

What could happen if only?

(we strive as in a race for all virtues)

فاستبقوا الخيرات

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The primary audiences for this paper are Muslim clerics and Muslim scholars. This paper is written to share with Muslim religious opinion leaders ways to interpret the Qur'an which allows for peace between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Middle East and other parts of the world.

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What could happen if?

Dear brothers and colleagues, the world around us is changing at a breath taking pace. In the near past Mubarak was ruling over Egypt, no one thought he could be jailed, or even replaced. Today, we have the first freely elected parliament in Egypt in 60 years, headed by the Muslim Brotherhood. Yet, the Middle East is plagued with a nagging and intractable conflict. For many years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has seemed to be intractable. Its solution has eluded most world and regional political leaders on all sides. This paper proposes a *forward-looking* approach to reconciliation, namely, a solution that does not involve intervention by external geopolitical interests but, rather, focuses primarily on the current and future mutual interests of the peoples now residing in the lands between the Jordan River to the east, the international Lebanese border to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and the Egyptian international border to the south.

Most major conflicts involve three elements: economy, politics, and religion or ideology. Any economic or political plan that fails to consider religious differences is unlikely to be successful. In the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict, it would be impossible. Such a plan requires acknowledgement of the various beliefs of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious traditions that consider locations in Jerusalem and other places holy or revered and under the watchful eye of a Higher Power. Emphasizing the mutual goodwill supported by their respective scriptures empowers parties to the conflict to focus on the hopeful future and less on past injustices or differing perceptions of history and rights of possession.

Today I would like for us to think and reflect on Qur'anic text that may allow us to view the conflict in Israel- Palestine in a new and different light. I would like to share with you **six points** supported by Qur'anic verses which may contribute to peace and reconciliation in our region and allow all our people in the Middle East to enjoy long awaited prosperity.

In June 2009, President Barack Obama gave a speech here in Cairo in which he said among other things *“in order to move forward, we must say openly to each other the things we hold in our hearts and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground It's easier to blame others than to look inward. It's easier to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share. But we should choose the right path, not just the easy path. There's one rule that lies at the heart of every religion -- do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”* Can we together for a moment imagine the possibility of reading the Holy Qur'an as it was revealed to The Prophet Muhammad? Can we possibly set aside our attitudes, inclinations, dispositions and differences when we read and contemplate our beloved Qur'an?

The first point one would like to discuss here is: what could happen if we issue a formal apology to our Arab brothers and sisters who were forced to leave the Holy Land “Palestine” in 1948 and 1967 after the creation of the state of Israel? What could happen if we grant those displaced Holy Land Arabs (“the oppressed”) un-conditional full citizenships in all the Arab lands and countries where they reside after being displaced from their homes and their communities? What could happen if we told the oppressed we Arabs were wrong in treating you as second class citizens in your host Arab country? What could happen if we told the oppressed “sorry” we were wrong in excluding you, your children and your grand children from employment in government, the military, civil service and seventy other professions as it is the case in at least ten Arab countries? What could happen if we forgave each other? Why should we continue to keep those Oppressed living in sub-human conditions in camps inside and outside the Holy Land when we control almost half the world wealth in the form oil and gas production and reserves? It is rather sad and pathetic that our tradition as Muslims and Arabs call for treating the weak and the destitute with love and care and we are doing exactly the opposite with our Holy Land brothers and sisters.

It is disheartening to know that while we claim to be followers of the Prophet Muhammad, and his superb Islamic tradition, we tend to mistreat the weak among us, and we use the feeblest of excuses to do so. Our Holy Qur'an advises against such practice as in "The Believers are but a single Brotherhood:"¹ what is not an acceptable practice to do with our own brothers and sisters should also be unacceptable practice to do with our Holy Land Arabs. The Prophet of Islam said "*the likening of the believers in their mutual love, sympathy and mercy is like the body, if a small part is hurting, the whole body reels in fever until that part is healed.*"² Someone may say, but if we treat the Holy Land Arabs as equal citizens in the land of their host country, we would dilute the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the Holy Land Arabs would not be able to go back to Palestine, Brethren and sisters that is flawed logic. Why? Because going back to the Holy Land has less to do with those Holy Land Arabs being treated poorly or with respect, and more to do with our willingness as Arabs to accept the Jews we kicked out of our countries to come back as described in the following point.

The second point I would like for us to consider is: what could happen if we think that some Jews may have lived in the Holy Land since the time of Jesus Christ? What could happen if we consider the waves of Jewish immigrants who came to the Holy Land in the 1940's and 1950's as people running away from danger? What could happen if we thought that the Jews were persecuted in Europe with nowhere else to go? What would happen if we believe that the Holocaust actually happened? What could happen if we actually thought along those lines? What could happen if we forgave each other? The scattered Jews came to the Holy Land because they were persecuted and killed by the Nazi war machine in Europe in a horrific process called the Holocaust. Entire Jewish communities were annihilated in Germany, Poland and Russia. They came to the Holy Land running away from danger. They came to take shelter among their cousins the descendents of Ismail. Allah put in the heart of the Jews that there is no safe place for them to go except the Holy Land. Furthermore, Allah put in the heart of

¹ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an 49:10 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 1341

² Imam Nawawi, Ryadul Saleheen (Cairo: Al Darul Hadith 2010) 65.

the Christians (traditionally the arch enemy of the Jews) to support the Jews in the Jews endeavor for safety and security.

The story of the Jews outnumbered by their antagonists and running away from persecution and danger has many precedents in history: Starting with the exodus story which took place here in Egypt to the Assyrian enslavement, the Babylonian exile, the Roman destruction, the Greek occupation, the French Crusade, the English Expulsion, the Russian Pogroms, the Spanish Inquisition and culminating with the German Holocaust. So, let us look at the last time the Jews were kicked out from a European country: Spain. Where did the Jews go? Where did the Jews run for cover? Where did they hide from danger? In Arab and Muslim land, in 1492, when the Jews were persecuted and faced annihilation in the Iberian Peninsula in a process called Spanish Inquisition, they came running for cover in North Africa, Egypt, Levant, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. In 1492 our forefathers, our Arab and Muslim ancestors, faced the same dilemma we are facing today. Namely, what to do with the Jews? Now, did our ancestors oppose the Jews? Did our ancestors incite hatred against the Jews? Did our ancestors slaughter the Jews or pledge to feed them to the fish in the sea? Did our ancestors threaten the Jews with weapons of mass destruction? No. Our ancestors took the Jews in, helped the Jews out and made them members of our society. We Arabs and Muslims healed the wounds suffered by the Jews on the hands of the Spaniards.

Now, let's think about this, were our ancestors mentally sluggish? Did they lack intelligence or good judgment when they provided shelter for the fleeing Jews? Were our ancestors not aware of the Qur'an and Hadith traditions of the Prophet Muhammad? In fact, our ancestors were quite aware of the Qur'an and Hadith. They were actually wiser than we were in the 1940's and 1950's, and they had good judgment. In fact, they used the Qur'an and Hadith as a basis to host and show integrity, kindness and magnanimity to the Jews who were running away from danger in the Iberian Peninsula. Our ancestors were relying on Allah's commandments in the Holy Qur'an: "*if a non-follower of Muhammad asks you for asylum grant it to him, so that he may hear the*

*word of God. Then escort him to where he will be secure.*³ That last word “secure” or “security” is what the Jews were looking for back in Spain 500 years ago, and security is what the Jews are looking for today in the Holy Land.

That is why in contemporary media, the adjective most associated with the Jews, is: security. All we hear about in the news regarding the Jews is: “the security of Jews” or “the security of Israel”. What is amazing about this 64 year old conflict between Jews and Arabs is that both sides of the conflict are talking about a different cause. The Arabs who live in the Holy Land are struggling for dignity and social justice and the Jews who live in the Holy Land are struggling for safety and security. Both sides are not fighting for the same cause; both sides are fighting to attain two entirely different objectives. The Arabs are suing for dignity whereas the Jews are suing for security. Are you still listening? The fight is not entirely over a piece of dirt. The fight may include land, but the fight is not entirely about land. The fight can be summarized as **Jewish security vs. Arab dignity**. This really means that if we Arabs truly want our dignity back, then we should first find a way to restore the security for the Arab Jews. If one understands that, one could find a way to afford the Jews their security while affording the Arabs their dignity. This leads to a very important point to make about the Jews in Arab Land.

Let's think about what the State of Israel consisted of since its inception in 1948: it consisted of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, about 50/50. Now, where did the Sephardic (or Mizrahi) Jews who reside now in the Holy Land come from? They came from Arab lands. They are Arab Jews who came from North Africa, Egypt, Levant, Iraq and Yemen. Some Jews left Arab lands voluntarily to go to the Holy Land. However, the overwhelming majority of Jews in Arab lands loved their countries and did not want to leave. The overwhelming majority of Jews in Arab lands were actually driven out against their will.

³ ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an* 9:6 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 438.

Now, let's stop for a moment and see what we Arabs and Muslims did to our own Arab brothers and sisters (who happened to be Jewish), who lived within our borders, within our communities, and were citizens of our countries and neighbors in our land. What did we do to them? We uprooted them and we kicked them out, about one million Jews had to leave against their will. We confiscated their places of worship. We took away their communities and possessions and threw them out of our countries. This action by us Muslim Arabs in the late 40's, 50's and 60's is contrary to what Allah and his messenger commanded us to do in the Holy Qur'an. Now I am not saying that all the Jews were angels and that none of them did anything wrong (like spying for Israel). Rather, I am saying that the wrong-doers could have been dealt with separately. The Quran warns the believers against collective punishment in the Holy Qur'an⁴. And the Prophet of Allah said: *"Be careful of the prayer of the oppressed. Even if the oppressed is not a Muslim, his prayer will be answered in this life and he will be judged about his faith in the next life."* And the renowned Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiyyah said: *"The just nation prevails even if ruled by non-Muslim and the oppressor nation vanishes, even if ruled by Muslim."*⁵

Now, as religious leaders in the Arab and Muslim world, do you not think that an honest acknowledgment that we may have unjustly kicked out the Jews would soften the hearts of people on both sides of the conflict over the Holy Land today? Then, going further, do you think we Arabs, together, could astound everyone by making an unconditional invitation to the Jews, who were kicked out against their will, to return to their communities and synagogues in Arab lands, as protected and not as oppressed minority- as equal citizens of the land, not as second class citizens? Why would this be good for everyone? It would show that our people have the confidence to face the truth of the past without fear. It would give our people a clear conscience and make them feel good as they stand on high moral ground.

⁴ Ibidem: 17:15 and 4:105

⁵ Ibn Taymihhah, *fatawi Ibn Taymyyah*, (2001: Cairo Press volume 4, page 26)

Some one might say “How about the Palestinians? Shouldn’t we ask Israel to let the Palestinians go back to the Holy Land in exchange for us allowing the Jews to come back to Arab land?” Of course, one can ask for anything one wants as a condition for accepting the Jews back; however, one would be wiser to postpone such a condition. Why? Because the Jews with all their weapons and military might still do not feel secure in the Holy Land. They wake up each morning with the vision that all Arab guns and rockets in countries around Israel are directing their weapons towards Israel. One has to make the Jews feel safe before one can ask the Jews to see the conflict from the person point of view. For example one can postpone such a request for several years after the return of the Jews to their communities and synagogues. If the Jews are safe, secure and reconciled in their homes and communities in Arab Lands, one can safely say that the Jewish people and the international community will invite the Palestinians in the Diaspora to come back home. Why? It makes great economic sense! The Israelis need to grow their economy. But they fear being outnumbered completely by Arab Palestinians in the coming decades who would vote to treat them as second class citizens and ask them to convert to Islam or be put to the sword. So we must see first that the minority Jews among us are not second class citizens. This mutual trust is a real possibility. God said so in the Holy Qur’an “*Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then the person with whom you have enmity will become your friend and intimate!*”⁶

Someone else might say: what we did to the Jews of Arab land is nothing compared to the Holocaust and the Final Solution. The Europeans should be blamed for creating the state of Israel not the Arabs. Yes, in the most recent history, the Nazi’s have been implicated in the plight of the Jewish people. However, we Arabs and Muslims could be blamed for kicking out the Jews from our land “against their will”. I will grant you that both actions do not compare. However, we Arabs and Muslims followers of the Prophet Muhammad are held to a higher standard than Hitler and his henchmen.

⁶ Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an 41:34 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 1238.

We are held to the standard of the Holy book of Mercy, the Qur'an. We are held to the merciful traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, we should not be comparing ourselves with others who do not read and contemplate our holy book the Qur'an. Others who are not familiar with the tradition of mercy passed to us by our beloved Prophet Muhammad. Remember that Allah said in the Holy Qur'an that you are the best of nations: *"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah;"*⁷ enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong are the hall of fame of the tradition of the followers of Muhammad. Part of enjoining what is right is restoring justice to the people we mistreated- to both the Arab Jews and the Arab Palestinians.

Someone else might say, what if the Jews refuse to come back to reclaim their synagogues and their communities? First of all, one doubt that as a group the Jews will refuse to come back, many love their old countries, the land of their most recent forefathers. It is safe to say that, if the Jews are offered such opportunity and the offer is genuine, many of them would take it. Those are the Jews who say that, while their bodies exist outside their native country, their hearts yearn to go back to the land of their forefathers in North Africa, Egypt, Iraq, Levant and Yemen. Secondly, even if the Jews do not take our offer, we would have done the right thing. We would have proved to ourselves that we Arabs can face truth with confidence in God and a clear conscience; Allah will be our witness that we did what is right in the sight of Allah.

Someone else might say, but the Quran says the Jews are the worst enemies of the believers⁸; they are the enemies of Allah. They killed Allah's Prophets. How can you ask us to allow the enemies of Allah to come back to the land? Are you out of your mind? Well, Allah told us in the Holy Quran (41:34) to treat our enemies with *Ihsan*⁹, which is kindness, integrity and respect. And Allah said: *kindness will be*

⁷ Ibidem (3:110).

⁸ Ibidem (5:82)

⁹ Ibidem 41:34

*met with kindness, integrity will be met with integrity and respect will be met with respect.*¹⁰ And even if we as Muslims hate the Jews because of a narrative we heard or read, Allah warns the believers against not treating someone with integrity, even if we hate that person. Allah said in the Qur'an "*O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you (or your hatred of others) cause you to wrong others and to depart from integrity. Have integrity: that is next to piety: and fear Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do.*"¹¹ Actually, according to the Quran, the Jews can be the best people ever lived¹², or the Jews can be the worst people ever lived¹³. Allah said that the Jews will be with us to the end of time, they will not change their ways or convert to anything. If we think that the Jews will convert to Christianity or Islam we are DELUDING ourselves and we will be disappointed. The Jews have a lot invested in being Jews, they are not about to give it up regardless of offer anyone makes. Therefore, it is good to know how to accept the Jews for what they are, not for what we wish they were. It is good to bring out the best in a Jew and avoid the worst. Now, there are ways to help the Jews become the best neighbors to have and there are ways to make the Jews become the worst neighbors to have. We really do not lose ANYTHING by helping the Jews become the best they can be. On the contrary we all win.

If we treat the Jews with *Ihsan* (respect), kindness and integrity Allah will put in the heart of the Jew to forgive all the wrong doing perpetrated on the Jews by others. If the Jew forgives, the Jew will be the best human being ever. Why? The Jews have a lot of history persecution and subjugation to forgive—more so than Christians or Muslims. On the contrary, when we hate the Jews and treat them with dishonor or disrespect, we inevitably bring out the worst in a Jew. In the Qur'an Allah said: *Ihsan* will be met with *Ihsan*. If we say yes, we will do *Ihsan*, but not with the Jews, then we are changing the

¹⁰ Ibidem 55:60

¹¹ Ibidem 5:8

¹² Ibidem 45:16

¹³ Ibidem 5:60

word of Allah. Allah wants us to practice, perform and implement Ihsan with everyone, Muslim or non-Muslim¹⁴. The best way to help the Jews bring out the best in their own tradition and avoid the worst is a simple two step process: the first part in the process is to have the right intention towards the Jews and treat them as equal brothers and sisters in humanity. Apply the two-eyes-rule: Allah gave us two eyes; one eye to see and contemplate the beauty in the other person's tradition, and one eye to reflect on our own shortcomings. Secondly, apply the commandment in the Qur'an¹⁵. Take a selected group of young Muslim scholars (ulama), about a dozen from each Muslim region, who are versed in Qur'an and *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and teach those Muslim scholars the biblical Hebrew language and the Tanakh. Those Muslim ulama will learn the Tanakh, not with the intention of finding meaningless arguments, faults, flaws and fallacies with the Tanakh, but with the intention of mining those books for pearls of wisdom, cognitive content, accumulated knowledge, sapience, proverbs, anecdotes and sayings. Those ulama would then become the go-to group when someone HAS a question about Jews and Judaism.

Someone else might say, "How can we have Jews as our neighbors, in the same town? Didn't the Prophet Muhammad drive the Jews out of Medina?" Well, the Prophet Muhammad may have deported only the people who were accused of wrong doing, irrespective of their faith, he accepted Jews as his neighbors in Medina and was married to a Jewish woman, the mother of the believers Safyyah daughter of Hoyye (Arabic: ام المؤمنين صفية بنت حيي *umel-moameneen Safyah bint Hoyye*)¹⁶ and his shield was kept in trust by a Jew named *Avi Shachm* in Madina.¹⁷

Someone else might say, "Where is the money going to come from to restore all these synagogues and communities, so that it is sound and functional for Jews to return?" Do not worry about that part? If we are sincere and genuine in our intention to

¹⁴ Ibidem 60:8

¹⁵ Ibidem 9:122

¹⁶ Sirat Ibn Hisham, (Cairo: Sirah Publications, 2008) volume 5, page 20

¹⁷ Ibidem volume 6, page 26

correct past inequities, Allah the sustainer will help us find the funds necessary to reconstruct and restore such communities and synagogues. Many wealthy Jews who donate generously for the building of settlements in the Israeli occupied territories in the west bank will be glad to donate to rebuild damaged Jewish synagogues and communities in Arab land—if you let them. Also, it is much less expensive to build communities and places of worship than to buy weapons to fight the Zionist enemy.

Someone else might say, “How about America? Will America Agree to such a plan?” I cannot speak for all Americans, but I can assure you there are many people in America who hope the issue of Israel-Palestine is soon resolved in a fair and just way.

However, there are issues that the Christians (in America and elsewhere) need to work out among themselves that can cause confusion over political conflicts and divine Biblical prophecy. For example, a large number of Christian Evangelicals tend to support the state of Israel (and Jews generally) over Palestine (and Muslims generally)--not because of tribal favoritism, but because these Evangelicals interpret a passage in the Torah “*God will bless those who defend Israel and curse those who attack Israel*”¹⁸ to mean they must defend the *political state* of Israel or be cursed themselves by God. They do not make a distinction between the state of Israel and the children of Jacob (Israel), referring to the people of the Biblical peoples of the Covenant. Some of their leaders are aware of this distinction, and are more nuanced in their political positions. They understand that peace in the Middle East could well be a blessing to the children of Israel (all descendants of Jacob or peoples of the Covenant) and everyone else. They realize that secular states can make great and unjust mistakes and that God is never on the side of injustice--no matter who perpetrates it. These leaders could help their own people see that 'defending the children of Israel' means above all defending truth and righteousness wherever it needs defense.

¹⁸ The Harper Collins Study Bible, Genesis 12:3 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006) 20

There is another group of Christians called the Christian Zionists, who believe that Israel is important as an established state because they believe it fulfills [the] prophecy in the Bible. This group of Christians generally believe that when Jesus Christ returns, He will rapture (rescue) the believers and convert others including most of the Jews to Christianity, leaving non-believers to die in the fire as prophesied at the end of the world.

While we Muslims are not directly implicated in this theological matter, we have become entangled in it. It is my sincere wish that Muslims will remember the purpose of Allah's message to the prophet Muhammad (16:64) "*we have only revealed to you the Holy Qur'an so that you may clarify to them [Jews and Christians], that about which they differ*"¹⁹ therefore, we Muslims should focus on the purpose of our message so that we may help save the Holy Land from destruction. The question here is: could we Muslims, with Christians and Jews, look to the Final Hour or Messianic Time or Second Coming as an event only in the control of God? And until then, could we try to live together according to our religious virtues so *if and* when the End does come God will be pleased with our efforts--and his judgments will be righteous and merciful on us all?

Someone else might say, "This looks like another Zionist ploy to cause us Arabs to make more concessions and get nothing in return." I can assure you that this is not a Zionist ploy. Why? Zionists would like to bring all the Jews in the world to the Holy Land. Zionists do not want any Jew to Leave the Holy Land and go back to the country they came from. Zionists would like to make the Holy Land an ethnically pure area for the Jews. The Zionists are offering free housing, jobs, cars and \$20k move in bonus to Jews so that the Jews could leave their country and come to live permanently in the Holy Land. In fact, if you want to disappoint the Zionists, then consider such a plan. Why? Such a plan will take an arrow out of the Zionists quiver. Some Zionists hold some Arabs and Muslims in low esteem right now; they do not think that we Arabs will

¹⁹ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an 16:64 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 653.

ever have the moral courage to consider correcting past inequities. They think that there is no place in your hearts for the other. Coming out with such a plan will show those Zionists that they were wrong in thinking about us that way.

Someone else might say, “But, what is in this deal for us Arabs? It looks like we are giving up something for nothing?” What is in it for us Arabs is that we would be correcting past errors, amending past mistakes, reconciling ourselves with God, redeeming our souls, healing our wounds and librating ourselves from worshipping our Arab-Muslim identity to worshipping God the creator of all people and nations, the companionate, the beneficent, the merciful. Allah said: *“To each among you [Jews, Christians and Muslims] we have prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, Allah would have made you [Jews, Christians and Muslims] a single people, but [Allah’s plan is] to test you in what Allah hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues.”*²⁰ What could happen if we Arabs make such an offer is that we draw ourselves closer to Allah, closer to word of Allah as delineated in the next point.

The third point one would like to discuss here is: what could happen if one uses the names in the Qur’an as Allah revealed them? What could happen if one does not change the names that Allah chose in the Qur’an? For example, Allah describes someone who is pious, prays, fasts and gives to charity as a believer (Arabic: مؤمن Mo’amen). If one changed what Allah said and called that person infidel (Arabic: كافر Kafer), then one would be changing the word of Allah and therefore, one would not be faithful to the word of Allah.

By the same token if Allah calls a certain location the Holy Land in both the Quran “The Holy Land”²¹ and in the Torah²² “the Holy Land” (Hebrew: ארץ הקודש; Eretz Ha Qodesh ; Arabic: الأرض المقدسة Al-Ard Al-Muqaddasah), and one insists on calling it another name, such as Palestine, then one is changing the word of Allah. The question

²⁰ Ibidem 5:35

²¹ Ibidem 5: 21

²² The Harper Collins Study Bible, Exodus 3:5 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006) 88.

here is: if the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea is called the Holy Land in the Qur'an, then why does one, follower of Muhammad call it Palestine? Where does the name Palestine come from? Is this an Arabic name? No, is it in the Qur'an? No, the word Palestine derives from a name that came from Greek or Latin, "Palestina" into English as "Philistine". According to the English Dictionary²³ the word "philistine" means several derogatory terms including: someone regarded as a natural or traditional enemy because [of] belonging to a despised class. Another meaning is: a crass prosaic often priggish individual guided by material rather than intellectual values. Other meanings include: Ignoramus, outsider, oblivious to aesthetics. Do you now understand why the west and the English speaking world does not look favorably on the name Philistine.

So, why do we trade a beautiful name Allah gave for a name the Greeks or the Romans chose? Do we prefer the Romans choice over the book of Allah's choice? Do we love Caesar more than we love Allah? If we truly love Allah and respect and revere Allah's word then we should reflect such love by using the name Allah gave in the Qur'an to the land we commonly call Palestine, namely we should call that land the Holy Land. Just like the name of the holy city to which the Prophet Mohammad immigrated from Mecca was changed from Yathrib to Medina²⁴ to fulfill Allah's command, One should have no doubt that Allah will be pleased if one uses the name Allah gave in the Qur'an over the name Romans gave, "the Holy Land," not Philistine.

Now, Allah called Palestine the Holy Land for a reason. The reason is to sanctify and purify the soul and spirit of those who visit the Holy Land. Think of the Holy Land like a hospital—a hospital for the heart- where a sick person goes to receive treatment. People flee to such land when they have nowhere else to go—just like Muslims flee to the Holy Land in Mecca and Medina when they feel that their spiritual life needs

²³ Philip Grove, Webster Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc. Publishers, 1993) pp 1697

²⁴ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an 9:120 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 473.

alignment. Pious Jews and Christians consider Jerusalem Holy Land²⁵. This is akin to Mecca and Medina for the Muslim people—a place to sanctify oneself. However, some people choose to live in the hospital because they are afraid that if they leave the hospital they will get sick—they may even die or be killed. Just like Muslims who yearn to travel to Mecca and Medina and live there to purify their hearts and cleanse their souls and follow the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, Christians and pious Jews like to travel to the Holy Land to purify their hearts and cleanse their souls and follow the footsteps of their Prophets Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Jesus Christ. Jews and Christians have a faith tradition originating in the Holy Land, both faith traditions are part of B'nai Israel (the children of Israel). This is a very important distinction to understand. The Jews are B'nai Israel and the Christians are B'nai Israel; the Holy Quran affirms this distinction²⁶. Both faith traditions had their Holy Books (the Torah in Hebrew and the Gospel in Greek) revealed completely or partially in the Holy Land. Now the question is, why Allah, the Lord of both the Jews and the Christians is sending another message or another messenger? Why is the new message is in a totally different language and tongue from the previous two messages? The next point will attempt to answer that question.

The fourth point one would like to discuss is: what could happen if one takes the Qur'an's word for what it says, and not for what one wishes it said? What could happen if one did not add one's attitude, disposition or inclinations to the Qur'anic text? I am referring here to the question: why did Allah send the Prophet Muhammad to the world? The Qur'an tells us that Allah had two established religions before Islam, namely Christianity and Judaism. Why was a third message introduced? Well, according to the Qur'an, Allah wanted to restore the religion of the patriarch Abraham (Ibrahim) back to the world. So, Allah sent the prophet Muhammad (a descendent of Ibrahim through the line of Ismail) with a message to restore the religion of Ibrahim. In this case Allah, had to reveal the new message in a language other than the previous two languages and to

²⁵ Just like Shia consider Qum in Iran and Najaf in Iraq as Holy Land. Just like Hindu Indians consider Kashi Vishwanath in Benaras, UP, Holy Land. Just like Sikhs consider Amritsar in the Punjab Holy Land. Just like Catholics consider the Vatican Holy Land.

²⁶ Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* 61:14 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 1463.

direct the new Prophet to worship Allah by facing a new destination. Why? When Jews and Christians pray they face Jerusalem, just like the early Muslims did before Allah commanded the Prophet Muhammad and the believers to change their destination from Jerusalem to Mecca. Then Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad that the Prophet Muhammad destination is different from *Ahlul Kitab* (Jews and Christians) destination; and that neither group is going to follow the destination of the other group as recorded in “Even if you were to bring to the people of the Book [Jews and Christians] all the Signs (together), they would not follow your Qibla (destination); and you are not going to follow their Qibla (destination)”.²⁷ So, Allah has decided that the Prophet Muhammad has a new message in a new language and a new Qibla that is different from the Qibla of Jews and Christians. Why? Because Allah said that, Jews and Christians have irreconcilable differences and the Prophet Muhammad should not get himself entangled in those differences. However, Allah draws the attention of the Prophet Muhammad to the most important mission of his message in the Holy Qur’an: “(O Muhammad) we have only revealed to you the Holy Qur’an so that you may clarify to them (Jews and Christians), that about which they differ and (as) guidance and a mercy for those who believe.”²⁸ The word “them” in the above verse refers to “the people of the book” (Arabic: اهل الكتاب *Ahlul Kitab*) the Jews and the Christians. Allah is instructing His messenger Muhammad “the main reason the Qur’an was revealed is to clear up those things about which Jews and Christians differ”.

The Prophet Muhammad’s message was revealed to invite Jews to follow and keep up the best morals and ethics their own tradition has to offer as delineated in their own book the Hebrew Torah, and to invite Christians to follow and keep up the best morals and ethics their own tradition has to offer as delineated in the Christian Gospel. That is why Allah said in the Holy Qur’an “*And if they [the Jews] had kept up [the moral and ethical teachings of] the Torah and [the Christians had kept up the moral and ethical teachings of] the Gospel and that which was revealed to them from their Lord,*

²⁷ Ibidem 2:145

²⁸ Ibidem 16:64

*they would certainly have eaten from above them and from beneath their feet (which means to have comfortable and fulfilling lives) ”.*²⁹ The Qur’an was not revealed so that Jews abandon their faith and abolish their prophet Moses and abrogate their book the Torah in order to follow The Prophet Muhammad. The Qur’an was not revealed so that Christians abandon their faith and abolish Jesus Christ and abrogate their book the Gospel in order to follow The Prophet Muhammad.

The Qur’an was revealed, first, to invite both Christians and Jews to follow the best morals and ethics their respective traditions offer and to invite the pagans of Mecca and people with no religion to follow the Prophet Muhammad. The Quran says that the Prophet Muhammad was sent to be compassion, grace and mercy to creation and not to coerce, curse or condemn creation. Allah said in the Holy Qur’an: “*We have only sent thee (o Muhammad) as a Mercy for all humanity.*”³⁰ Therefore, if Jews or Christians chose voluntarily to follow the message revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, they are welcome to do so; and they will have their reward doubled, once for following what was revealed to them and once for following the new message revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, as indicated in the Holy Qur’an³¹. Jews and Christians should not be taunted, insulted or ridiculed because they follow a messenger other than the Prophet Muhammad’s message or a book other than the Prophet Mohammed’s book. They should be treated with kindness, respect and integrity. They should be inspired and encouraged to follow the best guidance they have in their own Holy Scriptures. Allah gave us this message in the Holy Qur’an (39:23) “*Allah has revealed (from time to time) the most beautiful Message in the form of Books, consistent with itself, (yet) repeating (its teaching in various aspects).*”³² thus, we see that the Torah and the Gospel are also from Allah, therefore, we Muslims should not oppress or subjugate those who follow those books, but hold them to the best moral and ethics their books contain. Allah prohibited the believers against reviling, cursing, abusing or insulting the non-believers

²⁹ Ibidem 5:66

³⁰ Ibidem 21:107

³¹ Ibidem 28:53

³² Ibidem 39:23

or their deities in the Holy Qur'an *"And insult not those whom they [non-Muslims] worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge. Thus We have made alluring to each people their own doings; then to their Lord is their return and [their lord] shall then inform them of all that they used to do."*³³ As Muslims we should treat others with respect, kindness and integrity. No coercion, no insulting and no burning of places of worship because our Lord, Allah, is Mercy, our Prophet Muhammad is Mercy and our Qur'an is Mercy. The next point will illustrate how Islam is the religion of knowledge and mercy.

The fifth point I would like to make: what will happen if we thought of our religion as a religion of knowledge, science and learning? What if we thought that knowledge about revelation and knowledge about creation are the most important values in our faith? As to the Quran being a book of knowledge and learning, all one has to do is look at the first word revealed to The Prophet Muhammad "Read" (Arabic: اقرأ Iqra)³⁴. God did not start God's revelation by reciting the five pillars of Islam: No God but Allah, worship Allah, fast Ramadan, give to charity and perform Hajj. Allah started the Holy Quran by a succinct and powerful command: "Read". To cement such meaning, the first attribute or quality God chose to describe Godself was not as the creator of heaven and earth as the Book of Genesis has it, not as the creator of the sun and the moon, but as "He who taught with the pen" (Arabic: الذي علم بالقلم Allazi Allama bil qalam)³⁵. To affirm the previous two premises, Allah made a pledge in the Qur'an. What was the first pledge or vow in the Holy Qur'an? God did not make a vow or a pledge using significant signs like the sun, the moon, the stars, the day or the night which are all mentioned as pledges later in the Holy Quran. The first pledge in the Holy Qur'an is *"Inkwell. I pledge by the pen and by what man writes"* (Arabic: ن والقلم وما يسطرون Nun. Waal qalam wa-ma

³³ Ibidem 6:108

³⁴ Ibidem 96:1

³⁵ Ibidem 96:4

yastoroon.)³⁶ All of the previous verses were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad to emphasize the virtue of knowledge and learning.

Another insight in the Qur'an is when Allah wanted a witness for the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad's message, when Allah wanted a sign or a miracle to prove to the pagans of Quraysh that the Qur'an contains truth and comes from Allah. Allah chose the witness of scholars (Arabic: ulama) as proof. Allah said: "*Is it not a sign (to the pagans of Quraysh) that the learned scholars of the Children of Israel knew the Qur'an as true word of God*".³⁷ Therefore, the Qur'an is a revelation which emphasizes in its debut, in its unveiling, in its beginning the importance of knowledge and learning.

However, the Qur'an draws our attention to an important value that precedes learning and knowledge. A value where learning and knowledge rest firmly. That value is mercy, grace or compassion. To show that our religion is about mercy and compassion is easy. One could see that in no less than 400 places in the Holy Qur'an the attribute of mercy or compassion is advocated including "*Allah has inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy.*"³⁸ Also, Allah describes the Prophet Muhammad "*And Allah Has only sent you (O Muhammad) as a mercy to all creation.*"³⁹ Therefore, Allah describes Himself as Grace and Mercy, Allah describes the Prophet Muhammad as Grace and Mercy and Allah describe the Qur'an as grace and mercy. To emphasize the importance of mercy and to emphasize that mercy has to precede knowledge and learning we read in the Holy Qur'an that the Israelite prophet Moses has spoken to Allah directly and received the Torah from Allah directly.

Because of that the Prophet Moses thought of himself as the most learned person among his people or the most learned person among Allah's creation. So, Allah wanted to humble the Prophet Moses and to show him that among Allah's vast creation there are other servants of Allah who did not speak directly with Allah and did not

³⁶ Ibidem 68:1

³⁷ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 26:197 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 727.

³⁸ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 6:54 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 307.

³⁹ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 18:65 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 818.

receive the a holy book from Allah, yet they are much more knowledgeable and intelligent than the Prophet Moses. So, Allah sent one of Allah’s servants to teach Moses that which the Prophet Moses did not know. That servant of Allah was truly the most learned of Allah’s creation at the time, legend has his name as “Khedr”. Kheder, the most learned of Allah’s creation had a virtue that made him more knowledgeable than the Prophet Moses. That virtue was mercy. Allah said *“one from among Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.”*⁴⁰ Therefore, mercy precedes knowledge as prerequisite for the servant of Allah. Islam acknowledges the prophet Moses and all of those who follow, respect and revere his message as acceptable to Allah. Islam acknowledges Jesus Christ and all of those who follow, respect and revere his message as acceptable to Allah. Each messenger and His followers are good human beings who worship Allah according to the dictates of their own conscience. Therefore, it is possible to be a good human being and worship Allah differently from the way your neighbor worships Allah. The next point illustrates this idea.

The sixth point: what could happen if we thought that there is more than one way to worship God and be a good human being? What could happen if we Muslims thought that the Prophet Moses came with a superior way for human beings to live their lives and worship Allah as recorded in the Hebrew Torah, and the Torah also says that there are other ways to worship Allah that are equally acceptable to Allah?⁴¹ What could happen if we thought that Jesus Christ came with a superior way for human beings to live their lives and worship Allah as recorded in the Greek Gospel, and the Gospel also says that there are other ways to worship Allah that are equally acceptable to Allah?⁴² What could happen if we thought that the Prophet Muhammad came with a superior way for human beings to live their lives and worship Allah, and the Qur’an says that there are other ways to worship Allah that are equally valid to Allah?⁴³ What could

⁴⁰ ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 21:107 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 727.

⁴¹ The Harper Collins Study Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:11 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006) 895

⁴² The Harper Collins Study Bible, Romans 1:20 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006) 1912

⁴³ ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 40:78 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 727

happen if we believe that people who sincerely follow Moses or Jesus Christ are equally accepted by Allah? What will happen if we believe with certainty when Allah said in the last Chapter revealed to The Prophet Muhammad *“To each among you (Jews Christians and Muslims) we have prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, Allah would have made you [Jews, Christians and Muslims] a single people, but Allah’s plan is to test you in what Allah has given you: so strive as in a race for all virtues.”*⁴⁴

The over arching theme in the Holy Qur’an is “strive as for a race for all virtues” or “strive for all virtues”. The object here is not which of Allah’s laws do I follow, the object here is to use such law, whether it is in Hebrew, Greek or Arabic as my basis to “strive for all virtues” The amazing news about the book of Allah is that it mentions the people of the book (Jews and Christians) using direct or indirect reference in 4155 versus out of 6233 verses in the Holy Quran. That is a whopping 67% of the book of Allah that invites the believer to reflect and ponder on verses that relate directly or indirectly to the people of the book⁴⁵ (Jews and Christians). What could happen if we exegete the verses in the Qur’an that sum up the meaning discussed here as a basis for our relationship with Jews and Christians? Allah said in the Holy Qur’an *“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, [not that ye may despise each other]. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the person who is the most virtuous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things.”*⁴⁶

When I give a talk in a Church or a Synagogue in America, I usually end my talk by asking my audience to read the Qur’an. I ask them to read the Qur’an, not with the intention of finding faults, contradictions and controversies, but with the intention of finding pearls of wisdom, moral and ethical values to hold their Muslim neighbors to. The same way here if some of us Muslims read the bible, not with the intention of

⁴⁴ ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an 5:48 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 263

⁴⁵ Ibn Rushd Institute, Independent Research Project, *Ahlul Kitab in the Holy Qur’an*.

⁴⁶ ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an 49:13 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 1342.

finding faults, contradictions and controversies, but with the intention of finding pearls of wisdom, moral and ethical values to hold our Christian and Jewish neighbors to the world will be a much safer and better place to live.

What could happen if we thought that pious Jews and Christians believe in the unity of God just like we Muslims believe in the unity of God? What could happen if we thought that pious Jews and Christians believe in the presence of angels like we believe in angels? What could happen if we thought that pious Jews believe that the Hebrew Torah is the word of God just like we Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of God? What could happen if we thought that Christians believe that the Greek Gospel is the word of God, just like we Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of God? What could happen if we thought that pious Jews love and revere their Prophet Moses just like we love and revere our Prophet Muhammad? What could happen if we thought that Christians love and revere Jesus Christ, just like we love and revere our Prophet Muhammad? Can we then have a place in our heart for others? Can we truly ponder and apply the verse in the Holy Qur'an "*we sent you [O Mohammed] only as a harbinger, and to every people [such as Jews and Christians] we have sent a guide.*"⁴⁷ The Prophet Muhammad is described here as a harbinger, a herald or announcer and to every other people Allah has sent a harbinger, a herald or announcer (someone to show them the proper way to Allah). What could happen if we Muslims believed that there is more than one way to Allah? Why? Allah said that in the Qur'an "Wherewith Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light,"⁴⁸ Allah did not say "way of peace and safety" Allah said "ways of peace and safety". Therefore, we should be thankful to Allah for all his blessings including the blessing of creating people of other faith traditions, including Jews and Christians, Buddhist, Hindu and others. Our paradise as Muslims is underneath the feet of Christians and Jews. Why? Because our faith in the message brought down to the Prophet Muhammad is not really tested until we have a Jewish

⁴⁷ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an 13:7 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 588.

⁴⁸ Ibidem 5:16.

neighbor on one side and a Christian neighbor on the other side and we are kind and respectful to both of them, then and only then will we be fulfilling the mission of the message revealed to our beloved Prophet Muhammad, in Holy Qur'an "*(O Muhammad) we have only revealed to you the Holy Qur'an so that you may clarify to them (Jews and Christens), that about which they differ and (as) guidance and a mercy for those who believe.*"⁴⁹

When I give a talk in a Church or a Synagogue in America, I usually end my talk by asking my audience to read the Holy Qur'an. I ask them to read the Holy Qur'an, not with the intention of finding faults, contradictions and controversies, but with the intention of finding pearls of wisdom, moral and ethical values to hold their Muslim neighbors to. The same way here if some of us Muslims read the bible, not with the intention of finding faults, contradictions and controversies, but with the intention of finding pearls of wisdom, moral and ethical values to hold our Christian and Jewish neighbors to the world will be a much safer and better place to live.

The concept of plurality discussed here does not mean anything and everything goes. It does not mean that we compromise our own faith to accommodate the way some else believes. The concept of a successful plurality is where the group that shows more sincerity and adherence in interpreting, adhering and applying the word of God, God will choose that group to rule. The group that strive the most as in a race for all virtues, God will choose that group to rule and we should all be joyous of the choices God makes. Just like in an Olympic race the competitor who invests the most time and sweat in training, preparing and focusing is able to win the competition. When that person wins he or she gets the Gold Medal and we are all cheering and happy for him/her. After all on the Day of Judgment we will all be judged on the time we could have been happy and joyful, yet we wasted that time in conflicts and contempt.

⁴⁹ Ibidem 16:64

In Conclusion, if we, focus on the question: why the Qur'an was revealed? If we are willing to return to the oppressed (Arab Palestinians) and the scattered (Arab Jews) that which belongs to them—that is dignity to the Palestinian Arabs and Security to the Jewish Arabs; and if we focus more on what God emphasized as a priority when God revealed God's message to The Prophet Muhammad, namely knowledge, mercy and learning; If we allow people to worship Allah according to the dictates of their own conscience; If we yearn to see social justice in the Holy Land, we will be able to achieve all that and more; and God will be on our side. When God is on our side, God will put in the heart of whoever is guarding over the Holy Land to have the Muslims, followers of The Prophet Muhammad, share in the guarding of the Holy Land or even be the only guarders of the Holy Land. This happened before in history and could happen again in our life time.

It might surprise you that the keys to the most sacred Christian site, the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulcher have been entrusted to a Jerusalem Arab Muslim family. The family of Nusaybah⁵⁰ held the keys to the most sacred Christian site for hundreds of years. And I would not be surprised, if the second temple was still standing in Jerusalem today, if it were not destroyed by the Romans, the keys to that temple would have also been trusted to a Muslim family. Why? Many Jewish families who lived in Jerusalem before 1948 use to leave their children with Arab Muslim families on Yom Kippur and go to the synagogue to worship⁵¹. So, which act shows trust between the faithful? Entrusting the key to the temple with a Muslim or entrusting your child with a Muslim? I hope that you all agree that a child is way more precious than the keys to a building—any building for that matter, even if it is the place of worship. Prophet Muhammad said “to destroy the Kabba one stone at a time is easier in the sight of Allah than to spill the blood of an innocent human being.”⁵²

⁵⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nusaybah_clan

⁵¹ <http://www.nkusa.org/activities/Statements/2006July18.cfm>

⁵² Al Sakhawi, Book of Maqasid, pp 381. Salafi site <http://www.kulalsalafiyeen.com/vb/showthread.php?t=34082>

The Torah and the Qur'an say that all land belongs to God. God is the true owner of the land. God alone grants permission for possession of the land to certain people for a certain duration. God alone grants the Land to whomever God is pleased with. I know you would like to liberate the Holy Land from the Jews who live there. I know that we have been taught that the Jews are the enemy of Allah, the Jews are the enemy of the Prophet Muhammad, the Jews are the enemies of the Qur'an and the Jews are the enemies of the believers. That is why you consider the Jews to be an alien body that should be uprooted, by force if necessary. So let's think about it, if there is an effortless path to do something and a difficult path to do it, why not consider the easy path? Why not consider the path of least resistance and leave the thorny difficult path? The easy path I refer to here is the path of winning God on our side. The difficult path is going against God's will. The easy path starts by understanding why The Prophet Muhammad message was revealed, emphasizing names used in the Qur'an such as the Holy Land, respecting people of other faiths and traditions (even if you think they hate you), providing security for those running away from danger, returning to others their rightful possessions and focusing on the Qur'an as a book of knowledge, mercy and compassion. That is the easy path to win other people's heart. That is the easy path to win God on our side. Once we have God on our side, God will put in the hearts of those who currently guard the Holy Land to let the followers of the Prophet Muhammad to share in the guarding of the Holy Land. No war is needed and no bloodshed is necessary. All we need is to respect one another and seek common ground, as Allah said in the Qur'an 41:34, "*Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then the person with whom you have enmity will become your friend and intimate!*"⁵³

⁵³ 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an 41:43 (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2009) 1241.

Epilogue

The Holy Quran calls on all humans to strive as in a race for all virtues. The call to “strive” is not limited to Muslims and *Ahlul kitab* (Jews and Christians). The call is directed towards all humanity, towards all mankind. All of us humans are commanded to strive as in a race for all virtues. The need to strive towards all virtue is a general commandment for all humans; it is impeded in our conscious as humans. Allah said in the Qur’an: *“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most virtuous of you.”*⁵⁴ Therefore, all of us brothers and sisters, living on this space ship called – Earth are commanded by Allah and rewarded by Allah to “strive”. Whether we are Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucius, Christians, Jews or Muslims we should all be looking to our own traditions to draw the best morals and ethical values, then strive towards such values and help others to strive towards their own good virtues, traditions, and values. Allah said in the Holy Qur’an that Allah sent a guide (a messenger) to every people, tribe and nation on earth in their own tongue to teach them about their own tradition, virtues and qualities, “and to every people we sent a messenger (a guide)”.⁵⁵ Allah is generous and Just, he sent guides in the form of messengers and prophets to the four corners of the globe to teach their own people in their own tongue about Allah.

Allah said in the Qur’an “If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues”⁵⁶ Our duty as Muslims is to strive for all virtues according to our faith traditions and help others to strive for all virtues according to their own faith traditions. Why? Because, Allah created all people and all traditions; and Allah asked the believer to respect Allah’s decision to create many nations, people and tongues when Allah said

⁵⁴ Ibidem 49:13

⁵⁵ Ibidem 13:7

⁵⁶ Ibidem 5:48

in the Holy Qur'an "We have honored the offspring of Adam;"⁵⁷ Allah did not say, "we have honored the believers offspring of Adam" or "we have honored the Christian offspring of Adam" or "we have honored the Jewish offspring of Adam". Allah honored the offspring of Adam without specifying color, creed, religion or race. Because Allah honored the offspring of Adam, we as Muslim are commanded to do the same: Honor the off spring of Adam. The only criteria Allah set for such honor is "so strive as in a race in all virtues."

Therefore, if the followers of other traditions are also "striving for all virtues" the best way they know how and we oppose them, then we are protesting Allah's plan. Our role as Muslims is to "strive as in a race in all virtues" and help others "strive as in a race in all virtues." That is true Islam as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad and that is true Islam as preached by the Prophet Muhammad and that is true Islam as believed by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad; and that is true Islam as believed by the early Muslims who embraced Islam when Islam came to Egypt and went from here in Egypt all the way to Spain. If we want Allah and Allah's messenger to be pleased with us "strive as in a race in all virtues." And help others do the same according to their own tradition. You have the measuring tape, the Holy Qur'an that will protect you and all of Humanities from going astray. Therefore do not be worried or afraid of having non-Muslims "strive as in a race in all virtues" according to the dictates of their conscious because the human conscious is one and comes from the only one. Allah.

⁵⁷ Ibidem 17:70