

4. Bani Isra'il

In “The Book about Quarrels,” “Narrated Abu Huraira: Two persons, a Muslim and a Jew, quarrelled. The Muslim said, ‘By Him Who gave Muhammad superiority over all the people!’ The Jew said, ‘By Him Who gave Musa [Moses] superiority over all the people!’ At that the Muslim raised his hand and slapped the Jew on the face. The Jew went to the Prophet and informed him of what had happened between him and the Muslim. The Prophet sent for the Muslim and asked him about it. The Muslim informed him of the event. The Prophet said, ‘Do not give me superiority over Musa [Moses], for on the Day of Resurrection all the people will fall unconscious and I will be one of them, but I will be the first to gain consciousness, and will see Musa [Moses] standing and holding the side of the Throne (of Allah). I will not know whether [Musa (Moses)] has also fallen unconscious and got up before me, or Allah has exempted him from that stroke.’ [3:594-O.B.]”¹

In the quarrel, each man antagonistically claimed superiority for himself, his people, and his faith over the other. When they appeared before Muhammad, each one gave the same description of what had taken place. Muhammad rebuked the Muslim who had slapped the Jew, and denied that he himself was superior to Moses.

Those who give Muhammad superiority over Musa are rejecting what Muhammad said. In effect, they are making themselves superior to Muhammad. Muhammad said that these differences will be sorted out on the Day of Resurrection. Certainly it is a rebuke of those who claim that their religious superiority gives them the right to strike others.

This is not a prohibition against argument, but a guide. There is a place for discussion and disagreement, and a way to engage in it. “And dispute not with the People of the Book, save in the most virtuous manner, unless it be those of them who have done wrong. And say, ‘we believe in that which was sent down unto us and was sent down unto you; our God and your God are one, and unto Him are we submitters.’”²

Muhammad’s description of what he will see on the Day of Resurrection when he regains consciousness is very interesting. Moses will already be standing next to the throne of God. More than standing next to it, Moses will be holding on to the side of the throne of God. No one touches the throne of God, but what Muhammad saw does correspond to a passage in the Torah, which is often obscured in translation.

Before they entered into the Holy Land, Moses reminded the new generation that when their fathers had come out of Egypt, Amalek “met you by the way, and struck at your rear, all who were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God.”³ At that time, “the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this for a memorial in a book, and recite it in the ears of Joshua; for I will surely wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. ... Because there is a hand on the throne of the Lord, the

Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”⁴

It is not possible to know if this is the explanation for what Muhammad saw, but he said that there are two possibilities of what will happen on the Day of Resurrection. Either Moses is “exempted from the stroke” that rendered everyone else unconscious, or else Moses regains consciousness before Muhammad does. In either scenario, Muhammad is attributing this superiority to Moses on the Day of Resurrection.

The people whom Moses led are specifically called “the Children of Israel” about forty times in the Quran. Sometimes what is said about them is positive, sometimes it is negative or hostile. The hostile passages are often, though not always, connected to specific historical encounters between Muhammad and various Jewish tribes in the Arabian peninsula. It is essential to recognize these passages as part of the Quranic record, but it is not necessary to emphasize them beyond measure or beyond their historical context.

These passages are similar in tone and content to some of the things that Martin Luther said and, at least partly it would seem, for the same reasons. Each was beginning a new religious venture, and hoped that the Jews with whom he had contact would accept his message and ally with him against his theological and physical enemies. In both cases, that did not happen.⁵

As we have seen, there are Quranic passages that indicate the ongoing legitimacy of the community of Israel and the revelation which God gave to it. The Quran recognizes the Children of Israel as the first community to be connected to God by a covenant, a community which God exalted above all others. It also claims, as do the other Holy Scriptures, that most of the people did not continue in the covenant, but some did.

“O Children of Israel! call to mind My favor which I bestowed on you and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you; and of Me, Me alone, should you be afraid....

“O Children of Israel! call to mind My favor which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations....

“And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel... Then you turned back except a few of you and (now too) you turn aside...”⁶

There is a recognition that, as with all peoples, some among the Children of Israel seek to be what God wants them to be, and some do not. As Isaiah the prophet said, “The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.”⁷ And Muhammad said, “And among the people of Moses is a community that guides by the truth and does justice thereby.”⁸ God remains faithful to His covenant with them and His promises to them.

Some commentators seek to lessen the meaning of such verses. “These various attempts to qualify the reference to this righteous *ummah* among the people of Moses contradict the plain sense of the verse, which indicates that a group among the people of Moses, in the sense of being followers of Jewish Law and ritual, continue to live and

worship righteously according to the teachings of the Torah. Other verses support the literal reading as well, including v. 168, which indicates that there were communities of righteous Jews still existing at the time of the revelation of the Quran (see also 3:113-115, 199 and commentary).”⁹

There are two very important things to note here. 1) God wants the Children of Israel to remember the great favor which He showed in choosing them, and to therefore be faithful to the covenant which He made with them. He then will fulfill what He promised in that covenant. 2) God wants those who receive the message of the Quran to recognize that there are still Jews who are (a) faithful to God’s covenant with them, (b) guided by the truth which God gave them, and (c) doing justice in the earth according to it.

The comment is supported by other passages in the Quran, including some that speak of all the People of the Book: “They are not all alike. Among the People of the Book is an upright community who recite God’s signs in the watches of the night, while they prostrate. They believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin right and forbid wrong, and hasten unto good deeds. And they are among the righteous. Whatsoever good they do, they will not be denied it. And God knows the reverent.”¹⁰ In each community, apparently, God keeps for Himself a remnant.

The Quran also says that the Children of Israel were the first community to receive a Book directly from God. “Then we gave unto Moses the Book, complete for those who would be virtuous, as an exposition of all things....

“And indeed We gave unto Moses the Book — after We had destroyed the former generations — as a [source of] insight for mankind, and guidance and mercy, that haply they may reflect.”¹¹

The Book was given to Moses and Israel, but it is said to be for all mankind. This is similar to the message which God often said to Israel, primarily through Isaiah. “Listen to Me, My people; and give ear to Me, O My nation; for Torah shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment for a light to the people.”¹² “And the remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like the showers upon the grass, that do not delay for man, nor wait for the sons of Adam.”¹³

And in the Quran, God says, “Truly We sent down the Torah, wherein is a guidance and a light, by which the prophets are submitted (unto God), judged those who are Jews, as did the sages and the rabbis, in accordance with such of God’s Book as they were bidden to preserve and to which they were witnesses....”¹⁴ The verse indicates that the prophets, the sages, and the rabbis preserved the Book which God gave to Moses.

“This verse, then, along with vv. 44-47, indicates that the Torah and the Gospel remain valid sources of moral and legal judgment and guidance for Jews and Christians, respectively, even after the coming of the Prophet — indeed, even in his presence. See also v. 68, where the people of the book are likewise enjoined to observe their scriptures.... The Quran states elsewhere that judgment is ultimately the prerogative of

God alone (6:57,62; 12:40,67).”¹⁵

On a particular occasion, some Jews came to Muhammad, asking him to judge a case for them. He responded, “And how is it that they come to me for judgment, when they have the Torah, wherein is God’s Judgment? Yet even after that they turn their backs and they are not believers.”¹⁶ He questioned their motives, because God had already given them a Book with sufficient revelation to decide the case. Muhammad testifies here that in his day, the Jews had the Torah which God had given them.

“The God of the Children of Israel”

In other ways, the Quran is witness to a special relationship between God and the Children of Israel. It speaks of God’s deliverance of the Children of Israel from Pharaoh in Egypt. By the power of God, Moses defeated the sorcerers whom Pharaoh called upon in his defiance of the Lord God of Israel. After that defeat, “They [the sorcerers] said, ‘We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron.’”¹⁷

God used His power to bring about that deliverance. “We carried the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them out of envy and enmity till, when drowning overtook them, he said, ‘I believe that there is no God but the one in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am among those who submit.’”¹⁸

No one would claim that Pharaoh and his sorcerers are the best of witnesses, but the Quran, in essence, presents their statements as true. Pharaoh said, “I believe that there is no God but the one in whom the Children of Israel believe,” and his sorcerers said, “We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron.”

This is similar, though milder, than some things which the Bible records that other Gentile kings said. After God had delivered Daniel from the lion’s den, King Darius the Mede said, “I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom there is to be fear and trembling before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God, enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be to the end.”¹⁹

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon said, “I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language who speak any negligent thing against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego will be cut in pieces, and their houses will be made a dunghill; because there is no other God who can save like this.”²⁰ God had delivered these three exiles of Judah from the fiery furnace.

Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army, highly honored, but afflicted with leprosy. He went to Israel to be healed by Elisha the prophet, who told him to immerse himself in the Jordan River seven times. He despised these “waters of Israel,” but finally did so. When he came out of the water the seventh time, “his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. ...and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel”.²¹

In the Sura, there is presented another aspect of the relationship which the Children of Israel have with God. In response to God's deliverance, Moses said, "Glory be to Thee! I turn unto Thee in repentance, and I am the first of the believers."²² In the Quran, Moses is presented as "a believer," as were others among the Children of Israel such as the prophets, and individuals such as Joseph, David, and Solomon.

"The Prophet said, '*Iman* [Faith] is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books and Messengers, the Last Day and to believe in the Divine Preordainment of all that is good and evil.'²³ In light of the accompanying admonition that Jews are to believe and live according to Torah, it can be said that these elements are all part of standard Jewish faith.²⁴

"The message of the Quran concerning religion is universal. Even when it speaks of *islam*, it refers not only to the religion revealed through the Prophet of Islam, but to submission to God in general. Therefore, in the Quran Abraham and Jesus are also called *muslim* in the sense of "submitter."²⁵ So, though it sounds strange to some, the Quran indicates that there were Jews and Christians who were "muslims" long before there were Muslims who were "muslims". For example, the Quran records that Solomon said of the Queen of Sheba, "...And we were given knowledge before her and we were **submitters**, while that which she worshipped apart from God barred her; verily she was from a disbelieving people."²⁶

Centuries before, God had explained some of the specific behaviors that He wanted from a believing people. "And [remember] when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel, 'Worship none but God; be virtuous toward parents, kinsfolk, orphans, and the indigent; speak to people in a goodly way; and perform the prayer and give the alms.' Then you turned away, save a few of you, swerving aside. And when We made a covenant with you, 'Do not shed the blood of your own, and do not expel your own from your homes.' Then you ratified it, bearing witness."²⁷

In this covenant, there were actions that God required of the Children of Israel, and promises He made to them. "God had made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We raised among them twelve chieftains. And God said, 'I am with you! Surely, if you perform the prayer, and give alms, and believe in My messengers and support them, and lend unto God a goodly loan, I shall surely absolve you of your evil deeds, and shall cause you to enter Gardens with rivers running below. But whosoever among you disbelieves thereafter, surely he has strayed from the right way.'²⁸

In sum, on common ground with the Scriptures in Hebrew and in Greek, the Quran presents God as the Creator, the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, the God who delivered the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt and made a covenant with them which will be wholly fulfilled in the days to come. He is presented as the God who sent His prophets to call people to kindness and justice, and to do good to parents, family, and the orphans and the needy. He forbids killing those of one's own family or refusing to

provide for and protect them.

God is presented as telling people to call on Him in prayer, to give a certain amount for the poor, and to speak kindly to all. He knows that people will commit evil deeds, but is willing to forgive them. The passage specifically gives as one reason for that forgiveness that they use their wealth to provide practical support for those who work for Him — in the case of the Children of Israel, the Torah specifically designates an obligation to the priests/*kohanim* and the tribe of Levi, who served them.

The Land of the Children of Israel

In the Quran, God calls the Children of Israel “My People,” and says that He gave them things which He gave to no other people. As part of that, He speaks of the land which He gave to them. “And when Moses said unto his people, ‘O my people! Remember God’s Blessing upon you, when He appointed prophets among you, and appointed you kings, and gave you that which He gave unto no other in all the worlds. O My people! enter the Holy Land which God has prescribed for you and do not turn back, or you shall become losers.’”²⁹

“It is interesting that the Quran describes this land as blessed in a universal way, and as the ‘Holy Land’ — a term used widely today in Judeo-Christian contexts for this land, but one that is used only very rarely in the Bible itself. The exact location of this *Holy Land* mentioned in the Quran is unclear. Various reports locate it in Sinai, Syria, Jericho, or an area encompassing parts of Syria, Palestine, and Jordan (R, T, Z); others identify it simply as the land of the Jerusalem sanctuary (*al-bayt al-muqaddas*; Z) Al-Tabari claims that the exact location is unknowable, but that it lies somewhere between the Euphrates and Nile rivers (although not encompassing all of this area).”³⁰

The precise borders of modern nations, and the cartographers who record them, did not exist then. So it was normal to sometimes refer to large land areas. Though some commentators and some moderns may not know the location of this “Holy Land” that God gave to the Children of Israel, it is certain that Muhammad did. The Holy Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek are geographically specific, as are countless historical sources.

“And We bequeathed unto the people who were oppressed the eastern and western parts of the land that We blessed. And the most beautiful Word of thy Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because they were patient. And we demolished all that Pharaoh and his people had wrought and that which they used to build. [5:21]”³¹

The commentators adopt different views. “*The land that We blessed* is thought by many to refer to the area encompassing Syria and Palestine (*Sham* in Arabic; T, Ts), since this is the land understood elsewhere in the Quran as being ordained for the Israelites (5:21), but not necessarily only the Israelites, since it is holy and *blessed for all peoples* (21:71); others claim that *the land* here refers to the domain of Pharaoh in Egypt (R, T,

Ts) or to both Egypt and Syria/Palestine (R, Ts, Z).”³²

For those who say that *the land* refers to the domain of Pharaoh in Egypt, numerous difficult questions arise. When did God prescribe and bequeath land in Egypt to the Children of Israel? What land in Egypt was it? When did the Children of Israel have kings there?

Why did God bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt to take them to their land of inheritance if that land was actually in Egypt? When will He settle them in the land that He bequeathed to them in Egypt? In what text, or in what sense, does God designate Egypt as “The land that We blessed”? or “the Holy Land”? If “the Holy Land” that God gave to the Children of Israel refers to a land other than the land of Israel, why was the Night Journey of Muhammad to Jerusalem? In sum, nothing in the Quran conflicts with “the Holy Land” being the land of Israel.

Since the people of Israel had not yet entered the Holy Land when Moses spoke to them, this specific Quranic text (5:20-21) must be understood in part as a prophetic reminder recorded for future generations. For Moses, the kings and prophets were in Israel’s future. When God spoke to Muhammad, it was more than two thousand years after the Children of Israel first entered that land. The Quran speaks from the vantage point of being able to look back on that time. A lot of history took place during those years — they had kings and prophets there, were driven off the land twice and restored once. The Quran affirms this history of the Children of Israel in the Holy Land.

As part of the historical background, the Quran speaks of God bringing the Children of Israel out of Egypt, across “the sea” in which Pharaoh and his army were drowned.³³ There are only two possibilities: the Red Sea or the Mediterranean Sea. They walked through “the sea” to land on the other side. That leaves only one possibility.

The Quran records that the Children of Israel did not want to then obey God, enter the land He prescribed for them, and fight the people who were already there. “They said, ‘O Moses! In this land are a domineering people. We shall not enter it till they leave it. But if they leave it, we shall enter.... O Moses! We shall never enter it, so long as they remain therein. So go forth, thou and thy Lord, and fight! We shall sit here.’”³⁴

The Quran records different events that took place while the Children of Israel were in the wilderness after coming out of Egypt: the Golden Calf, Moses bringing forth water by striking the rock with his staff, God sending manna and quails, etc.³⁵ From there, God brought them into the Holy Land and destroyed the peoples who were already there.

Elsewhere, a general comment directed to Muslims gives God’s explanation of why He decrees the destruction of the earlier inhabitants of a land. “We have indeed destroyed generations before you when they did wrong, and their messengers brought them clear proofs, but they would not believe. Thus do We recompense the guilty people. Then We made you vicegerents upon the earth after them, that We might observe how you behave.”³⁶

To the peoples already living in a land, the Muslims were invaders and then conquerors. But from God's perspective given in the Quran, the earlier inhabitants were dispossessed and destroyed because they did not heed the warnings that God had sent to them; "they would not believe."

In Torah, God spoke to Abra[ha]m in the land of Canaan and promised him that the land would belong to his descendants forever.³⁷ At that time, the peoples of the land were already guilty enough to be destroyed, but God continued to give them the opportunity to turn from their sins. And in God's purposes, He wanted the Children of Abra[ha]m who would inherit the land to know the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. God told Abra[ha]m, "Know for a certainty that your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them; and they will afflict them four hundred years... But in the fourth generation they will come here again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."³⁸

The earlier inhabitants of the land surely saw the Children of Israel as invaders and conquerors, but those inhabitants were dispossessed and destroyed because they did not heed the warnings that God had sent to them. In the Quran, "Moses said unto his people, 'Seek help from God and be patient. Truly the land belongs to God; He bequeaths it to whomsoever He will among His servants. And the end belongs to the reverent.'"³⁹ As owner of all the earth, God prescribed the Holy Land for Moses and his people, and then settled the Children of Israel in it.

"Certainly We settled the Children of Israel in a sure settlement, and We provided them with good things. ..." ⁴⁰ Life in Egypt as slaves was not "sure," and it was filled with bitterness rather than "good things". "A *sure settlement* refers to a comely place in dwellings in Palestine or Syria (Bd, Ts)."⁴¹

But God requires holiness from all peoples, especially in His land. While Israel was still in the wilderness, He warned them about the sins of the tribes of Canaan: "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and are not to commit any of these abominations; neither anyone of your own nation, nor any foreigner who lives among you... so that the land does not vomit you out also, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. "⁴² Foreigners may live in the land, but they must be holy, or they too will be cast out.

Five hundred years later, after King Solomon had built the Temple in Jerusalem, God appeared to him at night and said: "But if you turn away, and forsake My statutes and My commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them. Then I will pluck them up by the roots from My land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for My Name, I will cast from My sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations."⁴²

The Night Journey of Muhammad to that House is the reason the Islamic world has more than an historical interest in the land of the Children of Israel. "Jerusalem is considered the third most sacred site for Muslims primarily because of the Prophet's

miraculous journey to the city and his heavenly ascension from the site of the ancient Jewish Temple located there. In fact, after the Prophet's return from the Night Journey and for several years thereafter, the Prophet and the Muslim community prayed in the direction of Jerusalem, making the city the first direction of prayer (*al-qiblat al-ula*), which also contributes to its sacred status in Islam."⁴⁴

In 2003, "Ahmad Muhammad 'Arafa, a columnist for the Egyptian weekly *Al-Qahira*, which is published by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, wrote an article rejecting the established Islamic doctrine that the Prophet Muhammad's celebrated 'Night Journey' (Koran 17:1) took him from Mecca to Jerusalem. 'Arafa, presenting a new analysis of the Koranic text, asserts that the Night Journey in *Surat Al-Isra*' (that is, "the *Sura* of the Night Journey") in the Koran does not refer to a miraculous journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, but to the Prophet's emigration (Hijra) from Mecca to Medina.

"It should be noted that the belief that Muhammad's Night Journey (Koran 17:1) was a miraculous journey to Jerusalem is one of the most important foundations of the sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam. There is an extensive body of Islamic traditions related to this belief, and these are explicitly or implicitly rejected by the author. This article constitutes a dramatic departure from a standard Islamic doctrine. The fact that this article was published in a government journal adds to its political significance."⁴⁵

If the author's contention were true, it would undermine a significant aspect of Islamic tradition, and render negligible the connection of Islam to Jerusalem. But it has not been accepted as true. The traditions remain integral in defining Islamic faith. Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer before the Night Journey took place, and it remained so for about a year and a half after it.

One day, Muhammad changed his direction and prayed towards Mecca. One of those who was there with him then told others. "By Allah, I testify that I have offered Salat with Allah's Messenger facing Makka (Ka'ba).' (Hearing that,) those people changed their direction towards the Ka'ba immediately. Jews and the people of the Scriptures used to be pleased to see (the Prophet) facing Jerusalem in Salat but when he changed his direction towards the Ka'ba, (during the Salat), they disapproved of it."⁴⁶

Up until that time, followers of Muhammad prayed as "Jews and the people of the Scriptures" did, facing Jerusalem, which was the center of their faith. His change of direction was a distinction and separation from what had been before. The "Jews and the people of the Scriptures... disapproved of it."

The Quranic description of the Night Journey of Muhammad begins: "Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. Truly He is the Hearer, the Seer."⁴⁷ It then continues by speaking of some of the things that God did with Israel, indicating that these are "Our signs" that relate to "the Farthest Mosque".

That is why "This *surah* is also sometimes referred to as the *Surat Bani Isra'il* (II),

because vv. 2-8 discuss the Children of Israel and the historical destruction that came upon them and their Temple...”⁴⁸ Muhammad visited the “Farthest Mosque,” a holy place which he did not establish, a holy place which existed before his visit. The visit is presented as part of the continuity of God working in the world.

Today, the Al-Aksa Mosque commemorates the location of that “Farthest Mosque”. It is situated on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the location of the First Temple, which Solomon built, and the Second Temple, which was begun in the days of Ezra, and completed in the days of Herod.

Jews and Christians were the primary communities of believers which the Quran recognizes as having been established by God before the Muslims. Both of them recognized the Temple in Jerusalem as the holy place. This flows from “Jerusalem” being mentioned more than 800 times in the Bible as a whole. It was the focal point for all Israel, including Jesus and his followers. (It is mentioned another 150 times as “Zion”.)

That is why Surah 17 continues by speaking of the disobedience and exile of the Children of Israel. “And We gave unto Moses the Book, and We made it a guidance for the Children of Israel — ‘Take no guardian apart from Me ...And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Book, *Surely you will work corruption upon the earth twice, and you will ascend to great height.*’ So when the other promise comes to pass, they will make wretched your faces, and enter the Temple as they entered it the first time, and utterly ruin whatsoever they overtake.”⁴⁹

In all the Holy Scriptures, God says He will hold the Children of Israel accountable for their lack of faithful obedience; as He will do with all peoples. We are told that the Children of Israel will twice be removed from the land because of their sins, but eventually exalted. Because of their sins, the Temple will be ruined two different times.

The Talmud asks, “Why was the first Sanctuary destroyed? Because of three [evil] things which prevailed there: idolatry, immorality, bloodshed.... But why was the second Sanctuary destroyed, seeing that in its time they were occupying themselves with Torah, [observance of] precepts, and the practice of charity? Because therein prevailed hatred without cause. That teaches you that groundless hatred is considered as of even gravity with the three sins of idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed together.”⁵⁰

The Torah contains prophecy indicating that God will remove the Children of Israel from the land twice for their rebellion against Him. Moses said, “Now it will come to pass, when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, then you will return to the Lord your God, and will obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul; then the Lord your God will turn your captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the nations, where the Lord your God has scattered you.”⁵¹ In the Torah, it is said that God will bring them back to

the land and back to Himself after their rebellion, because of His compassion.

At the time of Muhammad, there were extant Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures from different countries from earlier centuries. They all clearly identified the Land of Israel as the land which God gave to the Children of Israel. There, as the Quran says, He gave them prophets and kings, and a future that included disobedience, hardship, and restoration.

“O Children of Israel! Remember My Blessing which I bestowed upon you, and fulfill My covenant, and I shall fulfill your covenant, and be in awe of Me.”⁵² In his commentary on this verse, Abdullah Yusuf Ali explains this as: “I have fulfilled My part of the Covenant by bringing you out of the land of bondage and giving you Canaan, the land ‘flowing with milk and honey’ how have you fulfilled your part of the Covenant?”⁵³

The Bible and the Quran say that God gave the land to the Children of Israel. Some people, even some who claim to be believers, do not believe what it says. To them, the Quran says, “Have you considered if it is from God and you disbelieve in it, though a witness from the Children of Israel bore witness to the like thereof, then believed in it, while you waxed arrogant? Surely God guides not wrongdoing people.”⁵⁴

Some people are so rigid in their minds and hearts that they refuse to believe that God does not require exactly the same things from everyone. But as the Quran says, “...I believe in that which God has sent down as a Book, and I have been commanded to establish justice among you. God is our Lord and your Lord. Unto us our deeds, and unto you your deeds; there is no argument between us and you. God will gather us together and unto Him is the journey’s end.”⁵⁵

During Muhammad’s lifetime, almost all the Children of Israel were living dispersed among the nations. Significant communities of them lived in the Arabian peninsula. It is in that situation that the Quran says that God will fulfill His covenant with Israel, which includes it becoming a light to the nations. Though Jerusalem has a history where peace is sporadic at best, the prophets say it will point the way to peace in the future. “And God calls unto the Abode of Peace, and guides whomsoever He will unto a straight path.”⁵⁶

There are many people who think that God is irrelevant to human affairs and the history which they produce. As might be expected, all three Holy Scriptures present a different view. They claim that God rules over human history.

FOOTNOTES

1. Sahih Al-Bukhari 43. The Book about Quarrels. Chapter 43. What is mentioned about people, and quarrels between the Jews and the Muslims, 1108, p.522.
2. Quran, The Spider/*al-Ankabut* 29:46
3. Deuteronomy 25:18.
4. Exodus 17:14,16
5. In Luther’s case, his hatred of the Jews preceded his split with the Roman Catholic Church. It appears full-blown in his *Commentary on Romans*, which he began to teach at

the University of Wittenberg in 1515, two years before he posted his 95 theses. See, for example, his comments on Romans 11, especially on verse 28.

6. Quran, The Cow/*al-Barqarah* 2:40, 2:47, 2:83
7. Isaiah 10:21
8. Quran, The Heights/*al-Araf* 7:159
9. *The Study Quran*, Comment on 7:159, at 27008.
10. Quran, The House of Imran/*Al-Imran* 3:113-115
11. Quran, The Cattle/*al-Anam* 6:154; 28. Ta. Sin. Mim. 28:43
12. Isaiah 51:4.
13. Micah 5:6 in the Hebrew text, 5:7 in others. The word translated as “Listen” is *ha’azinu*, a very important word which also appears in Dt. 32:1-5: “Give ear, O you heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.”
14. Quran, The Table Spread/*al-Maidah* 5:44
15. *The Study Quran*, comment on 5:44 at 17724 and 17759.
16. Quran, The Table Spread/*al-Ma’idah* 5:43
17. Quran, The Heights/*al-Araf* 7:121-122
18. Quran, Jonah/*Yunus* 10:90
19. Daniel 6:27 Hebrew.
20. Daniel 3:28-29, cf. Daniel 2:46-47, 4:31-32.
21. 2Kings 5:14-15
22. Quran, The Heights/*al-Araf* 7:143
23. *The Pillars of Islam and Iman*, Shaikh Muhammad bin Jamil Zeno, (Dar-us-Salam Publications: Riyadh, 1996/1416) , p.19
24. This would apply to the extant Torah manuscripts from before the time of Muhammad.
25. *The Study Quran*, “The Message of the Quran” at 703.
26. Quran, The Ants/*al-Naml* 27:42-43
27. Quran, The Cow/*al-Barqarah* 2:83-84
28. Quran, The Table Spread/*al-Maidah* 5:12
29. Quran, The Table Spread/*al-Maidah* 5:20-21
30. *The Study Quran*, comment on 5:21 at 17178.
31. Quran, The Heights/*al-Araf* 7:137
32. *The Study Quran*, comment on 7:137 at 26453.
33. cf. Quran, Jonah/*Yunus* 10:90
34. Quran, The Table Spread/*al-Maidah* 5:22,24
35. E.g. Quran, The Heights/*al-Araf* 7:160
36. Quran, Jonah/*Yunus* 10:13-14
37. E.g., Genesis 13:14-17
38. Genesis 15:13-16
39. Quran, The Heights/*al-Araf* 7:128
40. Quran, Jonah/*Yunus* 10:93
41. *The Study Quran*, comment on 10:93 at 32388.

42. Leviticus 18: 26.28
43. 2Chronicles 7:19-20
44. *The Study Quran*, comment on 17:1 at 40249.
45. Translated and published in MEMRI, Sept. 2, 2003
<https://www.memri.org/reports/egyptian-ministry-culture-publication-prophet-muhammads-night-journey-was-not-jerusalem>
46. Sahih Bukhari Volume 001, Book 002, Hadith Number 039, Chapter 27. [38] “The Salat is a part of faith,” p. 71
47. Quran, The Night Journey/*al-Isra* 17:1
48. *The Study Quran*, commentary at 40037.
49. Quran, The Night Journey/*al-Isra* 17:2,4,7
50. Talmud Yoma 9b
51. Deuteronomy 30:1-3. See chapters 28-30.
52. Quran, The Cow/*al-Barqarah* 2:40
53. *Quran English Translation & Commentary*, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Note C58 on verse 2:40, p.25
<http://www.quran4u.com/Tafsiraya/002%20Baqarah.pdf>
54. Quran, The Sand Dunes/ *al-Ahqaf* 46:10
55. Quran, Counsel/*al-Shura* 42:15
56. Quran, Jonah/*Yunus* 10:25