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Islam and Judaism

When you think of Islam and Judaism, the first thought likely to come to mind is the Arab-Israeli conflict. There is good reason for this; Israel and the Arab states have been in a more or less constant state of conflict for sixty years. But in terms of history, this is a blink of an eye. Islam has been a religion for almost 1400 years. There have been numerous conflicts, some very bloody, but there have been more periods of relatively peaceful co-existence.

One glorious period took place in what is today Spain, but was then known as Andalusia. For a brief time, Muslim, Jew and Christian all lived in harmony and produced advances in philosophy, the arts and sciences. It is out of this region that Judah Halevi would come and he in turn would influence Moses Maimonides, also of Spain. He was a contemporary of Abu Walid ibn Rushd, and they shared many points of view.

But before we discuss that, we need to understand what Islam is about and where it came from.

Middle East



The Land of Islam's Birth

The Arabian Peninsula is located between the Red Sea on the West, the Persian Gulf on the East and the Arabian Sea to the South. The land mass is over 2.25 million miles, most of it desert. There are mountains and the region called the Asir is quite pleasant and attracts tourists. The cities of Mecca and Medina are near the Western coast.

When we concluded the last class, Rome had banned the Jews of the time from living in Israel and the Jews had been forced out into the world. Some would live in the Roman West, in modern day Europe. Most

would stay in the more familiar area around the Mediterranean. There were already Jewish communities in Egypt and Iran. Jews were not unknown in Lebanon and Syria. Other Jews would head south, into the Arabian Peninsula.

By 570 CE, there were a number of Jewish tribes in the area and even a Jewish kingdom. Jews had lived in the northern area since Biblical times. In 518 CE Dhu Nuwas became the king of the Himyarite Kingdom, which had replaced the previous kingdom of Sabea or "Sheba" as mentioned in the Bible, and existing north of Yemen. Upon ascending the throne, he announced his conversion to Judaism and took the name of Yusuf or Joseph.

These Jews would have significant interaction and influence with the Islamic Prophet, Muhammad. Muslims tell two stories that reflect how they perceive their relationship with Judaism. The first is that it was not Isaac that Abraham took up to sacrifice, but Ishmael. After all, Ishmael was the oldest son and would certainly have been Abraham's favorite. Therefore the covenant and prophecy apply to the descendants of Ishmael. The second related story is that Abraham would not have driven Hagar and Ishmael away into the desert. No, he accompanied them to a place of safety, to Mecca in Arabia.



Figure 1 Jews of Hadramaut celebrating the Seder.

When Christianity became the official religion of Rome, the Orthodox began eliminating heretics. Among those deemed to have heretical beliefs were the Gnostics. Many Gnostics took refuge in Arabia. Among the beliefs that they contributed to Islam was that Jesus was not killed on the cross; what the crowd saw was an illusion. This belief would also be adopted by Islam.

Other Christians in the area include the Nestorians, who had been declared anathema for refusing to accept the divinity of Jesus. The Muslims would also incorporate this belief. Jesus would be remembered by Muslims as a prophet, not a Divine figure.

But the majority of people living in the Arabian Peninsula were neither Jewish nor Christian, they were pagan. This included the Quraysh, Muhammad's tribe. The Quraysh

had conquered the area in and around the city of Mecca. Mecca was a wealthy city in large measure because pilgrims came to worship at the shrine called the Ka'bah. The Ka'bah housed many idols and was deemed especially holy because of the presence of the Black Stone, a fragment of a meteor that is said to date back to the time of Adam and Eve.

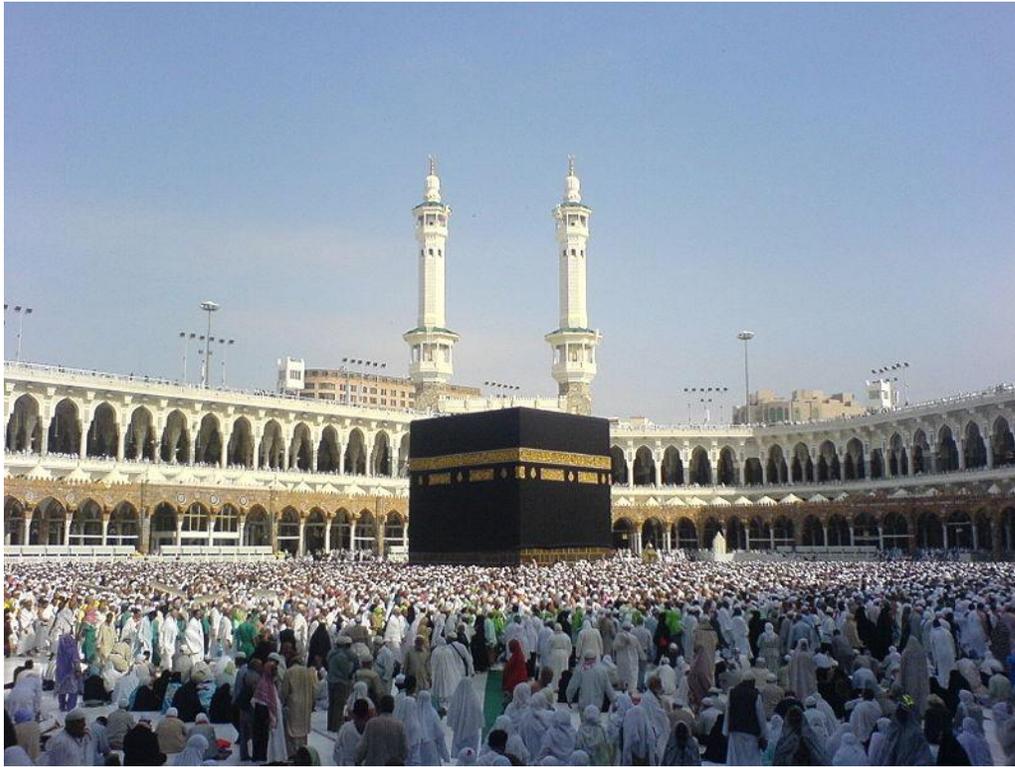


Figure 2 Pilgrims make Hajj to the Ka'bah

The sanctity of the Ka'bah as a shrine occurs not long before Muhammad's birth. While there are historical records of people coming to worship as far back as the 2nd century CE, most of the tribes were in a constant state of warfare. It is not until the Quraysh conquer the area around 500 CE and make a pact with the surrounding Bedouins that pilgrims came to worship in safety. Much of the wealth of the Quraysh comes as a result of these visiting pilgrims.

The Birth of the Prophet and Early Years

According to tradition, Muhammad was born in Mecca on April 20th, 570. Tradition holds that his father died soon after his birth and that his mother died before he was six. He would be given into the care of his uncle, Abu Talib.

There are three major sources from which the story of Muhammad is drawn: The Qur'an, the Hadith and the Sira. Together these three texts make up the Sunnah. The Qur'an is often fragmentary and expects the reader to have a certain background for understanding. The Hadith is both commentary (tafsir) and traditions (hadith.) The Sira is the biography

of Muhammad, but is first written 150 years after the death of Muhammad. It is then rewritten and rewritten again. Many of the stories are hagiographical, portraying Muhammad as a figure larger than life, capable of pulverizing a large rock by mixing his spit with water and sprinkling it on the boulder.

It is up to the reader to choose what to believe and what not to believe. There are many stories of Jews and Christians recognizing the young Prophet as having come to fulfill an age-old prophecy. These stories are contradicted by the (shocking to Muslims) lack of acceptance by these same groups in later years.

In particular, the Jews are portrayed as being willfully disobedient to the apparent will of God. When Muhammad is still quite young, a pagan monk named Bahira warns Abu Talib “Verily the Jews are his enemies, and he is the Prophet of these people; he is an Arab and the Jews are jealous of him, wishing that he should have been an Israelite. So guard your brother’s son.” Another story has a Jew being so overcome by the sight of the infant Prophet that he falls into a swoon. When he awakens, he explains “The prophethood has gone from the Israelites and the Scriptures out of their hands. It is written that he (Muhammad) will fight with them and kill their scholars.”

Muhammad’s early life is relatively uneventful. When he is 25, he marries Khadija bint Khuwaylid, a wealthy widow, fifteen years his senior. Khadija had hired Muhammad as traveling salesman, to go to Syria. He was accompanied by a slave named Maysara. During their return, Maysara saw two angels shielding Muhammad from the scorching sun. When he told Khadija what he had seen, she determined to marry him.

One might take the position that Muhammad married Khadija to benefit from her wealth. It should be noted however that Muhammad took no other wives until after Khadija had died. (He would then marry Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr. Aisha was six at the time and the marriage was consummated when she was nine. More about Aisha and Abu Bakr later.)

Khadija had a cousin, Waraqa, who was born a Jew, but converted to Christianity. Waraqa would be a major influence in the early prophetic career of Muhammad.

According to sources, Muhammad often went to pray and find seclusion in a cave known as the cave of Hira. Although he would not declare himself a prophet until he was 40 years old, he had visions and dreams for several years prior. The dreams and visions left him pained and afraid. They were so troubling that he thought about killing himself and went as far as starting to climb a mountain with the intention of throwing himself off. He was stopped by an angel who said “O Muhammad! Thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel.”

Muhammad was first recognized as a prophet by Khadija and Waraqa.

What the Prophet Said

Islam means submission, submission to the will of God. A Muslim is one who has submitted himself.

Islam is based on five basic tenets, often called the Pillars of Islam:

- Shahadah is the acceptance of god in a singular form, “I testify that there is no god except God.” These are the first words of prayer.
- Salat is performing the five prayers required every day. Prayers are to be said at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night fall.
- Zakat is the practice of charity.
- Siyaam is the ritual of fasting, including the fasting during Ramadan, the holy month.
- Hajj is the requirement to make pilgrimage at least once during your life to Mecca.

Some Shiites refer to Jihad as the sixth pillar and in the Twelver Shi’a Islam school, jihad is considered one of the 10 Practices of the religion.

In addition to the Five Pillars there are a whole set of other laws that comprise Sharia, Islamic law. Every aspect of a true Muslim’s life is governed by these laws.

The first to accept these laws, to become the first Muslim, was Muhammad’s wife Khadija; the second was a 10-year old boy named Ali bin Abu Talib.

These commandments are not all that different from the commandments followed by observant Jews and with good reason.

Muhammad is believed to have the last and the greatest of a long line of prophets stretching back to Biblical times. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon are all considered prophets. John and Jesus are recognized as prophets. It is the Islamic belief that these prophets who had come before were all charged to bring mankind to the ways of righteousness. Yet the Christians had misunderstood the message and the Jews were willfully evil.

Muhammad knew of the Torah and of the Talmud as well. (The Talmud was compiled in the Second Century CE.) He was also aware the Christian works, the New Testament. These works are often referenced in the Qur’an. But it was expected that, now that a new and greater prophet had come, these People of the Book would accept the new revelation. As the Angel Gabriel said “Those to whom We sent the Book before this, they do believe in this revelation.”

In ritual and belief, Islam is not all that different from Judaism and Christianity and in some regards is quite similar. The dietary laws, Halal or “permissible” are almost

identical with the laws of Kashrut or Kosher, except that Muslims are forbidden all intoxicants, alcohol most especially.

Exiled from Mecca

Once Muhammad comes to the conclusion that he is divinely inspired, he began preaching. He gathered the clans of the Quraysh to a mountain and poses the question “Suppose I told you that there is an enemy cavalry in the valley intending to attack you, would you believe me?” When they said that they would, for he had always been truthful, he continued “I am a warner in the face of a terrible punishment.” By this he meant that those who did not follow God’s laws as laid out in the Qur’an would be doomed and damned.

Not all believed him. His uncle, Abu Lahab, responded “May your hands perish all this day. Is it for this purpose that you have called us here?”

Opposition to Muhammad grew, because he not only challenged the pagan beliefs of the Quraysh, he threatened the economy of Mecca, which was dependent on pagans coming to worship at the Ka’bah.

He once approached a group of worshippers at the Ka’bah and said “Will you listen to me, O Quraysh? By Him who holds my life in His hand, I bring you slaughter.” As far as the Quraysh were concerned, Muhammad had thrown down the gauntlet of war.

At one point, Muhammad tried to reconcile with the Quraysh. He received a revelation that it would be permissible for Muslims to worship the three pagan goddesses of the Quraysh, who would act as intermediaries to Allah. This was part of a peace pact with the Quraysh, who had offered “You will worship our god for a year and we shall worship your god for a year.” This was in direct contradiction to what he had preached earlier and subsequently it was determined that this revelation did not come from God, but from Satan. (These are the Satanic Verses that inspired the book by that name, written by Salman Rushdie.) Muhammad would say “I have fabricated things against God and have imputed to Him words he has not spoken.” Since Muhammad is the Perfect Man there must have been some powerful evil at work. God would, of course, be merciful and forgive his Prophet.

Failing to make peace with his pagan relatives, Allah sends Muhammad on a miraculous Night Journey, where he travels to Jerusalem in a single night and ascends to Heaven. He is taken to the Temple Mount and then to Heaven where he meets Adam in the First Heaven, Jesus and John in the Second Heaven, Joseph in the Third Heaven. All greet him as a brother. In the Sixth Heaven he meets Moses, who begins to weep. The explanation comes when Moses tells Muhammad “I weep because after me there has been sent a young man (Muhammad) whose followers will enter Heaven in greater numbers than mine.” Muhammad is given the rules for his followers by the Divine and returns to find that his body has remained in place, while his spirit traveled.

Thirteen years after Muhammad begins preaching, tensions with the Quraysh force him and his followers to a nearby town, called Yathrib originally, but renamed Medinat al-Nabi, the City of the Prophet. Soon the name is shortened to Medina. Muhammad is now more than a preacher; he is the secular head of a growing band of followers. He begins to attempt the conversion of the Jews of Medina. Many of the laws of Islam are formulated in the dialogue and debate with the Jews of Medina. At this time, Muslims do not face Mecca, the city of their enemies, in prayer, but rather face Jerusalem, the city where Muhammad had ascended to Heaven.

Muhammad makes a pact of mutual defense with these Jews. "To the Jew who follows us belong help and equality. The Jews of the Bene Auf are one community with the believers." But the concord is short-lived. The Jews begin to question Muhammad's legitimacy in the line of Prophets. When a "rabbi" converts to Islam, stating that Muhammad's coming was prophesied in the Torah, the Jewish community rejects him saying that he was "the worst of us and the son of the worst of us." This story reinforces the Muslim concept that Muhammad fulfilled a prophecy and also that the Jews refusal to accept him as a prophet was an act of willful disobedience. The Jews were intentionally evil, while the Christians merely ignorant.

Muhammad and his followers took to raiding caravans. The Prophet led many of these raids himself and, at least on one occasion, violated the laws of the Quraysh by attacking a caravan during a month when fighting was prohibited. This was violation of both secular and religious law and made Muhammad doubly an outlaw.

Muhammad continued to try to convert the Jews in the region, but they continued to reject him saying that he did not fulfill any prophecy and that he "has not brought us anything that we recognize and he is not the one that we spoke of." Now a new revelation came that Muslims had only been instructed to face Jerusalem as a test and that they should face the Holy place in Mecca.

The Battle of Badr is Muhammad's first great victory. Raiding a large Quraysh caravan, laden with money and goods, the Muslims are met by a force of some 1,000 Quraysh warriors. There are only 300 Muslims, yet by their ferocity they gain a great victory. One of Muhammad's warriors asked the Prophet what would make the Lord laugh with joy at his servant? Muhammad responded "When he plunges into the midst of the enemy without his mail." The warrior, remembered as Auf bin Harith, did just that killing many of the foe until he was in turn killed. The Muslims charged their enemy so ferociously that the Quraysh were routed.

Muhammad had the leaders of the Quraysh thrown into a well. He taunted them as "the people of the pit." One leader was too fat to be easily interred; Muhammad had him torn into pieces and then thrown in. One leader pleaded for his life and asked, if he was killed, what would become of his children? Muhammad answered "Hell" and had him killed. Many prisoners were beheaded at Badr, an event that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi recalled, years later, when he beheaded Daniel Pearl, saying "The Prophet, the most merciful,

ordered his army to strike the necks of some prisoners in the Battle of Badr and to kill them. And he set a good example for us.”

The Prophet would take part in nine battles, not all of them victories. But Badr became a rallying point, proving that Muslims could win against odds. Pagan tribes began to convert, lured by the allure of a victorious war leader who shared the booty from his triumphs.

After Badr, Muhammad turned against the Jews of Qaynuqa, with whom he had made a treaty. He received a revelation from Allah that he could break treaties with impunity, “If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back their covenant to them.” The Qaynuqa Jews, outnumbered and without the military prowess of the Muslims, resisted anyway. “O Muhammad, you seem to think that we are your people. Do not deceive yourself.” Muhammad’s force laid siege until the Jews were forced to offer unconditional surrender. At first, Muhammad wanted to kill all the men of the Qaynuqa. Some Muslims pled with the Prophet to be merciful. They won a promise from Muhammad to let the Jews of Medina leave with their lives as long as they turned over all property to Muhammad. Muhammad would later regret this. These merciful Muslims would henceforth be called The Hypocrites.

Muhammad’s anger against the Jews who had rejected him (never mind that these same Jews had been his former allies) continued to grow. A Jewish leader and poet, Ka’b bin Al-Ashraf, had supposedly composed some verses that made fun of Muhammad. A Muslim named Muhammad bin Maslama offered to kill the offending Jew and requested permission to tell some falsehoods in the course of his mission. He pretended to be angry with the Prophet and sought shelter in the home of the Prophet’s enemy. When he had won the confidence of Ka’b, he pretended to be interested in Ka’b’s perfume. When he was close enough, he grabbed the trusting Jew and, along with some companions, beheaded the man and took his trophy back to the Prophet.

After dealing with the Qaynuqa, the Nadir Jews would also be stripped of their property and cast out of Medina. Both groups would make alliance with the pagan Quraysh in Mecca. Anticipating an attack, Muhammad ordered a trench dug around Medina. It was during the digging of this trench that Muhammad received a revelation that he was intended to conquer an empire. To him and his followers would be given the lands of Yemen, of Syria, of the Sassanian (Persian) Empire and the lands of the Byzantines. But first would come the Battle of the Trench, where Muhammad would have to face the warriors of the Quraysh and their allies, the Qaynuqa Jews. The allied forces were further fortified by the presence of the pagan Ghatafan tribesmen. One of the Ghatafan was a secret Muslim and he was able to sow discord among the allies until the Quraysh withdrew.

Once the Quraysh had left, Muhammad was free to deal with the Qaynuqa Jews. He refers to the Jews as “monkeys and pigs” a theme that is repeated in several places in the Qur’an. Trenches were dug in the Medina marketplace and the men of the Qaynuqa brought there, where they were beheaded. The Qur’an records that at least some captives

were executed by the Prophet's own hand. In total, between 600 and 800 Jews died that day. The surviving women and children were enslaved.

After this, Muhammad was the unquestioned master of Medina. Not long after that, Muhammad would lead his army against Mecca. By a clever stratagem, having his soldiers light more fires at night to exaggerate the size of his army, Muhammad intimidated many of the best warriors in Mecca into defecting, joining his army and converting to Islam. It was not long before he was master of the city.

According to the biographer Ibn Sa'd, the people of Mecca converted "willingly or unwillingly." This contradicts earlier parts of the Qur'an, but it left Muhammad with a solid base. When he entered the Ka'bah as master of the city, he found 360 idols. He ordered all the idols burnt, except for an icon of Jesus and Mary.

At the Battle of Hunayn, Muhammad would defeat the Thaqif tribe, age-old enemies of the Quraysh. This would leave him as the master of all Arabia.

Muhammad's attention now turned to the Byzantine Empire, still mighty but weakened by years of conspiracies and in-fighting. Muhammad wrote to the Emperor Heraclius, inviting him to convert to Islam. When the Emperor refused, Muhammad launched a raid against Tabuk, a part of the Empire. Some Muslims begged to be excused and Muhammad responded by telling them that jihad was an obligation. "Do ye prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter?...Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty."

Muhammad's raids against the Byzantine Empire were successful and he now found himself in possession of lands with a Christian population. There were also many Jews in these lands. The non-Muslims were given a choice: they could convert or pay a tax called the jizya. If they failed to accept either choice, their lives were forfeit. The monies gathered from the taxes on Christians and Jews would be used to fund further wars of expansion.

It should be noted that Muslim conquerors were, in general, more merciful to Christians and Jews than to pagans.

Muhammad would die of an illness without leaving a clear successor and much of Islam's history, even including today's modern events, is a result of that.

Muhammad's farewell address contained the words "I was ordered to fight all men until they say 'There is no god but Allah.'" (March, 632) These words are core to Islamic belief and would be echoed by Osama bin Laden in November, 2001 when he said "I was ordered to fight the people until they say there is no god but Allah and his prophet Muhammad."

Islam and the Jews

Muhammad had a special antipathy for the Jews. While he also railed against the Christians and the pagans, the animosity toward the Jews is part of the Qur'an. There are a number of reasons for this:

While Islam is directly influenced by both Torah and Talmud, there was an expectation that the Jews would accept Muhammad as a prophesied and long-awaited Prophet. It was further expected that the Jewish population of Arabia would convert. Not only did the Jews reject Muhammad, they did so publicly.

During Muhammad's Night Journey, he is hailed as a Prophet by Adam, Joseph, Moses and other Jewish prophets. For the contemporary Jews to reject him undercuts the very legitimacy of Islam.

The Jews did take up arms against Muhammad, although this was after the first aggressions by Muslims. There is some evidence that the Jews of Medina tried to assassinate Muhammad and some Muslims believe that the illness that took Muhammad's life was a result of being bewitched by the Jews. The Jews of Medina were wealthy and weak at a time when Muhammad's followers were in need. They were a target of opportunity. Yet they had also given the Muslim's asylum when they were in need. In order to justify Muhammad's actions, the Jews must have done something to earn his wrath.

Yet at the end, Muhammad comes up with a policy that, while harsh, will permit the Jews to live in Muslim lands.

The Heirs of Muhammad

There were two candidates to assume the mantle of Muhammad. Abu Bakr was Muhammad's father-in-law, an early convert and a companion of Muhammad's from the earliest days. In the final days of Muhammad's illness, Abu Bakr was selected by Muhammad to lead the faithful in prayer. Moreover he was one of the Sahaba (the Companions of the Prophet) and had the respect of the warriors. He would become the first of the Caliphs and would lead the conquest of Syria and Iraq. The Sunni faction of Islam holds to his legitimacy as both spiritual and secular leader.

In opposition was Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib. He was the second to convert to Islam and was a successful warrior in his own right. He had married the Prophet's daughter Fatima. His cause would be championed by the Shi'at Ali, known today as the Shi'a Muslims.

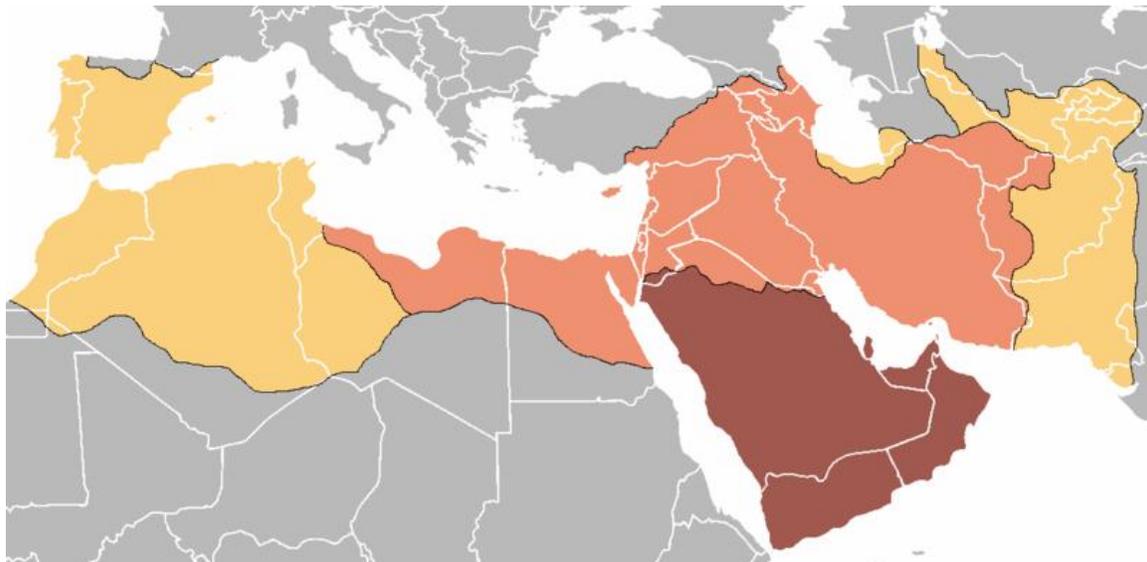
Abu Bakr would rule for only 27 months (632-634), but would greatly expand the Islamic Empire. He fought not only against the Christians and the Persians but would fight a series of wars against the converted pagan tribes of Arabia when they began to backslide.

When Abu Bakr died, he would be succeeded by the Caliph Umar (634-644), who in turn would be succeeded by the Caliph Uthman (644-656). Each of the Caliphs would expand the Muslim sphere of influence. These Caliphs, along with Ali, are known as the Rashidun or “Rightly Guided” Caliphs.

Ali would finally have his turn as the fourth Caliph beginning in 656. Ali was opposed by a rebellious force that included Muhammad’s widow Aisha. The war between Ali and the rebels is known as the Fitna. In 661, Ali was assassinated while praying in a mosque. Both the Sunni and the Shi’a revere him, the Shi’a considering him a “perfect man” like Muhammad.

Ali’s son Hasan attempted to assume the Caliphate, but was opposed by Muawiyah, one of the rebels who had opposed Ali and also a Companion of Muhammad. Muawiyah would lead his armies into Iraq, the seat of Hasan’s power and would emerge victorious. Muawiyah would found the Umayyid Caliphate, based in Damascus, Syria. (Umayyid was the name of Muawiyah’s grandfather.) The capital was moved to Syria to be closer to the Byzantine Empire and the war zone.

There would be numerous conflicts of succession among the later generations of the Umayyids before they were overthrown by Abbasids, a clan that had long opposed them. One of the factors that led to the downfall of the Umayyids was their own success. The Muslim Empire was now huge. Many nations and races had been conquered, more educated than the Arabs that reigned over them. These races converted to Islam, by and large, and became administrators under the Arabs. But they were not granted equal rights, even though they were part of the Muslim Umma or brotherhood.



The Caliphate, 622-750

- Expansion under the Prophet Mohammad, 622-632
- Expansion during the Rashidun Caliphs, 632-661
- Expansion during the Umayyad Caliphate, 661-750

It must be understood that Islam in Muhammad's day was Arab-centric. The Prophet had decreed that Arabs were the most favored of God's peoples as evidenced by his having been born among them. All the Umayyad Caliphs were Arabs and wealth and power was granted to the old Arab families.

But now many of the warriors and administrators came from non-Arab peoples. The core of opposition to the Umayyad Caliphate was in Iraq and was bolstered by the support of two religious factions, the Shiites and the Kharijites. The Shiites wanted the return of the Caliphate to the family of Muhammad, through the relatives of Ali and his wife Fatima. The Kharijites were fanatics and wanted all power invested in the Islamic community.

The Abbasid Caliphate would move the seat of power to Baghdad.

Andalusia

During the Umayyid (711-750) period, the Muslim Empire had expanded into Europe including the Iberian or Spanish peninsula. The warriors that crossed over from Algeria were not Arabs, but were Berbers. Later the area would be claimed by the Abbasids (750-929), but would split off to become its own Caliphate (929-1031).

In 732, the Muslim crossed the Pyrenees and entered into what was known as Frankland, ruled by Charles Martel, Charles the Hammer. They would be turned back, in part because of a revolt by the Berbers at home. In 778, Charles the Great, Charlemagne, would drive the Muslims back.

For the first 50 years, the Arab state in Andalusia mirrored the conflict in the rest of the Muslim world. The first twenty-two emirs had an average reign of two years each. But in 756, Abd al Rahman, a Syrian-born prince, became emir. He would rule for thirty-two years.

Rahman was the founder of Spain's *convivencia*, which translated literally means "living together." There were restrictions imposed on the Jewish and Christian populations, including the tax created by Muhammad and known as the *jizya*. There were many other rules imposed. Worship had to be performed quietly and non-Muslims were not allowed to proselytize. Their houses could not be taller than Muslim houses. But gradually the rules, except for the tax, began to fall away.

Jews in particular were allowed to enter public service, where they became scribes, clerks, advisers, valued for their knowledge and wisdom. The Golden Age of Al Andalus was also the Golden Age of the Sephardic Jews.

Among the other advances that came out of Andalus was the modern system of numerals, which replaced the Roman system. Papermaking was imported from China and the library at Cordoba housed four hundred thousand volumes. Greek and Latin texts were translated. One of the volumes was the Greek *De Materia Medica*, which remained the standard medical reference until the Enlightenment. In the twelfth century, the Muslim

philosopher Averroes wrote his commentaries on Aristotle while living in Cordoba. At roughly the same time and also in Cordoba Moses Maimonides (known to his Muslim colleagues as Musa ibn Mayum) wrote the "Guide to the Perplexed." It is generally agreed that Averroes influenced Maimonides and that both would in turn influence Thomas Aquinas.

The fall of Andalusia came from two sources. Muslim Spain was attacked first by Christian territories to the north and then by North African Berbers who came as reinforcements, but were more militant and regarded the original invaders as "soft."

In 1492, the last of the Muslim invaders would be driven out and the Inquisition would begin. Most of the Jews who fled Spain early on would emigrate to Muslim lands, especially Turkey.

Conclusion

The relationship between Muslims and Jews is a complex one. That we share many common roots (think of how similar Arabic and Hebrew are) provides grounds for both cooperation and competition. The modern animosity between Muslims and Jews has origins that go all the way back to Muhammad. In contrast, for much of the past 1400 years Jews lived securely (if not with equality) in the Muslim world.

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