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World Religions

Final Project

(Option 4)

## **Abstract**

This paper will discuss the relationship between Judaism and Islam. They have many similarities and have many of the same principles in common. It was also talk about the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Judaism and Islam are forever intertwined. Muhammad studied and appreciated the Jewish people when he observed how they live and practice their culture. Today however, there is a lot of animosity between the two religions. Politically, the state of Israel is a topic of extreme debate, mainly between Shia Muslims and the Jewish community. The Shia believe that Palestine should be its own autonomous state, while the Israeli's believe that Israel is their birthright. While the state of relations between Judaism and Islam are ice cold, there are a lot of similarities between the two religions. Muhammad based a lot of Islamic practices on Jewish traditions. They share many core beliefs such as monotheism and both are considered descendants of Abraham. They also share many of the same practices such as fasting during their respective holy months and their views on purification. Their dietary restrictions are even similar, neither are allowed to eat pork. Judaism and Islam are seen as enemies today, but they were founded on many of the same principles and have many practices in common.

On May 14, 1948, the state of Israel was established. Since then it has become one of the most hotly debated topics in global politics. The Israeli's believe that Israel is a birthright. It is the holy land to them that was given to them by god. Religion is the basis of the differing opinions on the state of Israel, but not the source of conflict. The conflict between the Israeli's and Palestinians is about land. Following the war of 1948-1949, Israel was split into three parts: the state of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The area is only about 10,000 square miles, roughly the same size as the state of Maryland. The Jewish claim to Israel is based on a promise to Abraham and his descendants. Israel is also the historical site of the Jewish Kingdom of Israel. The Palestinians believe that the land belongs to them, having lived there for hundreds of years. They are also the majority population in the area. The Palestinians do not believe that a biblical claim made thousands of years ago is basis enough for a modern land claim. (stanford.edu, 2015)

*“Actually—and this was where I began to feel seriously uncomfortable—some such divine claim underlay not just 'the occupation' but the whole idea of a separate state for Jews in Palestine.*

*Take away the divine warrant for the Holy Land and where were you, and what were you? Just another land-thief like the Turks or the British, except that in this case you wanted the land without the people.” -Christopher Hitchens*

Roughly 93 percent of Palestinians are Muslim. While the Palestine-Israel conflict is not caused by religion, it is a factor. Muslims see Israel as another example of the west coming over to their territory and taking Muslim land. The Palestinians feel they own the land because they have been there so long, while Israeli's feel it is a religious right. However, in the Qur'an and the Hebrew Bible the land of Israel is given to the Jewish people. There is an undercurrent of religious animosity in this conflict. Muslims believe the land belongs to them, and Israeli's believe it is theirs.

While the conflicts of today dominate these two religions, there are actually many similarities between the two. The cause of these many similarities is the respect Muhammad had for the Jewish people. He viewed both Christian and Jewish people as “People of the Book” and allies. When Muhammad went to Mecca, he observed many of the Jewish tribes there. Many of the teachings from the Hebrew Bible can be seen in the Qur'an. Some are very precise interpretations, such as the story of Jonah, and some are more vague, like the story of Abraham. The story about Abraham in the Qur'an is almost identical to a Jewish teaching called “Midrash Rabbah.” In it Abraham is jealous of people worshiping other idols, so he breaks all the idols except one and is thrown into a pit of fire by Allah. It is so similar to “Midrash Rabbah” that it is believed Muhammad must have been told the story by local Jewish tribe members, as he couldn't read the Jewish texts.

*He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me*

*"O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!"*

*So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son.*

*Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I have seen in a vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: now see what is thy view!"(The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou wilt find me, if Allah so wills, one of the steadfast!"*

*So when they had both submitted (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice),*

*We called out to him "O Abraham! ...*

*"Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. (Qur'an, 37:99-105)*

The story of Abraham sacrificing his son appears in both texts. Muslim scholars believe Abraham sacrificed Ishmael, while Jewish scholars say it was Isaac. Ishmael became the father of Islam and Isaac became the father of Judaism.

*"They said, "Truly, Joseph and his brother are loved more by our father than we, but we are a strong group. Really, our father is in a plain error. Kill Joseph or cast him out to some (other) land, so that the favour of your father may be given to you alone, and after that you will be righteous folk (by intending to repent)." (Quran 12:8-9)*

The story of Joseph also appears in both the Qur'an and the Hebrew bible. The story of Joseph is Chapter 12 in the Qur'an and is the longest chapter, or Surah. The same story is seen in Genesis 37-50. The stories are incredibly similar. They have the same characters and story. The only major difference between the two stories is that god takes a much more active role in the Qur'an's version. Moses also has a chapter dedicated to him in the Qur'an.

There are an incredible amount of similarities between the practices and traditions of the Jewish and Muslim people. They are both monotheistic religions. Both communities are descendants of Abraham, Muslim's are the sons of Ishmael and Jews are the sons of Isaac. Each religion has their own dietary laws. Both Judaism and Islam forbid the eating of pork, predatory birds, and meat that has not been ritually slaughtered. They share similar views on the afterlife, when you die you either go to a paradise or a punishment. A pilgrimage is practiced in both religions as well. They travel to different places, the Jewish people go to Jerusalem, while Muslims make their pilgrimage to Mecca. They even circle around their respective buildings (The Ka'ba and temple) seven times. Fasting is a major part of

both Judaism and Islam. The Jewish people fast seven times a year, while Muslims fast during the days of the month of Ramadan. One of the most similar and precise practices between Judaism and Islam are their views and processes of purification. Both go through the process early in the morning before prayers. They wash each hand down to the wrist three times, then recite prayers. It is very obvious that Muhammad and the writers of the Qur'an took many of these practices directly from the Jewish people.

*“Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all other nations.” (Qur'an, sura 2:47)*

Allah chose the Children of Israel (what the Jewish people used to be called) as the chosen people over all other nations and religions. Today the state of Jewish and Muslim relations almost nonexistent. One of the most significant reasons for this is the dispute over who has the right to Israel. Israeli's believe that the region is their birthright, bestowed upon them by god. It is also the site of the ancient Jewish Kingdom of Israel. The Palestinians believe that the land belongs to them because they have lived there for hundreds of years, and the west doesn't have the right to come and take their land. Despite the differences these two religions have today, they actually have a lot in common. Many of the stories and texts in the Qur'an are seen in the Hebrew Bible. The story of Abraham is an example of a text that appears in both books. The version in the Qur'an is almost identical to “Midrash Rabbah.” The stories of Joseph and Moses also appear in the Qur'an. Judaism and Islam share a lot of the same traditions and practices as well. This is a result of Muhammad observing the Jewish people at Medina. Both of the communities are descendants of Abraham. Both religions have strict dietary regulations including the practice of a spiritual slaughter and both forbid pork. Both Judaism and Islam also encourage pilgrimages, Muslims to Mecca and the Jewish people to Jerusalem. They may have their differences today, but Judaism and Islam are forever linked.

## Bibliography

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