

Jerusalem and the temple mount religion essay



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The history of the city of Jerusalem is filled with violence and conflict.

According to the Jewish Torah and the Old Testament of the Christian bible, Jerusalem was the capital of the Kingdom of Judah, which was predicted to at one time have been united with the Kingdom of Israel. Around 600 BCE the nation of Babylon conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem; including the sacred Temple of the Lord that King Solomon had built there, and took its people captive. It wasn't until decades after the Babylonians had plundered the city that the Jewish people were allowed to return to their home land and rebuild their once glorious city (Gascoigne, 2001).

About 80 years later Jerusalem once again became the capital of Judah and the temple was reconstructed. Jerusalem was captured by the Greeks under Alexander the Great in 312 BCE and nearly a century later the Babylonians once again took over the city, this time under the rule of commander-in-chief, Seleucus. By 19 BCE the Roman empire had gained control of the area and set Harod the Great as "client King" over Jerusalem, under their control. Harod rebuilt the Temple of the Lord after it had lay in ruins for centuries and renamed it the Second Temple. After the death of Harod in 4 CE the Romans implemented direct rule over the city. In 66 CE, after decades of living under the authoritarian rule of the Roman Empire, the Jews rebelled. Their plight for freedom didn't last long and four years later Rome came in and pillaged the entire city and the Temple was once again destroyed. (CITATION)

It was in the first century CE that the Christian bible records the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, the Messiah according to the Christian faith. During the second century CE Roman Emperor Hadrian rebuilt the city as a pagan city. Before Hadrian's reign, the Jews had been allowed

to freely practice their religion; but Hadrian's rules restricting worship lead to another rebellion in the city. Hadrian responded with a massacre that led to the death of nearly half a million Jews. The Jews were then forbidden to enter the city save for one day of the year, Tish B'Av, a day which Jews set aside to mourn and fast in honor of both of the Temples that had been destroyed.

Jerusalem was rebuilt as a Christian city in 335 CE by the Emperor Constantine, but the Jewish people were still not allowed entry. More than 300 years later the famous Muslim shrine, the Dome of the Rock, was built in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, the predicted location of the first and second Temples. Three centuries after the Dome was built the Al-qsa Mosque, a place of worship specifically for Muslim women, was constructed on the Temple Mount near the Dome. (CITATION)

Jerusalem became the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the late 11th century, around the time of the Crusades-a set of several military campaigns that lasted more than a century that were first initiated by Christian Europeans as "magnificent and general act(s) of repentant faith that would culminate in the moral reform and total renewal of Christendom" (Merton, 2008). Jerusalem, an important religious and historic site to Christians, Muslims, and Jews, had been captured by the Muslims and was under their rule. For the English, who were dominantly Christian, this was an abomination. It was in nearby Bethlehem that they believed the Christian Messiah, Jesus, was born, and it was in Jerusalem that he was crucified by the Jews, resurrected three days later, and then ascended into heaven before the eyes of his disciples and other followers. In the year 1095 Pope Urban II presented his idea of a "Church reform" (Knox) to France; he proposed that they take up arms

against the Muslim Turkish Ottomans who controlled Jerusalem and save the city from Muslim control. The First Crusade began in 1097 and two years later the European army finally reached Jerusalem where, after the battle, there was a recorded 70, 000 Muslim casualties. (CITATION)

There were several other crusades that took place after that and the conquests lasted until the year 1291 (Knox). During this time, Jerusalem was controlled several different nations. The Sultan of Damascus razed the city and destroyed the city walls in 1219 and two decades later, after Frederick II of Germany rebuilt them, the emir of Kerak demolished them once again. The Christians conquered the city in 1243 and for the next 20 years, rule passed between the hands of the Khmarezmian Tatars, the Egyptians, and the Ottomans. Unlike under the ruling of the Tatars and the Egyptians, however, the Ottomans introduced peace back into the city. Jews, Christians and Muslims were granted freedom and were allowed to worship as they desired, in peace, alongside one another. Religious freedom was once again allowed in the city and soon after, the Kingdom of Jerusalem fell. After the Crusades, Christians started migrating to the city in order to rebuild it and salvage its history. They built churches throughout the city and converted the Muslim shrines and mosques, including the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

During the 1800s the Ottoman Empire began to decline. Jerusalem's population, made up of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Armenians, did not exceed 8, 000 people. The current Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the middle east can trace it's beginning back to this time when Jewish immigrants started to arrive from Eastern Europe and other areas of the middle east and

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European nations sought control of the city. Christian churches were facing a “ time of religious reform and sent missionaries to the Jerusalem. In addition to the sudden flood of Jews, Europeans, and Christians, archaeologists were also interested in the city for its fascinating history of destruction and war and began flocking to Jerusalem on expeditions.

The Muslim Turkish Ottomans had controlled the majority of the Middle East for centuries but in the early 1900s they declared a military jihad with France, Russians, and Great Britain (Woodward, 2009). In 1917 the British defeated the Ottomans and took control of Jerusalem. The Old City of Jerusalem became an ancient community filled with poverty and the New City, located outside the old walls, became the life of Jerusalem. Violence in the city became the norm as the Arabs began to face anxiety over the new British rule and flood of Jewish immigrants. By 1947 the United Nations suggested that the city should go under international administration and a year later the British left Jerusalem (CITATION). In 1948 the Arab-Israeli war began and residents of several Arab villages were misplaced and massacres occurred throughout the city. The city was divided when the New City joined the state of Israel and the Old City was annexed. By 1950, only a century after Jerusalem’s population was struggling to meet 8, 000 people, the city became the capital of Israel and was the most populous city in the country. (CITATION). (TRANSITION)

Today conflict continues to plague the city; just as violence ruled the city in King Davids’ time, during the crusades, and throughout the 20th century, confrontation continues today amongst the three religions, especially between Muslims and Jews. The famous religious and historical site the <https://assignbuster.com/jerusalem-and-the-temple-mount-religion-essay/>

Temple Mount is the center for much of this conflict. As stated, the site is sacred to both Islam and Judaism and both religions want reign over the area. Although Israel currently controls the city, the Temple Mount is not completely in the possession of the government; as a highly respected and desired site for so many different people, the Mount cannot stay completely in the control of any one religious group, nor can it really be shared amongst them. The Temple Mount is usually open to visitors but recent restrictions were set on who was allowed to enter the site; these restrictions included not allowing entry to the site to men under 50 years old (Sharp, 2010). However, after a Palestinian riot in the city, which resulted in the injuries of more than 100 people, including 14 Israeli troops, the restrictions were lifted (Israel relaxes). Another riot broke out recently when Arab youths targeted Jews praying at the Western Wall. According to an article in the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA), the violence occurred after an Islamic imam encouraged Muslims to secure and protect sacred Islamic ground including the Temple Mount (Temple Mount reopened, 2010).

Muslims have considered the site of the Temple Mount to be sacred since the prophet Muhammad wrote about his Night Journey to Jerusalem which was said to have taken place in 619 CE. It is believed by Islamic tradition that God dictated The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, to Muhammad. There is controversy regarding the interpretation of the Qur'an, but according to most all translations, the location of the Temple Mount is the exact place where Muhammad was brought by the angel Gabriel from the Muslim temple in Mecca on his famous Night Journey. The story continues on to say that the prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus met him in Jerusalem and they prayed

together. Muhammad was offered a drink of wine, milk, and in some translations, water, and he chose the milk. Gabriel then commended him for choosing the correct drink, which represented his choice to follow Islam, the correct religion. Muhammad ascended into heaven and met God face-to-face.

Even with the controversy over the story of the Night Journey, the Temple Mount holds rich religious significance to the Islamic faith. The Dome of the Rock, which stands at the center of the Temple Mount, is an important place of worship to Muslims. The Dome was built around 690 AD by Abd al-Malik. (WHO IS HE?) . Tradition says that the Dome was built “ to commemorate Muhammad’s ascension into heaven after his night journey to Jerusalem (Qur’an 17).” (Hayes, 2010). The Oxford Archaeological Guide to the Holy Land states that Malik’s intentions were actually different; he wanted to show Christians and Jews that Islam was the superior faith (Hayes, 2010). The Dome is a beautiful site to come upon. The famous golden dome had originally been made purely out of gold but was later replaced by copper, then aluminum, and is now covered with gold leaf. It’s exterior is decorated with beautiful Turkish tiles and gleaming white marble. The Dome is outlined with intricate inscriptions of verses from the Qur’an. The interior of the Dome is adorned with picturesque floral designs and other inscriptions apart from those quoting the Qur’an. The Dome of the Rock was designed as carefully as the Temple, as it is an important holy place for Muslims.

AL AQSA MOSQUE

The Mount also holds significant value to both the Jewish and Christian faiths. It is believed by both Jews and Christians that it was at Mount Moriah, where
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the Temple Mount is currently located, that God appeared to the prophet Abraham, an important religious figure to both religions. The significance of the site continues for both religions. In the Old Testament of the Christian Bible and in the Jewish Torah it is written that God gave Abraham a vision of a temple that was to later be built in honor of Him. This same vision was later given to King David who, according to biblical texts, was told by God that he was not fit to build a monument of peace so he passed the plans along to his son Solomon in order for him to build it. The temple was destroyed by the Babylonians rebuilt by Harod, and was destroyed once again by the Romans. The Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall, and the Temple Mount were the only two structures of the Temple to survive the Roman conquest and today both continue to be important religious symbols to the Jewish faith.

The Temple Mount is located above the Kidron Valley and the Tyropoeon Valley, which are to the east and west of the Mount, respectively. At its peak the Mount is 2, 428 feet above sea level. When Harod the Great rebuilt the Temple in 20 BCE he increased the plateau of the Mount by surrounding it with four enormous walls and filling in the spaces left behind. After the expansion the total area of the Mount increased to about 35. 5 acres. It is the southern wall where the Western Wall, an important landmark to the Jewish faith, is located (CITATION). The locations of the First and Second Temples are predicted to be on top of one another (Dolphin, 1995). According to the Christian bible, the inner most room of the Temple of Solomon, the First Temple, was the Holy of Holies, a place where only the high priest was allowed to enter (1 Kings 6: 16). The Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the

Covenant, an important religious symbol to both Jews and Christians. 1 Kings 6: 21, 29-30 (1994) of the Christian bible says that “ Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold...On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. He also covered the floors of both the inner and outer rooms of the temple with gold.” The next room was The Holy Place, and then beyond that were several courtyards; first a Court for the priests, then the Jews and women, then the gentiles. The order of the courtyards was key as they were built in the order of holiness of the people who were allowed to enter each one; the Jews believed that the priests were at a level higher than them and that the gentiles were a step lower. Solomon took great care in building the Temple and it is obvious to see that same respect relayed toward the site then is also given today by the Jewish people, even though the Temple is no longer standing.

The exact position where the first and second temples of the Lord were built are unknown, but three main sites have been suggested by scholars, researchers, and archaeologists. “ The traditional site of the Temple is said to lie beneath or very near to the Moslem shrine known as the Dome of the Rock” (Dolphin, 1995). Dr. Dan Bahat, a respected archaeologist in Jerusalem, defends this statement. The two other sites where the original temple also may have laid are known as the Northern Conjecture and the Southern Conjecture. The Northern Conjecture is located 330 feet north of the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine located on the Temple Mount. According to the Arabs, the predicted temple site is under an area known as

“ The Dome of the Tablets” or “ The Dome of the Spirits” (Dolphin, 1995).

The Southern Conjecture is the newest addition to the predicted traditional temple sites and is located to the south of the Dome of the Rock. Today, “ some rabbis forbid Jews from even setting foot on the area...because as the site of the ancient Jewish temple it is considered holy ground” (Sharp, 2010).

TRANSITION

ADD THIS TO DESCRIPTION OF JERUSALEM: The geographical area known as Palestine sits next to the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River and is intertwined with Israel. The majority of Palestinians are Muslim by religion. The Palestinians have slowly been losing land to Israel and currently do not have a nation to call their own, although they have been advocating for statehood, with backing by the United States. Palestinian beliefs that they are being pushed out of the Old City are at the center of the fears of the will-be state. Palestine wants Jerusalem to be its capital when it is finally given independence as its own country, but because of its history, Israel is not so willing to give it up. Violence between Israelis and Palestinians regarding the site is almost a daily occurrence in Jerusalem and it does not appear to be ending any time soon. It seems as though any time Jews visit the Temple Mount, riots break out (Sharp, 2010). There is still frustration over regulations regarding the Mount, as there have been laws issued abolishing non-Muslim prayer on the Mount. “ In court the state has argues that allowing Jewish prayer on the Mount would spark Muslim violence” (Gershon, 2000). While this is highly likely, swindling the rights of the Jewish people does not appear to be the correct answer to the problem.