

4. Muhammad and Islam

In both the state-run and the religious state-run streams Islam is described with respect. All of the books elaborate in detail how Muhammad established Islam and explain the basic fundamentals of Islam in a factual, objective manner. Many books emphasize that Islam is closer to Judaism than to Christianity. It is frequently possible to discern a sympathetic tone and respect towards Islam. Such descriptions create openness among the student and provide him with an extremely good understanding of the Islamic religion and of the culture of the Arab peoples. Interestingly, it is the books used in the state religious stream that better highlight the positive aspects in Islam and the fact that jihad is not directed against Judaism and Christianity.

A second grade textbook used in the state-run schools explains to children, in a simple and substantive matter, what Islam is and who the Muslims are, under the heading, "Our Neighbors

"Israel is a Jewish state. Most of the country's citizens are Jews, but among its residents are also non-Jews. Most of the country's non-Jewish citizens are Arabs and Druze, who speak Arabic. The Arabs belong either to the Islamic religion or to the Christian religion. Most of the Arabs in the country are Muslims and a minority of them are Christians. The Muslims believe in the holiness of their prophet Muhammad – the founder of the Islamic religion. Their holiest book is the Koran, which contains the laws of their faith and the commandments of their religion. Their house of prayer is the mosque. Inside the mosque everything is very simple and there is no furniture. The worshippers in the mosque sit on the floor and pray facing Mecca – their holy city in Saudi Arabia, where their holiest temple is located. The mosques on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem are also holy to the Muslims."

(25, *The New Israel Reader* for second grade, 1987, p.74).

Muhammad and the Jews

All of the books, in all of the streams, emphasize that the Islamic religion is monotheistic and speak favorably of Muhammad's struggle against the idol worshippers. An ultra-orthodox book for children in the lower grades presents this, but also tells of Muhammad's negative regard for the Jews.

"The Founder of Islam

"The most respected family in Mecca was the Koreish family. Muhammad was a member of this family. He was born in approximately the year 570 CE. While still a small boy, he was orphaned and needed the benevolence of his uncle. He lived in poverty a long time until he married Hadidja, the widow of a wealthy merchant. To conduct his business, Muhammad traveled far and wide, and heard stories from Jews, Christians and Persians on matters of religion. Over time, he recognized that the legacy of his idol-worshipping forefathers was a lie, and that only the one God is the Creator and Master of the Universe. Along with this recognition, he began to believe more strongly that he was the messenger who would remove the belief in idolatry from his people and his country.

In the beginning, Muhammad hoped that the Jews too would believe in him. In order to win their hearts, he ordered that believers should pray in the direction of Jerusalem. But the Jews ridiculed Muhammad and called him a false prophet. From then on he hated them with a passion and changed the direction of prayer toward Mecca. And when he grew stronger he attacked them ... When he defeated the Jewish tribe of the children of Qureiga, he murdered all the men and made the women and children slaves.

Muhammad himself believed in his mission, even though as time went on he intentionally fabricated stories and imagined visions, in order to justify his actions or in order to attain some objective. His adages and the stories of his visions were recorded by his believers, some during his lifetime but most after his death. Slowly, they were collected into the book of the Koran, the Muslim book of faith". (367, **History of Israel**, 1993, pp.67, 68, 69).

As for Islam's regard for Judaism and the Jews, all of the books, in all of the networks, relate that Muhammad did not seek to convert the Jews:

“After all, Muhammad himself, already at the start of his wars, established the formula according to which the Jews were to be treated: whoever insists on retaining his Judaism ... should not be removed from his religion, and he must pay the poll tax ... and this will be given to God's Messenger (Muhammad)”.

“People of the Book’ – ‘Protected People’

“From what is written in the Koran, the believers of Islam learned that the law regarding the Jews is different from that of infidels who have no Torah from Heaven: infidels are to be converted to Islam or destroyed, while People of the Book (Ahal al-Kittab) are entitled to live in the shadow of Islam and to enjoy the protection of Allah and his Messenger, on the condition that they pay a special tax, the poll tax (Jeziya). As a result of paying the tax, the Jews became protected people (Ahal al-Dhimma), a status that was inferior to that of the Muslims, but the Muslims, the providers of protection, undertook to defend their lives, to guard their property and to enable them to practice their religion”.

(233, **Jews of the Islamic Countries During Ottoman Rule**, 1986, pp.18, 19).

A book used in the religious state-run network also contains a similar description:

"Muhammad determined that the Jews are not considered to be infidels, idol worshippers, since their faith is based on Torah from Heaven. In that, the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims are similar, and therefore they are called 'Peoples of the Book' (Ahal al-Kittab). Since the Jews were the first to receive Torah from Heaven, Muhammad praised them and said: We gave the Book to the Israelites and bestowed on them wisdom and prophethood. We provided them with good things and exalted them above the nations. ' (Koran 45:16). But the Jews rejected Muhammad's doctrine. They refused to believe that Muhammad was the 'seal of the prophets,' the last of the prophets, who was sent by God to enlighten people with God's will, and that his prophecy abolishes the Torah of Moses. When Muhammad saw that the Jews were mocking his message, he changed his attitude toward them. At Muhammad's order,

the believers drove out two Jewish tribes. They killed the members of the third tribe by the sword. Muhammad also accused the Jews of deviating from God's path. He claimed that the Jews included forgeries in the holy writings and used them to disrupt the writings. Muhammad distanced himself from the Jews and changed customs that mimicked the customs of the Jews: instead of facing in the direction of Jerusalem, from then on worshippers faced Mecca; and instead of fasting on Yom Kippur, from then on the Muslims fasted an entire month – the month of Ramadan. However, after Muhammad established himself in the country and succeeded in spreading his faith in the Arabian peninsula, he changed his attitude toward the Jews. Muhammad promised them that he would defend their lives and guard their property, on the condition that they recognize his rule and pay him a tax.

“In the Shadow of Islam

“... We can learn about the Muslims' attitude toward the Jews from the following sources: in the Koran it is written:

1. Fight against such of those to whom the Scriptures were given as believing neither in God nor the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His messenger have forbidden, and do not embrace the true Faith, until they pay tribute out of hand and utterly subdued.' (Koran 9:29).

“And a letter that Muhammad sent to the Jews states:

2. 'And when this letter of mine reaches you and you dwell in safety, you will have Allah's protection and the protection of his Messenger (Muhammad) ... because Allah's Messenger will protect you .. and for this you must (give) the fourth part of the produce of your date palms, and a fourth of your fish and a fourth of your women's spun-goods ... and if you hear and obey, Allah's Messenger will be ready to respect the honorable among you .. and you will have no other ruler among you except me' ... "
- (34, **From Generation to Generation**, lessons in history for the state religious school, 1994, pp. 230, 335).

Islam, Christianity and Judaism

A book used in the religious state network about the teachings of Rabbi Yehudah Halevy presents students with a comparison between Islam and Christianity, in which Islam is portrayed in a more positive manner:

"In contrast to Christianity, in which divinity was embodied in human form, Islam is extremely meticulous in avoiding any personification of God. The Muslims argue that the Koran's pure Arabic foiled any human attempt to copy it. Therefore, the very language used indicates the Koran's divine source, and this book does not need any further miracle to confirm its divine origin. To the contrary: the very fact that in Judaism and Christianity there is a need for signs and miracles indicates the weakness of these religions, and not their power (see the Koran, 2:44)."

(322, **The Historical Teachings of Rabbi Yehudah Halevy** , 1987, p.39) .

A book in the religious state network about the responsa literature (“literature of questions and answers”), a book is quoted that compares Christianity and Islam in two ways: the holiness of the Torah and God's oneness.

“Needs Study

“From the book of Rabbi Yitzhak Shelat, Letters of Maimonides, Vol. A, pp. 215-216: Regarding the two main foundations of Jewish faith – the reality of God and the divine origin of the Torah – there are conflicting disagreements between Christianity and Islam: the Christians are preferable to the Muslims in their regard for the sacredness of the Written Law, since the Christians believe that the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings as we have them are sacred writings that were given by God, and they even add them to their writings (see Shabbat, 116, B, in uncensored editions). The Muslims, however, while knowing about the Torah that was given to Moses by God, do not accept his Torah in its form, rather they draw story fragments from it in their writings ... In contrast, regarding the attitude toward the main belief in the oneness of God, the Muslims are preferable to the Christians, since the Muslims ascribe to God 'proper oneness, oneness that is unblemished' ... while the Christians do not properly ascribe such oneness.”
(224, **Responsa Literature**, 1992, p.42).

Maimonides' responsum on whether the Ishmaelites are idolaters and the attitude toward Hagar.

“Preface to the responsum

“The general content of Maimonides' responsum to Rabbi Ovadia regarding Hagar: The Ishmaelites and their religion: Maimonides determines that the Ishmaelites' religion (Islam) is not a religion of idolatry, and their ritual as well, the "Markolis – "throwing stones in their house of worship – is not an act of, nor an intention towards, idolatry.”
(224, **Responsa Literature**, 1992, p.42).

A history book in the state religious stream presents students with the "religion of the Arabs" before Muhammad and tells of the source of the Kaba:

“The Arabs' Religion

“The Arabian tribes actually believed in springs and rocks. Each tribe worshipped the god that it chose for itself, and it had its own laws and customs. But all of them also believed in the sanctity of the black rock, which was preserved in the Kaba building in Mecca. According to Arab tradition, the Kaba building was built by Abraham and his son Ishmael, and the black rock was God's gift that descended from heaven. When the rock came down from heaven it was white, but over the years it became black from the touch of the sinners (Kaba = Cube, since the structure in which the rock was placed was in the shape of a cube). The Kaba became the holiest site and drew pilgrims from across the peninsula. Each year, the tribes carried their gods and made the pilgrimage to Mecca.”
(34, **From Generation to Generation** – lessons in history for the state religious school, part b, 1994, p.194).

Further on, Muhammad's childhood is discussed in great detail and in very positive terms, and his struggle against idolatry is emphasized. The book tells of how the angel Gabriel was revealed to him and "ordered him to spread the belief in Allah – the one, true God." In the wake of this, "Muhammad demanded of the residents of Mecca that they abandon their pagan belief and atone for their sins by giving charity, prayer and good deeds." Since the residents of Mecca persecuted him, he fled. His flight is called the Hajira – and the year of the Hajira is the first year of the Muslim calendar. Alongside the text is a picture of the angel's revelation to Muhammad, and the text reads: "Notice that the Muslims do not draw the outlines of the faces of the holy figures. A Muslim holy figure always appears shrouded in flames)." (34, **op. cit.**, pp.198, 199).

The book also tells how Muhammad hoped that the Jews of the city of Yithrab (to which he emigrated from Mecca) "would help him spread the belief in one God, but they kept away from Muhammad and his messages, and therefore he persecuted them ... Muhammad's adherents killed all of the men of one of the Jewish tribes and sold the women and children into slavery" (*op. cit.*, p. 200). Further on, the "Pillars of Islam", the five commandments of Islam, are presented, The language which the book's author uses is free of pejorative terms and the description is substantive and objective, while pointing out positive customs in the Islamic religion, such as charity and atoning for sins.

“The Pillars of Islam”

“Muhammad ordered the Arabs to pray to Allah, the unseen, one and only God, and to perform his commandments. The new religion that he preached is called Islam, which means obeying God's will, and its adherents are called Muslims. The Islamic religion has five basic commandments that all believers, men and women, young and old, must perform:

1. Witness (Shahada) – the believer declares that 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.' Muslims recite this sentence during the call to prayer, during prayer and at various events.
2. Prayer (Tzal'at) – a Muslim must pray five times a day, facing the direction of Mecca.
3. Charity (Zaka'at) – every believer must give charity, in order to support needy Muslims (the charity is given to the poor, orphans and widows, but is also used to free Muslim prisoners and redeem Muslim captives).
4. Fasting (Tzom) – a Muslim must fast all the days of the month of Ramadan, from sunrise to sunset. According to Arab tradition, the Koran descended from heaven in this month, and therefore it is the appropriate month for atonement and forgiveness.
5. Pilgrimage (Haj) – Every believer must make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his life. But instead of the pagan ceremonies that were held at the Kaba, Muhammad established a new religious ceremony according to the new belief. At the end of the ceremony Id al-Adha – the Festival of the Sacrifice – is celebrated,

including much prayer and the bringing of offerings, most of which are distributed to the poor.”

(34, **op.cit.**, pp.200-202).

The text contains a picture of the Koran. The explanation states: "The Koran is the Arabs' book of books, and includes all of Muhammad's prophecies." The use of the term "book of books," which denotes the Bible, indicates the author's sympathetic regard for the Koran. The student is asked to respond, among other things, to the following question: "The word Koran is reminiscent of the Hebrew words hakra'a [recitation] and mikra [Bible]. What can we learn from that?"

(34, **op.cit.**, p.201).

Afterwards, an explanation is given about the Muslims' holy cities – Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem – and the story is told about Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Jerusalem on the horse (see the chapter on Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem). Further on, details are given about the commandment of the Pilgrimage. Among other things, it is explained that the tiled area on which those who walk around the Kaba step, includes the grave of Hagar and Ishmael. "The path passes by a pavilion called 'Makam Ibrahim.' According to tradition, Abraham stood at this place when he built the Kaba. Muhammad praised Abraham, since he was the first believer in the one God and it was he who built the Kaba. Afterwards, the pilgrim runs between two hills. This run imitates the run of Hagar, Abraham's wife, when she was searching for water for her son Ishmael. Close by the Kaba is the murmuring spring, also called Ishmael's spring. According to tradition, it was from this spring that Hagar drew water for Ishmael. Later, descriptions of other ceremonies are given, including throwing stones into three piles. According to Islamic tradition, the piles mark the place where Satan stopped Abraham and tried to prevent him from carrying out the Akeda [sacrifice] of his son. The throwing of the stones imitates the action of Abraham, who supposedly cast stones at Satan in order to drive him away..

The Festival of the Sacrifice: the holiday ends with the slaughtering of the sacrifice, and the great holiday begins – Id al-Adha, which lasts four days (the sacrifice symbolizes the slaughtering of the ram at the end of the Akeda)."

At the end of the chapter, among other things the student is asked the following: "The Arabs claim that Ishmael the son of Hagar is the father of all the Arab tribes. Is there justification for this claim (see Genesis, 21:20)?"

(34, **op.cit.**, p.205).

At the end of the chapter, there are two pages of drawings from the life of Muhammad and a number of questions phrased in a sympathetic tone about Islam and Muhammad:

“Why did the Muslims sanctify Jerusalem?”

“An ancient proverb says that 'a man is not a prophet in his own city'. In what way does the story of Muhammad's life demonstrate the proverb?"

“Try to find a logical order for arranging the five Pillars of Islam.”

“The Jews call the last remnant of our Temple the Western Wall. The Christians call it the Wailing Wall, and the Muslims call it Al-Buraq. What is the reason for each of these names?”

“For study and discussion: the differences between the Pillars of Islam and their parallel commandments in Judaism; Jerusalem's holiness in Islam compared with its holiness in Judaism or in Christianity”.

(34, **op.cit.**, p.208, 209).

The same book also emphasizes Muhammad's good regard for the Jews and quotes a verse from the Koran that shows this: "Muhammad determined that the Jews are not considered to be infidels, idol worshippers, since their faith is based on Torah from Heaven. In that, the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims are similar, and therefore they are called 'Peoples of the Book' (Ahal al-Kittab). Since the Jews were the first to receive Torah from Heaven, Muhammad praised them and said: We gave the Book to the Israelites and bestowed on them wisdom and prophethood. We provided them with good things and exalted them above the nations." (Koran 45:16).

(34, **op.cit.**, p.230).

In the next chapter, jihad (holy war) is explained as a religious commandment:

"Muhammad encouraged the believers to spread the new faith and ordered them 'to fight against the infidels – the people who continue to worship idols and refuse to recognize Allah as the single God. '... Slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush ...'"

(Koran 9:5)."

Afterward, under the heading of "The Achievements of Muhammad and His Successors," the book states that "he succeeded in uprooting idolatry from the entire Arabian peninsula ... the caliphs, Muhammad's successors, directed the Arabs' impulses for war against infidels outside the Arabian peninsula. They led the Arabs on wars against residents of the Persian kingdom and against the Christians residing in the Byzantine Empire." The book goes on to describe the Arabs' conquests and the religious split among them between Sunnis and Shiites.

(34, **op. cit.**, pp.210, 211).

A book used in state religious schools emphasizes the fact that Islam is closer to Judaism than Christianity is. There is a common denominator between the two religions.

“Islam – Between Judaism and Christianity

“Islam was influenced by both Judaism and Christianity. The influence of which religion is felt more in Islam? Study the following three selections and answer the questions that follow them.

Judaism – 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!' (Deuteronomy, 6)

Christianity – I believe in God the Almighty Father and in Jesus the Messiah His only Son and our Master, and in the Holy Spirit.' (from the Papal Bull; Second Century CE)

Islam – 'He, Allah, is One. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him.'

(Koran, Sura, 112)

1. Two of these texts resemble each other. Which ones?

2. How is the two texts' similarity expressed?

In art as well, especially in religious art, there is a noticeable closeness between Judaism and Islam”.

(341, **Lessons in History**, vol.b, 1987, p.132)

Another book used in the state religious stream also discusses the connection between Judaism and Islam: "In contrast to Christianity, in which divinity was embodied in human form, Islam is extremely meticulous in avoiding any personification of God." (322, **The Historical Teachings of Rabbi Yehudah Halevy**, 1987, p.39).

Further on, the story is told of Muhammad's successors, the caliphs, who conquered many lands in the seventh and eighth centuries CE, and who were tolerant of the Jews.

The Caliphs and the Jews

“Difficulties in Governing

“When the empire was established, problems arose that demanded an immediate solution. The Arabs were used to life in a tribal framework and they lacked experience in running the country and controlling its residents. How, then, were they to enact laws that would be appropriate for those of different cultures, and how would they rule many peoples in many countries? True, the caliphs went to war in the name of religion; but would it be wise to impose their belief on peoples who believe in other religions?”

“The Arabs' Tolerance

“The caliphs decided to employ tolerance and not to impose the Islamic religion on the peoples under their rule. They did not consider the Persians, the Christians and the Jews to be infidels, and they permitted them to continue following the customs of their ancestors. In this way, they prevented ferment and unrest in the empire and received the cooperation of the vanquished”.

“Later, the various dynasties that ruled the Arab empire and their treatment of the ‘protected peoples’ – e.g. the non-Arab residents of the empire – are discussed: “In exchange for having their lives and property assured, they were required to pay taxes which the Arabs were exempt from paying – a poll tax and a property tax”.

(34, **From Generation to Generation**, op. cit., pp.212, 213).

All of the books, in all of the streams, mention the "Laws of Omar," (named after Caliph Omar II, who ruled from 717-720 CE. Some books present the full text of the laws (for example, 14, **From Exile to Independence**, Vol. 2, 1989, p.26), while others suffice with presenting a summary of them: the prohibition against the carrying of weapons by protected peoples; the prohibition against riding on horses; the obligation to wear special clothing in order to distinguish them from Muslims; the obligation to bow to Muslims; the prohibition against burying the dead in areas for Muslim burial; the prohibition against living in a house that is higher than that of a Muslim; etc.).

(34, **op.cit.**, p.232).

All of the books note that most of the rulers were not meticulous in implementing the severe restrictions that were imposed on the Jews. “They preferred to be assisted by the Jews and to exploit their talents for their benefit and for the good of their kingdom ... At first, the rulers had no experience in running a country ... and therefore they were forced to use the services of the protected peoples who were members of the 'Peoples of the Book.' They gave the Jews important positions in the caliph's court and in managing the state treasury. The rulers employed the Jews because they knew that the Jews would not threaten their rule”.

Further on, the Jews in Babylonia (Iraq) are discussed: “When the Arabs conquered Babylonia, they granted the Jews the status of a religious community permitted to manage its own affairs. The people continued to be led by the Exilarch, who was the representative to the authorities and who was accorded great respect in the Caliph's court. The Exilarch represented the Jewish people in the Caliph's court and was responsible for appointing religious court judges and for punishing offenders”.
(34, **op.cit.**, pp. 232, 243).

Up to this point, long selections from one book have been brought, precisely because it is taught in state religious schools. The book contains many drawings from Islamic history and of Islamic art, and it is written entirely in a way that is sympathetic to Islamic heritage.

A history book taught in the state-run stream also describes the rise of Muhammad in a substantive and factual manner. This book presents the full text of the Fatiha prayer, which opens the Koran and which a Muslim must recite five times a day. “The teacher will play the prayer for you on a tape recorder”. About the Islamic religion it states: “Muhammad founded a new religion, Islam. Muhammad emphasized three things in his many speeches: 1. Monotheism: the belief in one God, Allah; 2. Judgement Day: the day on which mankind will be judged for good or bad; 3. Charity: the obligation of all people to give charity to the poor and to better each other's lives”. Later, the book describes the internal structure of mosques and presents many illustrations of prayer customs, the external and internal look of mosques, and the custom of making the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Meaning of Jihad

The book describes the commandment of jihad as follows:

“The Commandment of Jihad (a war that is commanded)”

“Muhammad called on his people to go to war against Arab tribes that did not want to accept his faith. After his death, his successors called for a war against other peoples that did not accept Islam. They viewed these wars as a commandment, and called them ‘jihad’.

“The Muslims divided the entire world into two regions: 'Dar al-Islam,' where the Muslims already rule, and 'Dar al-Harb,' which needs to be fought with the sword, until it too is ruled by Islam. The war against the people of 'Dar al-Harb' was considered to be a war that is commanded or jihad, since a Muslim had to participate in it. The leaders of Islam promised the fighters that anyone who fell in a war that is commanded or jihad is assured of going to Paradise. Thus, jihad became a

commandment in Islam, and some sects even viewed jihad as an additional, sixth Pillar of Islam." (348, **History of Israel and the Peoples**, vol. b, pp.183-196).

A geography book for state-run schools that deals with various cities around the world includes a chapter on Mecca and its holy sites. Alongside the description is a detailed diagram of the pilgrimage sites in Mecca and three pictures of the city. The description is written in a factual and substantive manner.

(72, **Communities in the Expanse – Chapters in the Geography of World Communities**, 1998, pp.180-181).

Another book, a history book used in the state run network, states that "the economic interests of the authorities occasionally required ignoring the discriminatory laws. Similarly, the Jews succeeded, through lobbying or by paying bribes, to circumvent these laws, mainly related to the building of new synagogues."

(14, **From Exile to Independence**, vol. b, p.27).

Another history book in the religious state network says that "in the period when Islam spread, Muhammad's successors, the caliphs, continued to show a sympathetic regard for the Jews ... This situation was not seen favorably by several caliphs, who were jealous of their religion . They sought to limit the freedom that was given to non-Muslims in their country. Their argument was that the wealth and success of the 'People of the Book' did not fit with the Koran's requirements that 'they be humiliated'."

(233, **Jews of the Islamic Countries During Ottoman Rule**, 1986, p.20).

And a history book for state-run schools writes about the caliphs' policy in the areas that they conquered:

"Usually, the Muslims behaved tolerantly toward the members of the monotheistic religions, even though they discriminated against them. In contrast, the Muslims used the sword to force idolaters to accept Islam."

(348, **History of Israel and the Peoples**, vol. b, p.200).

5. Jewish and Arab Holy Sites

The issue of Jewish and Islamic holy places is particularly sensitive since both sides periodically raise exclusive ownership claims to a particular holy site. Therefore, there is considerable significance to the way a holy place is presented to students – is it presented as exclusively Jewish or is information conveyed to students regarding the Arabs' attachment to that site?

The issue of Islamic holy places in Jerusalem is dealt with in Chapter 7 on Jerusalem. The attitudes toward the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem will be examined below.

The Tomb of the Patriarchs

A second-grade reader for students at state schools states: “According to Jewish and Arab tradition, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah, and Adam and Eve are buried in the Tomb of the Patriarchs... Today, the Tomb of the Patriarchs is used as a place of prayer and pilgrimage to the tombs of the Jewish patriarchs, and the Muslim Arabs also come to pray there.”
(25, **New Israel Reader**, for second grade, 1987, pp.245, 253).

In contrast, a second-grade reader for the ultra-orthodox stream tells a completely different tale. There is no mention of the Muslim attachment to the Tomb of the Patriarchs and only Arab harassment is related: “‘Dear Yossi’, said father with tears in his eyes, ‘I always wanted to prostrate myself at the tombs of our saints. Not just I, but all our Jewish brethren wanted to come here, but they could not. The Arabs, who knew of our great love for this place, forbade us to enter it. Those who tried anyway to come here, risked their lives. Now, after we have won our war against our Arab enemies with the help of God, they cannot prevent us from coming and again we pray by the tombs of our patriarchs and matriarchs in Hebron’.”
(21, **Our Children**, second grade reader, 1996, p.249)

A textbook on the Book of Joshua has pictures of the Tomb of the Patriarchs and of the modern city of Hebron. The captions read: “It is interesting to note that the Tomb of the Patriarchs is sacred not only to Jews, but to Muslims and Christians as well. A mosque where Muslims pray has been built above the Tomb.”
(125, **With Joshua**, from the series “With the Bible,” 1992, p.72)



A geography textbook describes the Tomb of the Patriarchs' sanctity to Muslims. A photograph beneath the text includes the Tomb and the mosque above it. In bringing the photograph the book underscores to the student the Arabs' strong connection to the site.

“The **Tomb of the Patriarchs** lies opposite the hill north of Nahal Hebron. Because of its sanctity to Jews, the Maccabees built a splendid building over it, which was enlarged in the days of Herod. Following the Arab conquest, the Tomb also became a sacred site for Muslims, who built a mosque on the ruins of the earlier building. The Muslims saw themselves then as the guardians of the Tomb. They forbade non-Muslims from entering it, and during certain periods forbade Muslims from entering it as well. Since the Six Day War (1967), the Tomb of the Patriarchs has been opened to Jews, after centuries during which they were barred from entering.”
(163, **The Central Mountain and Jerusalem**, 1994, pp.26-27).

A geography textbook for the ultra-orthodox network also writes substantively:

“Because of the Tomb of Abraham, who is also the father of Ishmael, the site is also considered to be sacred by Muslims, who are considered to be the descendants of Ishmael. They built a mosque in the courtyard above the Tomb ... And because the Arabs have a mosque there above the Tomb, and to prevent conflicts, special times have been arranged for Jews and Muslims to pray there.”
(365, **The Good Country**, Land of Israel studies textbook for grades 4-5, 1991, p. 94)

King David

A textbook used for Bible study in state religious schools states that King David is also holy to Muslims:

“Interesting to Know

“David in other religions: David is holy to both Christians and Muslims. Jesus, the founder of Christianity, is believed by Christians to be the Messiah of the House of David. The Koran, the Muslims' holy book, also talks about David. David is believed by Muslims to be one of the prophets or emissaries who were honored by God to receive a Sacred Book. In the case of David, it is the Book of Psalms. The Koran tells of the fight between David and Goliath and does not tell of David's sin with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

(178, **With King David**, work book for the Book of II Samuel, 1993, p.146).

Bethlehem

A geography textbook presents Bethlehem as a city sacred to Christians:

“Between Hebron and Jerusalem, on the mountain ridge, lies the city of Bethlehem. According to Jewish tradition, Rachel’s Tomb is located at the northern entrance to the city. The Bible also states that King David was born in the city.

Over time, Bethlehem became a sacred city for Christians. According to their faith, Jesus was born there. The Church of the Nativity was therefore built as a focus of Christian pilgrimage, especially on Christmas.”

(163, **The Central Mountain and Jerusalem**, 1994, p. 27).

6. The Arabs' Attachment to Jerusalem

The controversy between the Palestinians and Israel about the future of Jerusalem is the most crucial issue in the negotiations toward peace. Their positions seem to be unbridgeable. The Israeli textbooks do not ignore the deep affinity of the Arabs to Jerusalem and convey this feeling to the students. By doing so the student is aware of the intensity of the conflict and of the difficulty to find a solution that will satisfy both sides.

The stories and poems in the literary anthologies do not refer to the political aspect but concentrate on the religious aspect.

A Holy City for Three Religions

A language textbook for the third and fourth grades states: "Yitzhak's grandmother lives in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Jerusalem is a holy city for Jews, Christians and Muslims as well."
(42, **I Understand** – reading comprehension for grades 3-4, 1955, p.141).

An elementary school literature reader features a poem "This is Jerusalem," that says, among other things: "And the muezzin's voice/emerges from the turret/church bells chime in response/and a young boy with phylacteries/utters his prayers/and the melodies blend over the city."
(194, **The Way of Words**, Book 4, 1996, p.169).

Another reader contains two poems describing people from the three religions living side by side and expresses optimism about the coexistence of the two peoples.

Jerusalem /Rachel Farhi

A bell chimes the scent of frankincense, the muezzin calls from the top
of the mosque, and a small hyssop plant that grew on stone based on stone
Crowned and the voice of prayer a still small voice
Three prayers and a city so ancient.

The Chance / Aharon Bacher

A small alleyway in the market, on the way to the Wall.
A Muslim haj in a silken tarbush, in a long robe, strides,
slowly, leaning on a cane.
Two nuns deep in discussion.
Three yeshiva students, walking hurriedly.
Robe touching robe, murmuring touching murmuring.

The surrounding area looks at them with eyes of stone. It assesses
the size of the danger, so too the size of the chance that lies in
this sight, which contains all the unity that can be found

in contrasts. Each time they walk around here together, alongside each other, the chance exists. They are the chance. (187, **The Way of Words**, 5, 1992, p. 185).

A ninth grade reader features two poems by Yehuda Amichai, one of Israel's prominent modern poets, one of which mentions the names given to the city in the course of history by the members of the three religions.

Jerusalem 1967 / Yehuda Amichai

The city plays hide-and-seek among her names:
Yerushalayim, Al-Quds, Salem, Jeru, Yeru, all the while
whispering her first, Jebusite name: Y'vus,
Y'vus, Y'vus, in the dark. She weeps
with longing: Ilia Capitolina, Ilia, Ilia.
She comes to any man who calls her
at night, alone. But we know
who comes to whom.

(23, **Variations**, ninth grade reader, 1994, p. 252).

(translated by Stephen Mitchell, in *Poems of Jerusalem – a bilingual edition*, by Yehuda Amichai, Shocken Publishing House, Ltd., 1987).



A Hebrew-language study book for fifth grade in state-run schools contains a drawing with the symbols of the three religions that appeared in the “Children Draw Jerusalem” exhibition with the following caption underneath: “Jerusalem, the city that is sacred to the three monotheistic religions.”

(313, **That Is To Say – Language, Expression and Communication**, 1999, p.149).

Jerusalem – The Capital of Israel

In contrast to the above-mentioned books, there are some textbooks which totally ignore the other religions' attachment to Jerusalem and present students with a view of exclusiveness of Jewish ownership of the city. For example, a first-grade reader used in the state school stream says:

“Jerusalem the Capital

“There is one city in the world which all Jews love and it is called Jerusalem. Every day, in our prayers, we mention Jerusalem. David, King of Israel, built the city and lived there. The Temple stood in Jerusalem. Today the Temple no longer stands, but one section of the wall that surrounded the Temple Mount remains. That is the Western Wall. Jerusalem is beautiful. It is built on top of and is surrounded by mountains. It is where the President resides and it is the capital of the State of Israel.” (216, **Alfoni**, first grade reader, 1979, p.133).

A sixth-grade reader used in the ultra-Orthodox educational stream states: “We are all sons going to see their beloved mother who was held captive by foreigners for nineteen years.” (379, **Our Childhood 6**, sixth grade reader, p.274).

The same reader features a poem that requires no further explanation of the author's view of the Muslims' and Christians' attachment to Jerusalem:

"And Our Eyes Shall Behold
Your injured head still waits ...
Woe unto us – for gentiles have wounded you
Silver dust and gold dust
have covered the rounded bruises
on your radiant forehead.

Your ribs have been stabbed, Jerusalem
by piercing arrow crosses
and rounded crescents
that insolently dot the horizon.

Woe unto us, Jerusalem
for your ears are still ringing
from the mocking chiming of bells
and the alien metallic echo
spewing from the mosques' turrets.
(379, **Our Childhood 6**, sixth grade reader, p.277).

A book used in the ultra-orthodox sector refrains from using the word “holy” in reference to the other religions and suffices with saying “the city is also important to Muslims and Christians.” (365, **The Good Land**, grades 4-5 textbook for Land of Israel studies, 1991, p.27).

An eighth grade reader used in the ultra-orthodox network writes in a way that requires no additional explanation:

“Walk from place to place and you cannot help but see the glory and majesty in the city of your forefathers – even before its moment of redemption has come. And then you will come to the neighborhoods which the Greeks and Germans built for themselves and are named after them, such as the Greek Colony and the German Colony, etc. and which the wealthy Arabs built and called after themselves, such as Katamon, Baka, etc. and afterwards these were all given as an inheritance to the Children of Israel.”

(323, **Our Childhood 8**, eighth grade reader, 1989, p.271).

An elementary school history textbook writes that “Jerusalem has always been a holy city for the three religions.”

(223, **From Conservatism to Progress**, history for eighth grade, 1998, p.253).

A geography textbook features pictures of the Mosque of Omar and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and makes a clear distinction between the Jews’ very special attachment to Jerusalem and the attachment of the Muslims and Christians to it, which according to the book is solely of a religious nature.

“Eretz Yisrael is the land of the Jews. During the many years the Jews were outside their land, they sought to return there and settle the land. A special place in their hearts was reserved for Jerusalem and therefore they repeated in their prayers: ‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning’.” (Psalm 137:5).

“When Israel returned to its land and the State of Israel was established, Jerusalem, our capital once again, became the most important Jewish center for the entire Jewish people. Jews from Israel and all over the world make pilgrimages to Jerusalem and visit the sites that are sacred to Jews, such as the Western Wall.

“Jerusalem is a unique city: located in the eastern Mediterranean, in Israel, it is the only city in the world that is sacred to the three great religions. In addition to Jews, Christians and Muslims from all over the world also come to Jerusalem to visit sites that are sacred to each of the religions: Christians come to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and Muslims come to the Mosque of Omar.”

(159, **Mediterranean Countries**, 1992, pp.54, 65).

The next paragraph, taken from a geography textbook used in state-run high schools, unequivocally describes the attachment of the Jews to Jerusalem as much deeper than that of the Muslims and Christians.

“A prominent feature of Jerusalem is its diverse population. Living side by side in the city are residents belonging to different religions, different streams and different nations. Jews and Arabs, secular and religious, Muslims and Christians and others... Jerusalem has been the religious, spiritual and national center of the Jewish people throughout the generations and through all of its dispersions and it is a holy city for Jews. It is also a holy city for Christians and one of the three holy Muslim cities. Consequently, Jerusalem acquired a unique status, both among Jews in Israel and around the world, and among adherents of other religions in Israel and abroad... and

Jerusalem also has places that are sacred to Christians and Muslims. For Muslims, Jerusalem is the place from where Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic religion, ascended to heaven and therefore many mosques have been built there. The fact that the city is sacred to three religions has, throughout history, brought tens of thousands of pilgrims to the city to visit its holy sites. Jerusalem's importance as a holy city and place of pilgrimage is also apparent in the perception that prevailed at various times whereby Jerusalem is situated at the center of the world."

(72, **Communities in the Expanse – Studies on the Geography of World Settlements**, 1998, pp.174, 175, 176).

7. Islamic Holy Sites in Jerusalem

The Dome of the Rock

A geography textbook states: “Jerusalem is important in Judaism, Christianity and Islam... with the start of Muslim-Arab rule in the country, Jerusalem became sacred in Islamic tradition as well. Two mosques were built on the Temple Mount, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, in places that are linked in Islamic tradition to the journeys of Muhammad, the founder of the faith. Thus, Jerusalem became a city of religious significance all over the world.”

The text is accompanied by photos of the Western Wall, the Church of Mary Magdalene and the Dome of the Rock Mosque. The inclusion of the pictures reinforces in the student the idea that Jews do not have exclusive rights to Jerusalem and heightens awareness of the Muslims' connection to the city.

(302, **Man and Environment** – Studies in the History of Eretz Yisrael, 1999, pp.73, 162).

A geography textbook for the fifth and sixth grades used in the ultra-orthodox educational network indeed tells students about the connection between Muslims and Jerusalem, but does so without using the concept of holiness and highlights the fact that the Dome of the Rock Mosque was built on the site of the Temple. Below the text, there is a picture of the mosque.

“After the Arabs conquered Jerusalem, the sultan built a mosque known as the Dome of the Rock. The mosque was built on the site of the Temple and is called the Dome of the Rock because it is built above the Foundation Stone, upon which the Ark stood in the Temple. This mosque is also called the Mosque of Omar and it has a golden dome. On the southern side of the Temple Mount, there is a mosque known as the Al-Aqsa Mosque.”

(357, **Jerusalem the Holy City and the Temple**, 1991, p.36).

The book **With King David**, a student workbook for studying the Book of II Samuel, features a picture of the Dome of the Rock with the following caption: “The Dome of the Rock Mosque in Jerusalem. According to tradition, this is the site of Orna the Jebusite’s threshing floor.”

(178, **With King David**, 1993, p.129).

Jerusalem – A Holy City for the Muslims

Many history textbooks used in the state-run and state religious schools contain long and detailed chapters on the history of Islam (see the chapter on Islam in this report) and they contain explanations on how Jerusalem became a holy city for Muslims. The next quotation is an example of such an explanation which was written objectively and fairly. It illustrates for the student the depth of Muslims’ attachment to Jerusalem and leads the student to be sensitive to Muslims’ emotional attachment to this city.

“The first issue is religious – in the connection of Jews and Muslims to Jerusalem and to Eretz Yisrael. The connection between Jews and Eretz Yisrael, which is a basic principle of the Jewish faith, existed and was preserved throughout the generations. In contrast, the sanctity of Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael for Islam underwent several changes. Muhammad designated Jerusalem as a holy city which Muslims should face toward when they pray. However, after realizing that the Jews of the Hejaz continued to adhere to their faith, he ended this practice and designated Mecca as a holy place. Nevertheless, Islam accepted the view that the Al-Aqsa Mosque, located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, would be the valley of the vision of the resurrection of the dead in the end of days. Consequently, Muslim believers deemed the city a holy place, which alongside Mecca and Medina should be a place of pilgrimage. As early as the second century after the Hajira (Muhammad’s journey from Mecca to Medina), Jerusalem was already recognized as a holy site by most Muslims, and they directed the prayers and customs toward the city, which had originally been directed toward Mecca alone. Eretz Yisrael is mentioned in the Koran only once, and it is referred to as 'the Holy Land.' However, the reference as such reinforces Jerusalem’s sacred status and Islam gradually developed a view that saw the sanctity in all of Eretz Yisrael, while highlighting the fact that it was the land of the prophets and the place of Divine Revelation.” (299, **The World and the Jews in Recent Generations**, Part A: 1870-1920, 1998, p.226).

A geography textbook used in the ultra-orthodox educational stream emphasizes only the Jews’ connection to Jerusalem:

“Ever since King David purchased the threshing floor from the Jebusite and Solomon built the Temple, Jerusalem has been designated the capital of our country and from that time until today it has served as the capital and largest spiritual center in the world for the entire Jewish people. From Jerusalem, Torah went out to the Jewish people in all the lands of the Diaspora.” (365, **The Good Land**, Grades 4-5 textbook for Land of Israel studies, 1991, p. 47).

The Temple Mount

A junior high school history textbook states: “Muhammad declared that Jerusalem is a holy city and demanded that all his followers face toward it when praying. After clashing with the Jews of Medina, Muhammad ruled that worshippers must face toward Mecca and not toward Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Jerusalem was acknowledged as a holy city from that time on (to this day, Muslims refer to Jerusalem as 'Al-Quds,' i.e., the holy place), but not as holy as Mecca. From that point on, Muhammad began to claim that the Patriarch Abraham was the one who built the Kaba’a together with his first-born son, Ishmael.”

The same book cites a legend whereby Muhammad rode a winged horse from Mecca to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and from there ascended to Heaven for a visit. The place where Muhammad tied up his horse was the Western Wall and is therefore referred to by Arabs as Al-Buraq, after Muhammad’s horse. “On the basis of this story, and following the Jewish tradition sanctifying the Temple Mount, the Muslims also sanctified the Temple Mount and built several important structures on it. The

most important among them are the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.”

Alongside the text are two large photos of the mosques.

(341, **History Lessons** for state-run schools, vol.2, From the Rise of Rome to the Late Middle Ages, 5747, pp. 188, 190, 196-199); This story appears in greater detail in a history textbook. (348, **History of Israel and the Nations**, 1987, pp.202, 208-210).

Regarding the Western Wall, readers used in the ultra-orthodox network contain a story whereby the Arab sultan, Suleiman, uncovered it after the Christians sullied it. The story appears in two versions with certain modifications. It proves that the Arabs considered the site as a holy place.

A second-grade reader used in the ultra-orthodox network relates a story of a man appointed by Suleiman to look for the site of the Temple. One day, he met a woman with a basket of garbage on her head. She had come from Bethlehem especially to dump her garbage in a specific place in Jerusalem. The man was surprised and asked her, "Why did you come from Bethlehem to bring your garbage to this place?" – "This is what we were told to do, because whoever throws out his garbage here is, after all, doing a good deed." The man was curious and ordered that the garbage be removed and lo and behold before him was revealed the site of the Temple and the Western Wall.”

(377, **Our Childhood 2**, second grade reader, p.190).

A fifth-grade reader features the following description:

“Regarding the discovery of the location of the Western Wall and its uncovering, there is a tradition whereby the Sultan was once sitting by the window of his palace and looking over the Temple Mount area. Suddenly he saw a Christian woman holding a garbage basket and pouring it onto a pile of garbage that had accumulated over the years. The Sultan watched the woman repeat this action several times until he ordered that she be arrested. The Sultan inquired into the meaning of her actions and the woman answered him and said the following: ‘It is a tradition among us that it is an order to throw garbage in this place, because once the House of the God of Israel stood here.’ The Sultan immediately ordered that gold dinars be scattered around the pile and an announcement made to the poor of the city that whoever searched in the pile and found the coins would be able to keep them. Many of the city’s poor came there and after a short time, they uncovered the Western Wall.

“The Foundation Stone on Mount Moriah

“The foundations of the Temple were built on the foundation stone on Mount Moriah. Even in our time, when it is possible to visit the Old City and the Western Wall, a Jew does not have the opportunity to enter the Temple Mount, the place where the Temple once stood. Because of the sanctity of the place, it is customary not to tread there, lest one step on the actual spot where the Temple stood. The Arabs built a large mosque on the spot which is known as the Mosque of Omar, after the man who built it, and the Arabs prevented Jews from treading there. The Temple is within this compound and its foundations were built on top of one stone known as the foundation stone, i.e., the stone Jacob fixed as a monument as is stated in the Torah: ‘And Jacob took a stone and set a monument... and this stone which I have set as a monument shall be the house of God’.” (331, **Our Childhood 5**, fifth grade reader, 1997, p.226).