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### **Locating Jerusalem in Theology and Practice during the Crusades**

The belief in the holiness of Jerusalem is shared by the faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The city enjoys a unique place in the imaginations of the members of Abrahamic faiths and features prominently within the network of myths that make up the theology of the three religions. Yet, the idea of Jerusalem's holiness does not change the fact that Jerusalem is, in essence, an economically unimportant city—it has an inconvenient location and is severely lacking in resources. The city's theological importance seldom has significance especially when its rulers are faced with threats to their more important assets. One of the later Ayyubid rulers of Jerusalem chose to destroy its fortifications rather than lose important resources fighting for the city.<sup>1</sup> Jerusalem's doctrinal significance, of course, never diminishes but the way rulers or groups emphasize its importance is different at different times.

Due to its location, Jerusalem was never a major center of trade or intellectual life. This is true even of Crusader Jerusalem—although propaganda about the city was at the center of their political ideology, Crusaders never developed lasting institutions there. Intellectuals such as William of Tyre—one of the most important chroniclers of the Latin East—had to spend several years of study at institutes in the West.<sup>2</sup> Islam considers Jerusalem to be its third holiest city, yet the immediate Muslim reaction to the Latin takeover

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Little "Jerusalem under the Ayyubids and Mamluks 1187-1516 AD", in Jerusalem in History, 176

<sup>2</sup> Adrian J. Boas, Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades, New York: Routledge, 2001, 14

of Jerusalem was unenthusiastic and slow.<sup>3</sup> The Holy City was never a center of learning for Muslims either, although Saladin attempted to establish Islamic centers in an attempt to consolidate his hold on it after his conquest of in 1187.<sup>4</sup> Muslims also had lost sight of the importance of Jerusalem before Nur ad-Din Zengi. Half a century after the Crusader takeover of the city in 1099, Jerusalem was used as a rallying point, by Nur ad-Din, to declare Jihad against the Latin Christians-- at this point Muslim leaders began to understand the threat the Crusaders posed to their power in the region. Similarly, Jews exhibited a pattern of shifting attitudes about the importance of Jerusalem. Jews in the West seem to have valued and placed more importance on Jerusalem than those living in the Mediterranean. Jerusalem's position, as the Holy City, is constantly in flux.

### **The Economy of Jerusalem**

The hard reality of surviving in Jerusalem must have been driven home to the Crusaders after the conquest. They found themselves in a city they believed to be precious ideologically—the reality of Jerusalem, however, did not match their vision of it. It is not clear if the Franks were disappointed in the city they so looked forward to rescuing, but not many Crusaders remained after the conquest. Thus, William of Tyre describes the departure of the Franks after their success in the First Crusade “They broke into deserted cities whose few inhabitants scattered far apart... The result was that some stealthily, and many quite openly, abandoned the holdings which they had won and began to return to their own land”.<sup>5</sup> It was clear to

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<sup>3</sup> Nikita Eliseeff, “The Reaction of the Syrian Muslims After the Foundation of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem”, in Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth Century Syria, ed. Maya Shatzmiller. (New York: EJ Brill, 1993), 162.

<sup>4</sup> Sabri Jaffar, “Suq al-Ma’rifa: An Ayyubid Shrine in al-Haram al-Sharif” in *Muqarnas*(vol 15, 1998), 72

<sup>5</sup> William of Tyre in Mustafa Hiyari “Crusader Jerusalem 1099-1187”, in Jerusalem in History, ed. Kamil J. Asali (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 142.

those who fought for the city that it was one, in which, it was difficult to survive economically.<sup>6</sup> Most of the Franks who came over for Crusading were unskilled peasants used to a primarily agricultural life. Comparatively, Jerusalem was an urban city dependent on crafts and services needed by pilgrims.<sup>7</sup> Those who chose to stay in the East departed for the coastal towns.

The desertion of Jerusalem is even more dramatic when one considers that after its capture the Crusaders all but annihilated the native population.<sup>8</sup> It was named the capital of the Latin Kingdom and described in documents as *gloriosa*. These terms no doubt came from reminiscences of the biblical period as Jerusalem soon became a city only to be visited on pilgrimage and revered from afar. Even though the Holy City was revered, most people chose to reside elsewhere in order to make their livelihoods.<sup>9</sup> William of Tyre states that only one quarter of the city was inhabited while Jaffa, Acre, Tyre and Beirut bustled with new life.<sup>10</sup> Jerusalem was difficult to live in because of its limited water supply and non-strategic location. This is confirmed in the words of Theoderich, a pilgrim to Jerusalem ca. 1187, just before the Crusaders were expelled by Saladin:

The houses which are covered with lofty piles of carefully wrought stonework, are not finished with high-pitched roofs after our style but are level and flat. The people catch the rainwater that falls on them and store it up in cisterns for their own use—they use no other water, because they have none. Wood, suitable for building or for fires, is expensive there, because Mount Libanus—the only mountain that abounds in cedar, cypress, and pine wood—is a long way off from them, and they cannot approach it for fear of the attacks of the infidels.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, 142

<sup>7</sup> Mustafa Hiyari, “Crusader Jerusalem 1099-1187”, 142

<sup>8</sup> Joshua Prawer, *Crusader Institutions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 88

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, 87

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 89

<sup>11</sup> Theoderich. *Guide to the Holy Land*. (New York: Italica Press, 1986), 6

Even though Theoderich is respectful whenever he speaks of Jerusalem in his book, he acknowledges the economic limitations of the city. It is obvious why cities other than Jerusalem became major gathering points for the Crusaders when one understands the limitations placed on Jerusalem because of a lack of natural and commercial resources—the resources cities such as Acre and Tyre possessed. These cities had an independent water supply, ports and strategic locations for trade routes.<sup>12</sup> Because Jerusalem lacked these qualities, it did not attract the community of Italian merchants who were an important presence in the Latin East. These ‘communes’ of Italians were in every other city occupied by Franks in the region. Their absence further points to Jerusalem’s marginal status in economic matters. The Italians received privileges in Jerusalem equaling those they were given in other Latin cities but they simply chose not to conduct business there.<sup>13</sup> The attitude of the Jews is also similar to the Crusaders—as reflected in the Geniza letters of the eleventh century, Jews acknowledge Jerusalem to be a poor city, one in which trade was seldom profitable.<sup>14</sup>

For Muslim leadership, Jerusalem became much more appealing after the Crusader takeover than before it. The city was fairly neglected, first by the Seljuks and then by the Fatimids. However, after Saladin recaptured it for the Muslims he attempted to establish cultural institutions to make the city of lasting importance.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Roland Broadhurst trans., The Travels of Ibn-Jubayr. (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2007), 318-325.

<sup>13</sup> Praver 95-97

<sup>14</sup> SD Goitein, Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 107

<sup>15</sup> Donald P. Little “Jerusalem Under the Ayyubids and the Mamluks 1187-1516 AD” in Jerusalem in History, ed. Kamil J. Asali (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 179

The economic life or lack of economic life in the city is a reason why Jerusalem, as we will subsequently see, rarely provoked a sustained amount of interest, on the part of any given community. Jerusalem was a hard city to survive in for the Franks, especially immediately after their arrival in Europe. It was an urban city for a population that was overwhelmingly agricultural. Still, it never seemed to be a city that was overly interesting to merchants whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim.<sup>16</sup> This explains why in times of relative peace, Jerusalem was neglected by all communities. After the Franks settled in the Levant they began to cast their eyes in the direction of Fatimid wealth because they realized that Jerusalem alone would not satisfy their economic needs.<sup>17</sup>

Jerusalem, in the case of the Crusaders, exercised power as an image. It was an important motivator for bringing the Crusaders over from Europe, but the city's real handicaps—its lack of water supply, the infertility of its lands, its inconvenient location as relates to trade routes<sup>18</sup>—could not compensate for the glamour of Egyptian cities. For the Latin nobility, Jerusalem was a symbol, a rallying point around which to gather their troops. But in reality, Jerusalem, as a city, is a cipher—unable to pay off the vast debts that are incurred in order to win it. Despite these economic deficiencies Jerusalem was important ideologically and acted as a motivator for each community: in the case of the Franks to come to the Middle East, in the case of the Muslims to wage Jihad and in the case of Jews it is the city they look back on as their spiritual home.

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<sup>16</sup> Goitein Letters107

<sup>17</sup> Hiyari 168

<sup>18</sup> Theoderich, 5

## Urban II at Clermont and his presentation of Jerusalem

Medieval Christians believed that Jerusalem was the center of the world where the continents and seas meet<sup>19</sup>. The city was believed to be holier than any other. According to Augustine, the most widely read Christian theologian in the Medieval West, Jerusalem was the city of God.

Augustine draws a distinct line between the heavenly Jerusalem and other material cities of the world.

Two cities... have been created by two loves: that is, the earthly by love of self extending even to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending even to contempt of self... The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, "Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head".<sup>20</sup>

Jerusalem is the city that lives for God. The other cities live for material things. They are temporal, while Jerusalem is eternal because of its special relationship to God. Even though Augustine was speaking allegorically, these ideas were often interpreted literally. When Pope Urban II called for the Crusades at Clermont, he presented Jerusalem in this way, described by Augustine as a unique place with a unique destiny.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Theoderich, Guide to the Holy Land, (New York: Italica Press, 1986), xx

<sup>20</sup> Augustine in Ann Meyer, Medieval Allegory and the Building of New Jerusalem. (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2003), 62

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that no one knows exactly what Urban II said at Clermont, most versions of his speech were written well after the First Crusade and the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. The following versions of his speech would most likely represent the way Latin Christians felt about Jerusalem at the time they were written.

Robert of Rheims was a monk who put together his chronicle of the First Crusade ca. 1107 using several different sources.<sup>22</sup> In his version of, Urban II's speech the description of Jerusalem is otherworldly, another version of paradise.

Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above others, like another paradise of delights. This, the Redeemer of the human race has made illustrious by His advent, has beautified by residence, has consecrated by suffering, has redeemed by death, has glorified by burial. This royal city, therefore, situated at the centre of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God. She seeks therefore and desires to be liberated.<sup>23</sup>

It is the "centre of the world", a place made perfect by the sacrifices of the "Redeemer". Fighting for Jerusalem is, according to this interpretation of Urban II, not a large sacrifice since going to Jerusalem would be akin to going to Paradise after death. One of the great benefits of Crusading is the remission of sin but Robert of Rheims's version of Urban II's speech describes Jerusalem, not the remission of sin, as the ultimate prize for winning the war against Muslims.

Similarly in Baldric of Dol's speech, Jerusalem is the place where Christ sacrificed his life for Christians and is therefore a place that believers are obligated to protect and defend.<sup>24</sup>

Of holy Jerusalem, brethren, we dare not speak, for we are exceedingly afraid and ashamed to speak of it. This very city, in which as you all know, Christ Himself suffered for us, because our sins demanded it, has been reduced to the pollution of paganism and, I say it to our disgrace, withdrawn from the service of God... And yet in that place rested the Lord; there He died for us; there He was buried. How

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<sup>22</sup> Edward Peters ed., The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fucler of Chartres and other Source Materials. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 26

<sup>23</sup> Robert of Rheims in Edward Peters ed., The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fucler of Chartres and other Source Materials. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 28

<sup>24</sup> Baldric of Dol was the Archbishop of Dol in the early twelfth century. He also pieced together his version from several other narratives such as *Gesta*..

precious would be the longed for, incomparable place of the Lord's burial even if God failed there to perform the yearly miracle!<sup>25</sup>

Love of Christ, in this scenario, explicitly involves love of Jerusalem. The Holy City is the place in which Christ suffered and died for the sins of those very Christians present at Urban's speech. Even without the proof of the miracle of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem is uniquely holy because the body of the Lord is present in its soil. The tone of both versions of Urban II's speech reveals the unique place Jerusalem has in the hearts of Christians.

Furthermore, The Book of Revelations describes Jerusalem as a bride adorned for her husband. The husband is described as "the lamb", presumably Jesus.<sup>26</sup> This gendered take on the city further explains the initial zeal of the Crusaders in attempting to take over the city. The rhetoric around Jerusalem was one in which the city needed protection. Jerusalem is a woman, more importantly the bride of Jesus, who needs protection from dangerous outsiders. It is not necessarily the vileness of Muslims that arouses the Crusaders to set off for the Levant but the unique place Jerusalem holds in the imaginations of Christians.

### **Jerusalem in the minds of Latin Christians**

The unique place of Jerusalem in the imaginations of the Crusaders is again confirmed in the accounts of the journeys of those who set out on Crusade. Despite the many setbacks Latin Christians faced on their journey, the ultimate destination and goal of their travel is reaffirmed again and again. The presence of Jerusalem is central in the chronicles of the traveling Crusaders. Robert the Monk, in his account of the First Crusade, talks about a particular battle where the Latin Crusaders fought back Turkish attacks. He talks of the great

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<sup>25</sup> Baldric of Dol in in Edward Peters ed., The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and other Source Materials. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 30

<sup>26</sup> Robert H Gundry, "The New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place for People" in Novum Testamentum, (Vol 29, 1987), 257



losses sustained by the Crusaders and the suffering they endured during the attack. He mentions a particular prayer the Christians said that comforted them on their journey. “But Thou, Lord, wast with us as a strong warrior, and Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. Now we realize God, that Thou art guiding us in Thy strength onto Thy holy habitation. Thy Holy Sepulchre”.<sup>27</sup> The Crusaders even during their greatest losses reminded themselves of their ultimate goal of reaching the Holy City and freeing the Sepulchre. Jerusalem was an important image and motivator during their journey.

After the conquest of Jerusalem, ordinary travelers and pilgrims continued to hold the city in the highest esteem. Jerusalem, after the Crusades, was a major point of pilgrimage and devotion. The traveler, Theoderich, provides a guidebook about the centers of Christian interest in the Holy Land. He describes Jerusalem as holiest of holy sites.

Now, on the very topmost peak of these mountains, as is affirmed by Josephus and Jerome, is placed the city of Jerusalem, which is held to be holier and more notable than all the other cities and places throughout the world, not because it is holy in itself, or by itself, but because it has been glorified by the presence of God himself, and of our Lord Jesus Christ and his holy mother, and by the dwelling there, the doctrine, the preaching and the martyrdom of patriarchs, prophets, Apostles and other holy people.<sup>28</sup>

Theoderich’s description is one consistent with the picture Urban II painted for the Crusaders. It shows that Jerusalem continued to be the center of importance for laypersons, pilgrims and religious authorities. However this devotion was challenged when it came to actual realities of living in the city as discussed above. It cannot be denied, that for the Latin nobility especially, Jerusalem began to be a matter of diminishing importance almost as soon as they began to make conquests within the area of the Holy Land. Baldwin refused to

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<sup>27</sup> Robert the Monk in Carol Sweetenham trans., Robert the Monk’s History of the First Crusade. (Vermont: Ashgate. 2006), 112

<sup>28</sup> Theoderich. Guide to the Holy Land.(New York: Italica Press, 1986), 5

leave after he became ruler of Edessa and Bohemond behaved similarly after the capture of Antioch.<sup>29</sup>

### **Jews and Jerusalem**

Whilst Jews were only marginally involved in the Crusades, it is important to understand the role Jerusalem played both in their theological outlook and their daily reality. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Jerusalem in Judaism. No matter where they live, Jews pray towards Jerusalem, “Three times a day religious Jews pray that God and they may dwell in Jerusalem”.<sup>30</sup> Jews, no matter where they were, hoped to meet and be reunited in Jerusalem with their loved ones and others of their community.<sup>31</sup>

The Code of Maimonides: The Book of Seasons describes the ritual to be performed when a Jew goes to Jerusalem,<sup>32</sup>

A person who beholds the ruined cities of Judea should say, *Thy holy cities are become a wilderness* (Is. 64:9), and should rend his garment. If he beholds the ruins of Jerusalem, he should say, *Jerusalem, a desolation* (*ibid*) and likewise rend his garment. If he beholds the ruins of the Temple, he should say, *Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire* (Is. 64:10), and again rend his garment... he should rend his garment first for the Temple, and then enlarge the rent for Jerusalem... Furthermore one must rend every garment he is wearing, until his heart is laid bare.<sup>33</sup>

The responsibility of the observant Jew, in this liturgical text, is to show mourning for the Holy Land upon beholding it. The observant person is meant to show his mourning deeply enough so that his heart is literally “laid bare”. Jerusalem, one can deduce, from the ritual

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<sup>29</sup> Peters, 70, 84

<sup>30</sup> Leslie J Hoppe, The Holy City: Jerusalem in the Theology of the Old Testament, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000) 1

<sup>31</sup> SD Goitein ““Meeting in Jerusalem”: Expectations in the Letters of the Cairo Geniza” in AJS Review (Vol 4, 1979), 56

<sup>32</sup> Moses Maimonides was a Jewish scholar, born in Cordoba, Spain in 1135.

<sup>33</sup> Solomon Gandz and Hyman Klein trans., The Code of Maimonides III: The Book of Seasons, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 452.

described in the Mishneh Torah, is a city that the Jewish community in exile deeply mourns. Jews are meant to mourn Jerusalem, not just from afar, whilst they are away, but also when they are physically in the city. The loss of the city, even to one physically present, should be acknowledged and felt deeply.

The loss of Jerusalem is especially felt when the Jewish community in exile finds itself in situations where they are especially helpless. Suffering inspires the Jews to remember that they are in strange lands and that they have left their spiritual homeland. This is especially true of the Jews in Europe who were victims of the newfound zeal of Crusaders traveling to the Holy Land. The Hebrew Chronicles of the First Crusade document the immense massacres witnessed by the Jewish communities of the Rhineland. The following account by Solomon bar Simson was recorded in 1140, about the massacre in Mainz in 1096. There is not much known about either the chronicler or the sources of the chronicles—however, Solomon bar Simson's is the fullest of the three Hebrew Chronicles.<sup>34</sup>

The heart of the people of our God grew faint and their spirit flagged, for many sore injuries had been inflicted upon them and they had been smitten repeatedly. They now came supplicating to God and fasting, and their hearts melted within them. But the Lord did as He declared, for we had sinned before Him, and He forsook the sanctuary of Shiloh—the Temple-in-Miniature—which He had placed among His people who dwelt in the midst of alien nations.<sup>35</sup>

The Holy Land in the Jewish community, similar to the Crusading Christian community, is most deeply and reverently remembered in times of extreme crisis. The Rhineland Jews remind themselves that they are a community in the midst of “alien nations”, and that they

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<sup>34</sup> Shlomo Eidelburg ed. & trans., The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades, (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1996),3

<sup>35</sup> Solomon bar Simson in Shlomo Eidelburg ed. & trans., The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades, (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1996), 26.

are in exile from the place that they consider to be their spiritual home. Their explanation for their crisis is that God is angry with them because not only do they “dwell in the midst of alien nations” but because God has withdrawn from their traditional sanctuary. The following is an anonymous account, also of the pogrom in Mainz.

*I shall begin the narrative of past persecution—may the Lord protect us and all of Israel from future persecution. In the year one thousand twenty eight after the destruction of the Temple, this evil befell Israel. The noblemen and counts and the common people in the land of France united and decided to soar up like an eagle, to wage war, and to clear a way to Jerusalem, the Holy City, and to come to the tomb of the crucified one, a rotting corpse that cannot avail and cannot save, being of no worth or significance.<sup>36</sup>*

In this the author traces back the suffering of the Jews to the destruction of the Second Temple. Again, this is a case of Jews remembering the Holy Land and their exiled status from it in a time of extreme duress.

For the Jewish community of the Mediterranean, Jerusalem is a presence but not one that is constantly mourned. In a collection of letters from Jewish traders in the Mediterranean, there is no sense of the palpable regret that the European community seems to exhibit at their distance from the Holy Land. The letter writers in the collection still demonstrate a sense of love and duty towards Jerusalem but none of the mournfulness.

I am writing to you, my dear master—may God prolong your life and make permanent your honored position and your high and noble rank—from Jerusalem, the blessed—may God let me and you and all Israel see its rebuilding and establishment—on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Tevet (January). I am well and prosperous and full of gratitude to God who has let me reach this time and this illustrious view (of the Holy City). I ask God the exalted to grant me and all Israel remission in his

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<sup>36</sup>Mainz Anonymous in Shlomo Eidelberg ed. & trans., The Jews and the Crusaders, 99

mercy, as it is written: "*Come back to me, and I shall come back to you.*"<sup>37</sup>

This letter, from a trader, shows the appropriate awe and love that one might expect for the city but does not have the penitential tone that The Hebrew Chronicles have-- the sense of constant persecution is absent in the Cairo Geniza letters. There is a sense of confidence in the voice of the Mediterranean traders, which is not there in the chronicles of the Jews of the Rhineland. The fear and longing for the Holy Land is not as apparent. Jerusalem, and the area of the Holy Land in general, while not referred to in a derogatory way, is seen with less awe.

You inquired about silk. Here, black and sky blue are mostly in demand, and, indeed all colors. Crimson, however does not sell in Jerusalem, for it is a poor town. In any case, bring them or a part of them, for success is in the hand of God. If Persians happen to arrive, they may buy them.<sup>38</sup>

This particular letter speaks of Jerusalem in a purely monetary fashion. Jerusalem is acknowledged to be a town with few resources and is certainly not an overly profitable town for a merchant. What is striking about this collection of letters is the number of times these traders speak of Jerusalem in a purely business context and not a religious one.

Jews deeply revere Jerusalem. They have unique liturgical ceremonies to show their reverence for the city. The Jewish community also considers Jerusalem to be their spiritual home.<sup>39</sup> In a fashion similar to the Crusader Christians, the Jewish community also looks towards Jerusalem most in times of crisis. The Jews writing and living in the Mediterranean show a deep respect for Jerusalem but not the sort of mourning the persecuted Rhineland Jews do. In each case, it is evident, that the way the Holy City is viewed is dependent on

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<sup>37</sup> SD Goitein, Letters From Medieval Jewish Traders, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 159.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 107

<sup>39</sup> Hoppe, 10

the individual circumstance of the group. There are firm theological traditions about the ways communities should view Jerusalem, but the practice of how a place viewed is subject to their individual circumstance. The Mediterranean traders were also geographically closer to Jerusalem, which would explain their greater pragmatism in regard to the subject of the city.

### **Islam and Jerusalem**

Jerusalem is the third of the three holiest cities in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad is believed to have journeyed from Mecca to Jerusalem and ascended from the site of the Dome of the Rock to Heaven—it is on this journey that Muhammad is believed to have received, from God, the doctrinal principles of Islam.<sup>40</sup> The importance of Jerusalem is further compounded by the fact that Muslim scholars believed themselves to be the inheritors of the monotheistic traditions of Jews and Christians; many quoted Christian and Jewish sources copiously which resulted in some blurring of traditions.<sup>41</sup> Jerusalem, throughout Islamic history, was especially championed by various Sufi saints who extolled the frugality and modestness of the area.<sup>42</sup> They believed that Jerusalem, which was referred to as Sha'm, was the only place on earth where one could eat food free from the taint of greed and strife.<sup>43</sup> Jerusalem was where Sufi saints came to lead ascetic lives. Nevertheless by the time the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem, it was a city not given much administrative or economic importance by political rulers.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Nasser Rabbat, "The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock" in *Muqarnas* (Vol 6, 1989), 12.

<sup>41</sup> SD Goitein "The Sanctity of Jerusalem and Palestine" in Studies in Islamic History and Insitutions (Leiden, EJ Brill, 1968), 142

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, 145

<sup>43</sup> *ibid* 146

<sup>44</sup> Eliséeff 162

By the eleventh century the power in the caliphate of Baghdad lay in the hands of the Seljuk Turks. The Islamic world was in disunity and the creation of the Latin states of Antioch and Edessa by the Franks did not stir up much reaction. Even the conquest of Jerusalem by the Franks from the Fatimids did not garner prolonged attention, except in the case of the cities of Damascus and Baghdad, where the surviving refugees from Jerusalem fled.<sup>45</sup> Ibn al-Athir blames the fall of Jerusalem on indifference and disunity in the Islamic world.<sup>46</sup>

In Ramadan (22 July-20 August 1099) men came to Baghdad from Syria seeking assistance, accompanied by the Cadi Abu Sa'd al-Harawi. They recounted in the Diwan a narrative which brought tears to the eye and pained the heart. They demonstrated in the mosque on Friday and cried out for help, weeping and reducing others to tears.... Because of the severity of their suffering they did not observe the fast... The Caliph ordered the following to be sent on a mission.... They set out for Hulwan but news came to them of the death of Majd al-Mulk al-Balasanani as we shall related, so they returned without achieving any aim or any goal. The rulers were all at variance, as we shall relate, and so the Franks conquered the lands.<sup>47</sup>

The disunity of Muslim leaders indicates that the loss of Jerusalem was not a large priority for the political leadership both in Syria and Baghdad. The fragmentation of the Muslim rulers ensured that Jerusalem stayed safely in Crusader hands, without disturbance, for nearly half a century.<sup>48</sup>

While at the level of military leadership there were no attempts to regain Jerusalem, a member of the *ulama* called Ali as-Sulami saw the Frankish occupation of Syria in proto-colonial terms. He believed that the Franks were on a mission to occupy the Levant

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<sup>45</sup> Eliséeff, 164

<sup>46</sup> Ibn al-Athir was born in 1160 and lived a scholarly life. He was in Saladin's army for a time.

<sup>47</sup> Ibn al-Athir in DS Richards trans., The Chronicles of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period, (Vermont: Ashgate, 1988), 22.

<sup>48</sup> Eliséeff, 165

permanently and urged the Muslim leadership to action.<sup>49</sup> As-Sulami was speaking shortly after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Franks. His speech is prophetic as he predicts the rapid spread of the influence of Crusaders in the region.

They looked out over Syria, on separated kingdoms, disunited hearts and differing views linked with hidden resentment, and with that their desires became stronger and extended to what they all saw. They did not stop, tireless in fighting the jihad against the Muslims. The Muslims were sluggish, and avoiding fighting them and they were reluctant to engage in combat until they conquered more than their greatest hopes had conceived of the country, and destroyed and humiliated many times the number of people that they had wished. Still now they are spreading further in their efforts, assiduous in seeking an increase. Their desires are multiplying all the time because of what appears to them abstinence from opposing them...<sup>50</sup>

As-Sulami blames the success of the Franks on both a lack of religious zeal from the Muslim side and a lack of unity on the part of Muslim leadership. He accurately states that the Franks were engaged in a holy war, a point that the larger Muslim leadership seems to have missed. It is important to realize, however, that As-Sulami's speech contains very few references to Jerusalem itself. He is concerned firstly by the presence of the Franks in the Holy Land, secondly that that presence may make itself permanent, thirdly he is worried by the lack of action in the Muslim world. He criticizes the military leadership stating, "The most astonishment is at a sultan who takes pleasure in life or continues living as he is with the shadows of this calamity, of which the outcome is conquest by these blasphemers".<sup>51</sup> He is astonished at the inability of the Muslims to stand up against the invaders more than he is concerned with the conquest of the city itself.

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<sup>49</sup> Ali as-Sulami in Niall Christie trans., "A Translation of Extracts from the Kitab al-Jihad", (<http://www.arts.cornell.edu/prh3/447/texts/Sulami.html>)

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*,

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*



As-Sulami, of course, mentions Jerusalem in his declaration but only to claim ownership of it for Muslims “From this is proof of its (Jerusalem) being (supposed to) return to the Muslims, and that a group will be in it. These are their characteristics and status, and will be until God’s power comes. The hadith is sufficiently authenticated”.<sup>52</sup> For as-Sulami, Jerusalem seems to be a parenthetical. He is eager to establish ownership over it but he is more concerned with the condition and status of the Muslim world than in contemplating the theological importance of the city. In any case, As-Sulami’s words did not have much impact on his contemporaries.<sup>53</sup>

His ideology of Jihad was developed and supported half a century later by Nur ad-Din Zengi.<sup>54</sup> Nur-ad Din emphasized the ideology of Jihad, originally suggested by As-Sulami, he went further by emphasizing the idea of martyrdom, turning the Muslim who dies fighting into a *shahid*<sup>55</sup>. Furthermore, Nur ad-Din’s Jihad emphasized four objectives: “the ‘liberation’ of Jerusalem; the re-establishing of the political unity of Islam and the diffusion of Muslim ideology”<sup>56</sup>. It was with the arrival of Nur ad-Din that Jerusalem, again, begins to take a central place in the Muslim imagination.

Reconquest and unity were two of the slogans that appeared in the written propaganda of the time. Nur ad-Din did not live to complete the Jihad which he helped set the foundation for. However, Saladin, Nur ad-Din’s successor, continued in his mission to reconquer the territory lost to the Franks. Jerusalem was central to Saladin’s goals, as described by his biographer, Baha ad-Din ibn Shabab, “Now, towards Jerusalem the sultan

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid*

<sup>53</sup> Eliséeff, 165

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, 166

<sup>55</sup> *ibid* 166

<sup>56</sup> *ibid* 166

felt a great concern that would move mountains”<sup>57</sup>. The conquest of Jerusalem was central to Saladin’s plans to reunite the Holy Land.

Saladin’s conquest of Jerusalem was likened to the holiest of battles fought in Islamic history such as Badr, Qadisiyya and Khaybar.<sup>58</sup> There was fierce competition over who would deliver the first Friday *khutbah* at the al-Masjid al-Aqsa after eighty years of Frankish domination.<sup>59</sup> Ibn-Zaki ad-Din won out and he reminded Muslims of the importance of the battle they won.

It was the dwelling place of your father Abraham; the spot from which your beloved Prophet Muhammad mounted to heaven; the qibla toward which you turned to pray at the commencement of Islamism, the abode of the prophets; and the place visited by the saints... it is the country where mankind will be assembled for judgement, the ground where resurrection will take place... This temple is the first of the two qiblas, the second of the two sacred mosques, the third after the two holy cities (Mecca and Medina)<sup>60</sup>.

Ibn Zaki emphasizes the importance of Jerusalem for Muslims by speaking about the string of prophets such as Abraham, Jesus and, most importantly, Muhammad who lived in the city or “visited” (in the case of Muhammad). He also uses history to establish the importance of the Holy City, emphasizing the fact that early Muslims prayed towards Jerusalem and not Mecca, to lend credence to the idea of its holiness.

To this end, Richard Lionheart’s demand that Jerusalem be surrendered to him was unacceptable to Saladin,

Al- Quds is to us as is it to you. It is even more important for us, for it is to the site of our Prophet’s nocturnal departure and

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<sup>57</sup> DS Richards, trans., The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin, 210

<sup>58</sup> Donald Little, “Jerusalem under the Ayyubids and Mamluks 1187-1516 AD”, in Jerusalem in History 178

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, 177

<sup>60</sup> Ibn Zaki in Donald Little, “Jerusalem under the Ayyubids and Mamluks 1187-1516 AD”, in Jerusalem in History, 178

the place where people will assemble on Judgement Day. Therefore do not imagine that we can waver in this regard.<sup>61</sup>

By the time Richard Lionheart arrived for the Third Crusade the idea of waging Jihad against the Franks, for the sake of Jerusalem, is well established. Saladin could not have given up Jerusalem to Richard, even had he wanted to, because at this point Jerusalem became the reason Muslims continued fighting. There would have been no way to justify continuing the war were Jerusalem to be given up.

In the case of Muslims, like with Jews and Christians, the idea of Jerusalem's changing importance is again apparent. The conquest of Jerusalem by the Franks was largely ignored by Muslim leadership but when leaders such as Nur ad-Din and Saladin realized the threat Franks posed to their power in the region they used the holiness of Jerusalem as a central theme in cultivating resistance against the Crusaders. In the case of Muslims, Jerusalem, which at one had faded into the background, became once again a reason to fight in a time of uncertainty.

### **Conclusion**

All the evidence indicates that the importance of Jerusalem, in the eyes of any particular group, diminishes or expands depending on the state any given community finds itself in. Jerusalem is forever marked in the theology and holy texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam but, in practice, it can be either more or less vital. Saladin built his call for Jihad around the need to recapture Jerusalem from the Franks. Many of his Ayyubid successors were similarly devoted to the Holy City, and the Ayyubids built many Muslim institutions to boost its importance. However, Jerusalem was expendable to an empire whose political

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<sup>61</sup> Ibn Shadad in Donald Little, "Jerusalem under the Ayyubids and Mamluks 1187-1516 AD", in *Jerusalem in History*, p 179

base was in Egypt.<sup>62</sup> Al-Kamil chose to give up Jerusalem to Frederick II rather than risk losing Egypt.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, once the Crusaders settled in to Jerusalem they focused on expanding outwards towards other more economically substantial places. By the Fifth Crusade the focus was on Egyptian cities such as Damietta.<sup>64</sup> Proximity makes Jerusalem less appealing—that is, unless it can be used to fuel ideological warfare. This pattern can even be seen with the Jewish community as the Mediterranean Jews seem more casual in their attitude towards the city than European Jews. A community under siege finds Jerusalem more important than one that is at relative peace.

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<sup>62</sup> Little 181

<sup>63</sup> *ibid* 183

<sup>64</sup> Hiyari 170

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