rife with Anti-Semitic Themes.’” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158633>

¹⁵² Dictionary.com. “Ramadan.” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ramadan?s=t&ld=1125>

filled with impressionable adults and children who will begin to believe the anti-Semitic banter that is spewed at them practically every day on television...and that is just the tip of the iceberg...

Anti-Semitic Political Cartoons – Political cartoons are posted in daily newspapers throughout the Middle East and they depict Jews as schemers of world domination plots, as plunderers of resources, as war mongers, and even as Nazis. Below are examples of such cartoons that illustrate this point:



The words on the cow's udder are "Arab oil". This cartoon is portraying Jews as leeches who are sucking all of the Middle Eastern oil right out of the region for their own benefit.

Source: MEMRI. "Anti-Semitic Cartoons in the Arab and Iranian Press." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/175/2283.htm>

This Syrian political cartoon shows a Jewish soldier reading the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, implying that the Jews were using this document as a basis for taking over the world.

Source: MEMRI. "Anti-Semitic Cartoons in the Arab and Iranian Press." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/175/2283.htm>



The words on the newspaper are "The Arabs are Pursuing the Peace Process." Meanwhile, the Jew is telling George W. Bush that "there is no provocation greater than this!" What this political cartoon is trying to say is that Jews are war mongers, they do not like to make peace with their adversaries, and they are supported by the U.S. government nonetheless.

Source: MEMRI. "Anti-Semitic Cartoons in the Arab and Iranian Press." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/175/2283.htm>

The headline is “Israel Killed Egyptian Prisoners of War in 1967.” Whatever the truth of this statement, the Jewish soldiers in this Egyptian political cartoon are depicted as being Nazis. In fact, the soldier on the right is saying “We are not murderers, we are Nazis.”

Source: MEMRI. “Anti-Semitic Cartoons in the Arab and Iranian Press.” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/175/2283.htm>



As stated earlier, these kinds of political cartoons appear in daily newspapers distributed throughout various parts of the Middle East. What makes this so dangerous is that Arab citizens within this region are becoming exposed to anti-Semitic ideas every time they read the newspaper every morning before heading off to work. Imagine if a child came across anti-Semitic political cartoons similar in nature to those above, at a very young age no less. In this way, the Muslim Brotherhood may as well be breeding the next generation

of Arabian Nazis willing to fight against what these political cartoons are saying are the true enemies of Islam: the Jews.

Holocaust and Temple Denial – Another form of anti-Semitism in the modern Muslim world is the Muslim effort to delegitimize both the existence of Israel and the right of Jews to live in Palestine as much as possible. Two ways in which they do this are Holocaust Denial and Temple Denial:

a) Holocaust Denial: This is defined as the minimization of the scope of and/or complete denial of the occurrence of the Holocaust.¹⁵³ Within the Middle East, holocaust denial, which is illegal in several parts of Europe, is not just confined to small groups of people, but rather, it is a widespread phenomenon sponsored by various national governments, especially that of Iran, which became a virtual sanctuary for Holocaust deniers overtime.¹⁵⁴ Basically, if a denier was stuck in certain legal entanglements involving his beliefs about the Holocaust, among other things, Iran was a great place for him to seek refuge.

Certain Arabs also use Holocaust denial as a propaganda tool for shoring up more anti-Israeli support, which is done by portraying Jews as cunning and greedy conspirators who “created the story of the Holocaust in an attempt to defraud the world of billions and elicit support for the creation of Israel”.¹⁵⁵ By circulating these lies across as many areas of

¹⁵³ ADL. “Holocaust Denial in the Middle East: The Latest anti-Israel, Anti-Semitic Propaganda Theme.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

http://www.adl.org/holocaust/denial_me/hdme_genocide_denial.asp

¹⁵⁴ ADL. “Holocaust Denial in the Middle East: The Latest anti-Israel, Anti-Semitic Propaganda Theme.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

http://www.adl.org/holocaust/denial_me/hdme_genocide_denial.asp

¹⁵⁵ ADL. “Holocaust Denial in the Middle East: The Latest anti-Israel, Anti-Semitic Propaganda Theme.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

http://www.adl.org/holocaust/denial_me/hdme_genocide_denial.asp

the Middle East as possible, these Holocaust deniers are practically feeding the already growing anti-Semitic hatred towards Jews that exists throughout the region as of this moment.

Finally, what about the portrayal of Jews as Nazis as illustrated by a political cartoon shown earlier in this paper? How do Holocaust deniers reconcile their denials of the Holocaust with their beliefs in Jews being Nazis? What could possibly explain this blatant contradiction? This contradiction became starkly apparent in an issue of the Syrian daily newspaper dated January 31st, 2000. In that issue, an editorialist demanded that the international community “adamantly oppose the new Nazi Plague that breeds in Israel,” but this same editorialist also stated that the Jews made up the notion of there being a Holocaust in the first place.¹⁵⁶ To this day, the reason behind this inherent contradiction between denying the Holocaust and calling Jews Nazis has yet to be determined.

b) Temple Denial: This is the denial of the fact that there ever was a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁵⁷ The temple being referred to here is that which is currently located in Jerusalem. It was rededicated by Jews in the second century A.D. who fought and won victory against the Macedonian regime in Damascus.¹⁵⁸ The story of the Macedonians attempting to conquer Jerusalem and them being beaten back by the city’s Jewish

¹⁵⁶ ADL. “Holocaust Denial in the Middle East: The Latest anti-Israel, Anti-Semitic Propaganda Theme.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

http://www.adl.org/holocaust/denial_me/hdme_genocide_denial.asp

¹⁵⁷ National Post. “Geoffrey Clarfield: Muslims in denial about the existence of the Jewish temple.” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/12/07/geoffrey-clarfield-muslims-in-denial-about-the-existence-of-the-jewish-temple/>

¹⁵⁸ National Post. “Geoffrey Clarfield: Muslims in denial about the existence of the Jewish temple.” Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/12/07/geoffrey-clarfield-muslims-in-denial-about-the-existence-of-the-jewish-temple/>

inhabitants, namely the Maccabees, is celebrated as part of the well-known Jewish holiday known as Hanukkah. Furthermore, religious Jews, Christians, and Muslims, along with secular scholars, have accepted for over 2,000 years that the Jewish Temple's ruins "lie beneath the two Muslim mosques that were later built upon the Temple Mount by conquering Arabs after the death of Muhammad – and that the surviving pre-Islamic Wailing Wall' is the outer wall of the Temple courtyard that existed in Roman times during the ministry of Jesus."¹⁵⁹

All of that changed after the Six-Day War of 1967 when Israel conquered the entire Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Temple Mount itself.¹⁶⁰ Israel then claimed sovereignty over the Temple Mount, but left administrative control of it in the hands of Muslim authorities.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, when Israel claimed sovereignty over the Temple Mount, it led to some unsavory unintended consequences, more specifically widespread fear among many Muslims that the Jews were planning to take over not just the Temple Mount, but the entire city of Jerusalem as well.¹⁶² In order to fight back against

¹⁵⁹ National Post. "Geoffrey Clarfield: Muslims in denial about the existence of the Jewish temple." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/12/07/geoffrey-clarfield-muslims-in-denial-about-the-existence-of-the-jewish-temple/>

¹⁶⁰ Global Research in International Affairs Center. "The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial." Accessed December 8, 2012.

<http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/08/the-mounting-problem-of-temple-denial/>

¹⁶¹ Global Research in International Affairs Center. "The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial." Accessed December 8, 2012.

<http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/08/the-mounting-problem-of-temple-denial/>

National Post. "Geoffrey Clarfield: Muslims in denial about the existence of the Jewish temple." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/12/07/geoffrey-clarfield-muslims-in-denial-about-the-existence-of-the-jewish-temple/>

¹⁶² Global Research in International Affairs Center. "The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial." Accessed December 8, 2012.

<http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/08/the-mounting-problem-of-temple-denial/>

what they saw as Jewish imperialism, Palestinian historians began to “deny the importance of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount to Jews.”¹⁶³ Soon, their writings about this topic spread throughout the Middle East and the widespread phenomenon of Temple denial was born.¹⁶⁴

Among the arguments made by Temple deniers was how there was no evidence of the existence of the Jewish Temple and there was no evidence of a Jewish connection to the Wailing Wall. Therefore, they argue, there was no Jewish connection to the city of Jerusalem as a whole.¹⁶⁵ In addition, some deniers even make the claim that “the Jewish connection to Palestine is a modern creation that is part of a Jewish plan to rule the region ‘through active control, media control, or economic control.’”¹⁶⁶ This shows that just like Holocaust deniers, Temple deniers tended to resort to using anti-Semitic themes and motifs to justify their arguments. These were only some of the arguments made by Temple deniers in the Middle East back then, as well as today.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Islam started out as a great religion, attracting followers who desired

¹⁶³ Global Research in International Affairs Center. “The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

<http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/08/the-mounting-problem-of-temple-denial/>

¹⁶⁴ Global Research in International Affairs Center. “The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

<http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/08/the-mounting-problem-of-temple-denial/>

¹⁶⁵ Global Research in International Affairs Center. “The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

<http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/08/the-mounting-problem-of-temple-denial/>

¹⁶⁶ Global Research in International Affairs Center. “The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial.” Accessed December 8, 2012.

<http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/08/the-mounting-problem-of-temple-denial/>

something entirely different from that practiced by the majority of the population in Mecca in those days. The sole problem that it had was Mohammed himself, whose overreaction to being rejected by Medina's Jewish population began a chain of events that led to the establishment of a system throughout various parts of the Middle East that persecuted and discriminated against non-Muslims. Things became even worse when the region was visited by Christian missionaries who shared their own anti-Semitic ideology with the Muslims they came across, thus, in the long run, transforming Islam from a religion that simply tolerated the existence of non-Muslims into a religion that simply hated them for who they were. Finally, Islam became completely radicalized by contact with Nazi Germany until it became the anti-Semitic, Nazified movement it is today in numerous parts of the Middle East. As the Muslim mythology, which held that the Muslims could easily destroy the Jewish State, never came to fruition, more nonsensical and elaborate conspiracy theories had to be created to maintain the Muslim view of Jews. However, a recent article by a former Saudi air-force officer explains that the Arab leaders perpetrated these anti-Semitic views in order to keep themselves in power.¹⁶⁷ It is a classic case of a religion that turned into what it is today instead of what it could have been.

Before closing this essay on a bittersweet note, there are two questions that remain unanswered. Why was Muslim society so willing and so open to accepting anti-Semitic ideas from abroad? Could it be that Muslim society was conditioned to accept them because of the dhimmi status the Jews were forced to accept? That we are unable to say for certain,

¹⁶⁷ Arab News. "Arab Spring and the Israeli enemy." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.arabnews.com/arab-spring-and-israeli-enemy>

Al-Monitor. "Saudi Asks if Israel-Bashing Serves to Deflect From Domestic Problems." Accessed December 12, 2012.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/culture/2012/10/in-praise-of-normalcy.html>

for only the Muslims who lived during the age of colonialism would most likely know for sure.

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