

Why was the Dome of the Rock built? A new perspective on a long-discussed question

Milka Levy-Rubin*

The National Library of Israel

milka.rubin@gmail.com

Abstract

The existing discussion regarding the motives for building the Dome of the Rock revolves around two suggestions: that the incentive for building was the fierce competition between ‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Abdallah b. al-Zubayr in Mecca, and that it was competition with local Christian monuments that moved ‘Abd al-Malik to building this outstanding edifice. This paper suggests that a third incentive lay in the political and ideological rivalry with Constantinople that was at its peak during that period. This rivalry drove ‘Abd al-Malik to build a monument that would outdo those of Constantinople, and especially that of the Hagia Sophia. Muslim tradition emphasized that Constantinople had contaminated the site of the Temple and had claimed to inherit its place as God’s throne on earth. The building of the Dome of the Rock, the New Temple of Solomon, was thus meant to redeem the Temple of Jerusalem’s honour as of old against the claims of Constantinople.

Keywords: Dome of the Rock, ‘Abd al-Malik, Jerusalem, Solomon’s Temple, Constantinople, God’s Throne, Hagia Sophia

The question posed here has been discussed by many fine scholars for many years, and much ink has been spilled in attempts to reach satisfying solutions. These scholars include Goldziher, Goitein, Grabar, and Elad among others.¹

* I would like to thank Prof. Amikam Elad for his helpful comments. Errors remain mine alone.

1 For this ongoing discussion see A. Elad, “Why did ‘Abd al-Malik build the Dome of the Rock? A re-examination of the Muslim sources”, in J. Raby and J. Johns (eds), *Bayt al-Maqdis, ‘Abd al-Malik’s Jerusalem, Part One* (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art, Vol. IX. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), vol. 1, 33–58; idem, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 147–63; for Elad’s most recent version see “‘Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: a further examination of the Muslim sources”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam (JSAI)* 35, 2008, 167–226, including a full survey of the ongoing discussion. For the positions of Goldziher, Goitein and others, and a full bibliography, see O. Grabar, “Kūbbat al-Šakhra”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (*EF²*), ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs; M. Milwright, “Dome of the Rock”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *Three* (*EF³*), ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson; Grabar, “The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem”, *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1959, 33–62; Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Grabar, *The Dome of the Rock* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006); and more recently M. Milwright, *The*

The essence of the problem has been defined by one of the leading scholars in the discussion, Oleg Grabar, in his article in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Of Islam*:²

The Dome of the Rock has excited more scholarly concern than any other Islamic monument, and this for several reasons. It is a unique building which was rarely copied for its shape (a few later mausoleums like the Sulaybiyya in Sāmarrā or Qalāwūn's tomb in Cairo may have used it as a model), and never for its functions. It does not fit into any architectural series. Also it is located on the site of the Jewish Temple, in the holy city of Christianity, without showing obvious traces of impact from the two older monotheistic faiths. It does not look like a mosque, and the Aḳṣā nearby fulfilled the congregational needs of the Muslim community.

To what purpose and for what reasons was this architecturally unique and lavishly decorated building built? Explanations based on the sources vary a great deal: Goldziher, whose claim was recently substantiated by Elad, maintained that the wish to create an alternative centre to the Ka'aba in reaction to 'Abdallah b. Zubayr's revolt was the central motive;³ others assert that 'Abd al-Malik was motivated by competition against Christianity (Goitein, Grabar based on al-Muqadassī)⁴ and that in effect this splendid monument fulfilled the need to contend with the towering, glimmering crosses in Jerusalem and with theological issues such as the Trinitarian doctrine in an attempt to display victorious Islam. Grabar also pointed out the Abrahamic connection.⁵ More recently, based first and foremost on the Praises of Jerusalem literature

Dome of the Rock and Its Umayyad Mosaic Inscriptions (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). On the date of the construction see S. Blair, "What is the date of the Dome of the Rock?", *Bayt al-Maqdis*, 59–83. For a discussion of the iconography see M. Rosen-Ayalon, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharīf: An Iconographic Study* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1989); R. Shani, "The iconography of the Dome of the Rock", *JSAI* 23, 1999, 158–207; Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Dome of the Rock as palimpsest: 'Abd al-Malik's grand narrative and Sultan Süleyman's glosses", *Muqarnas* 25, 2008, 17–105; and more recently L. Nees, *Perspectives on Early Islamic Art in Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

2 O. Grabar, "Kubbat al-Ṣakhra", *EP*².

3 I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* II, trans. S.M. Stern (London, 1967–71), 44–6; Elad, "Why did 'Abd al-Malik build?"; Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 158–63; Elad, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock".

4 S.D. Goitein, "The historical background of the erection of the Dome of the Rock", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 70, 1950, 104–8; Goitein, "The sanctity of Palestine in Early Islam", in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 135–48; for Grabar, see above, n. 1.

5 See O. Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1959, 33–62, esp. 42; Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy, Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 112; see also Shani, "Iconography", 164, n. 28, with additional bibliography regarding this question; see also J.D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham* (Princeton: PUP, 2012), who discusses among other issues Abraham's role in Islam, and the traditions locating the sacrifice of Isaac to the Temple Mount, *passim*.

(*Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*), Hasson,⁶ Livne-Kafri,⁷ Van Ess,⁸ Elad,⁹ Cook,¹⁰ Berger,¹¹ and Necipoğlu,¹² emphasized the central role of traditions of Jewish origin regarding Jerusalem and the Temple which were part of Muslim lore as early as the beginning of the eighth century; these traditions concerned especially Solomon's Temple and cosmological and eschatological elements of the Temple Mount and Jerusalem. Elad maintains that 'Abd al-Malik conceived himself as a Davidic Messiah who was rebuilding Solomon's temple. Crone and Cook believe that the Muslims originally intended to build the Jewish Temple.¹³ Busse, Rabbat, Sharon and Elad have shown that in its early years the ceremonies in the monument bore many similarities to those of the Jewish temple, and that Jews were in fact involved in them.¹⁴ As for the established tradition regarding the sanctity of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, most scholars tend to agree that the tradition of the *Isrā'a* and *Mi'rāj*, became established only later and in any case did not serve as the main incentive for the building of this extravagant and unique monument.¹⁵ Robinson puts this great project into context claiming that "'Abd al-Malik's ambitions as a ruler were as grand and radical as the design and execution of the Dome of the Rock",¹⁶ and that such a project was a clear signal to the local population that "the Muslims were now laying permanent claims to the land".¹⁷

- 6 I. Hasson, "The Muslim view of Jerusalem: The Qur'an and Hadith", in J. Prawer and H. Ben-Shammai (eds), *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Islamic Period (638–1099)* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 349–85.
- 7 O. Livne-Kafri, *Jerusalem in Early Islam – Selected Essays* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2000), esp. "On Jerusalem in Early Islam", 78–109 (in Hebrew); see also Ofer Livne-Kafri, "A note on some traditions of *Faḍā'il al-Quds*", *JSAI* 14, 1991, 71–83.
- 8 J. Van Ess, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: an analysis of some texts", in J. Raby and J. Johns (eds), *Bayt al-Maqdis, vol. 1*, 89–103.
- 9 "Why did 'Abd al-Malik build?"; Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 158–63; Elad, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock".
- 10 D. Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002), 54–5.
- 11 P. Berger, *The Crescent on the Temple: The Dome of the Rock as Image of the Ancient Jewish Sanctuary* (Brill: Leiden, 2012), 31–53.
- 12 "The Dome of the Rock as palimpsest".
- 13 P. Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 10.
- 14 M. Sharon, "The 'praises of Jerusalem' as a source for the early history of Islam", *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 44, 1992, 56–67; H. Busse, "The Temple of Jerusalem and its restitution by 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān", in B. Kühnel (ed.), *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art: Studies in Honour of Bezalel Narkiss on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Jerusalem, 1998), 23–33; N. Rabbat, "The meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock", *Muqarnas* 6, 1989, 12–21; Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 161–3; Elad, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock", 180–3.
- 15 Busse, "The Temple of Jerusalem and its restitution", 30; Busse, "Jerusalem in the story of Muhammad's night journey and ascension", *JSAI* 14, 1991, 1–40; N. Rabbat, "The meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock", 12–3; O. Grabar, *The Dome of the Rock* (Cambridge, 2006), 140–41. Goitein and lately Rubin support the idea that this tradition is in fact early. See S.D. Goitein and O. Grabar, "Al-Quds", *IEJ* vol. 5, 322–44; U. Rubin, "Muhammad's Night Journey (*Isrā*) to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā. Aspects of the earliest origins of the Islamic sanctity of Jerusalem", *Al-Qantara* 29/1, 2008, 147–64; and see Hasson, "The Muslim view of Jerusalem", who argues with Goitein.
- 16 See C. F. Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 1–9, esp. p. 8.
- 17 Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik*, 7.

As Elad rightly emphasizes¹⁸ the various motives do not contradict each other. In effect, together, they even provide added support for such a great and ambitious investment. In this paper I would like to propose an additional motive, presented from a different and hopefully somewhat fresh perspective.

The gist of my claim is that one of the main incentives for building the Dome involved an emotionally, politically and eschatologically loaded competition between the Muslim Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire, between Jerusalem and Constantinople. At the nucleus of this competition were on one hand the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim version of the Temple of Solomon, meant to reclaim the honour of the humiliated Temple in Jerusalem, and on the other, haughty Constantinople which professed to be the New Jerusalem, with the Hagia Sophia – an extraordinary church magnificently rebuilt over a century-and-a-half earlier by Justinian, which claimed to be the Byzantine heir of the temple – at its centre.

In the following discussion I will describe the position of Jerusalem in the Byzantine world in Late Antiquity and the growing competition between Jerusalem and Constantinople in the early Islamic period. I will then attempt to demonstrate how this competition may well have been one of the central motives for erecting an outstanding monument built in the Byzantine tradition that was to be as impressive as the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

Between Jerusalem and Constantinople in Byzantine history

Jerusalem, and the Temple mount in particular, posed a difficult challenge to Christianity from the start.¹⁹ On the one hand, the devastated city, previously the Jewish spiritual centre, and particularly the ruined temple in its heart, served as the ultimate proof of the victory of Christianity over Judaism, from which, according to Christian belief, God had turned away. This proof was reinforced by Hadrian's edict forbidding the Jews from entering Jerusalem, and reiterated probably by Constantine upon building the church of the Holy Sepulchre.²⁰ Eusebius in his *Demonstratio Evangelica* (VI, 18), advocated the idea that the sanctity had moved after the destruction to the Mount of Olives basing his claim on Zach. 14: 1–10 (a Jewish idea based Zachariah 14: 4).²¹ Yet just a few years later, when Constantine decided to build the church of the Holy

18 Elad, “‘Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock”, 211.

19 For a succinct description of this dilemma see G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: études sur le recueil des ‘patria’* (Paris: PUF, 1984), 304–5.

20 A. Linder, “Ecclesia and Synagoga in the medieval myth of Constantine the Great”, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 54, 1976, 1021–60, esp. 1027–30; O. Irshai, “Constantine and the Jews: the prohibition against entering Jerusalem – history and hagiography”, *Zion* 60, 1995, 129–78 (Hebrew).

21 In Jewish tradition this transition was not permanent as was conceived at the time in Christian theology, but was temporary just until its final return to Jerusalem. See E. Ben Eliyahu, who also claims that the Jewish tradition at some point shifted the destination of the divine presence following the destruction from the Mount of Olives to the desert in order to differentiate itself from the developing Christian tradition regarding the sanctity of the Mount: E. Ben-Eliyahu, “Mount of Olives – between Jews and Christians in the Roman Byzantine Era”, in E. Baruch (ed.), *New Studies on Jerusalem* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1998), 55–63 (in Hebrew).

Sepulchre in Jerusalem, it became evident that the status of the city had changed.²² True, the focus had now moved to the place of the crucifixion and the resurrection while the ruined Temple Mount continued to serve as a living proof of Christian victory of Christianity and a constant source of humiliation for the Jews.²³ Yet the revival of the city which had served as the Jewish political as well as spiritual centre regaining the old name Hierusalem was problematic even for Eusebius himself, who chose at first to declare that the Holy Sepulchre was built only in the margins of the city, later admitting that it was in fact in its centre.²⁴ The somewhat fragile solution to this dilemma was found in the differentiation between the Old Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem²⁵ (just as the New Testament was differentiated from the Old Testament). From now on, the bishops of Jerusalem would invest tremendous energy in promoting the status of the city. The results would soon be evident, starting with canon 7 of the Oecumenical council in Nicaea, which approved the custom according to which the bishop of Aelia should be honoured, continuing in Constantinople I in 381, when the church of Jerusalem was declared “Mother of all Churches”,²⁶ and culminating in Chalcedon (451), when Jerusalem was declared the Fifth Patriarchate.²⁷ During these years Jerusalem would become an important centre of pilgrimage characterized by a growing number of Holy Places and by its special feast days. This special status would be reinforced by Heraclius’ triumphal entry upon returning the cross from the Persian captivity to Jerusalem.²⁸

Beyond the establishment of a religious and political status of this “New Jerusalem”, Christian tradition also assigned the city a special eschatological status which was clearly based on messianic expectations strongly attached to both Jewish tradition and the interpretation of Jesus’ messianic role. Already in the fourth century we find in the *explanatio somnii* attributed to the Tiburtine Sybil the first version of the later famous legend of the Last Emperor, relaying the following account: during the reign of the Antichrist, the King of the Romans (i.e. the Byzantine Emperor) will vanquish Gog and Magog, he will then make way to Jerusalem, “lay down his diadem and his royal garb, and will hand over the Kingdom of the Christians to God the Father and Jesus

22 See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 25.

23 See e.g. Eusebius’ *Commentary of Psalms*, 59, 7; Jerome, *In Sophoniam*, I, 15–6 (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, vol. 75, p. 125), and more in Linder, “Ecclesia and Synagoga”, 1034–5; Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 304–5.

24 Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, VI, 18; idem, *Tricennalia* 9, ed. Heikel, GCS VII (1902), 221; Linder, “Ecclesia and Synagoga”, 1032–33.

25 Linder, “Ecclesia and Synagoga”, 1033.

26 See “A Letter of the bishops gathered in Constantinople”, in Norman P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London and Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), vol. 1, 9–10.

27 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*: vol. 2, ed. and trans. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 244–9.

28 C. Mango, “The Temple Mount, AD 614–638”, in Raby and Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, I, 1–16.

Christ his son”.²⁹ This same legend was to be recapitulated, possibly inspired by Heraclius’ triumphal entry to Jerusalem, sometime in the seventh century, in the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, which was distributed widely not only throughout the East but also the West.³⁰ Despite the impressive similarity, however, there is one noteworthy variation: while the earlier version mentions that the Emperor will give up his royal insignia in Jerusalem, the Pseudo-Methodius describes the dramatic setting of the event in the Holy Sepulchre: “The moment the Son of Perdition appears, the king of the Greeks shall go up and stand on Golgotha and the Holy Cross shall be placed on that spot where it had been fixed where it bore Christ. The king of the Greeks shall place his crown on the top of the Holy Cross, stretch out his hands towards heaven, and hand over the kingdom to God the Father. And the holy Cross upon which Christ was crucified will be raised up to heaven, together with the royal crown.”³¹ This legend would continue to resonate for centuries throughout the Christian world.

Thus, despite the complexity surrounding the revival of Jerusalem as a Christian city, there is no doubt that between the fourth and seventh centuries it established for itself an influential position in the Christian world.

Between Jerusalem and Constantinople

The rising status of Jerusalem in the Byzantine world did not remain unrivalled. Constantinople was not indifferent to the growing sanctity of Jerusalem and in fact, seemed to have been somewhat threatened by it.

29 Ernest Sackur, *Sybillinische Texte und Forschungen* (Halle, 1898), 186, cited by Paul Alexander, “The strength of empire and capital as seen through Byzantine eyes”, *Speculum* 37, 1962, 339–57, esp. 343–4.

30 For references to the original Syriac, Greek and Latin texts, introduction and annotated English translation of the last part (beginning with the Muslim conquest) as well as further bibliography, see Sebastian Brock, in A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 222–42. For the full text beginning with the creation see now B. Garstad, *Apocalypse Pseudo Methodius – An Alexandrian World Chronicle* (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 14. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); For a new and updated edition of the Syriac text see G.J. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius, CSCO 540 SS Syri 220* (text) (Louvain: Peeters 1993), XIV, 2. Regarding the date of the text see Michael Kmosko, “Das Rätsel des Pseudomethodius”, *Byzantion* 6, 1931, 273–6, who dates it to the reign of Mu’āwiya (661–680 CE). Brock and Reinink date the text to 691; see S. Brock, “Syriac views of emergent Islam”, in G. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 18–9; G. Reinink, “Pseudo-Methodius: a concept of history in response to the rise of Islam”, in A. Cameron and L.I. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near-East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 178–86. Congourdeau claims that since the Cross is still to be found in Jerusalem, the text must have been written prior to the Muslim conquest, when the Cross was taken to Constantinople. See M.H. Congourdeau, “Jérusalem et Constantinople dans la littérature apocalyptique”, in M. Kaplan (ed.), *Le sacré et son inscription dans l’espace à Byzance et en Occident* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 18. Paris, 2000), 125–36.

31 Trans. Brock, in Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, 240.

Unlike Jerusalem, which possessed a growing number of holy places and was a rich source of relics, Constantinople lacked these completely and strove continuously to address this deficiency by importing various relics.³² In the mid-fifth century, when Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem and Patriarch to be, strove to upgrade the position of the city in the church hierarchy, he was pressed to relinquish Mary's coffin with its sacred remains, found in the church of the Mother of God in Gethsemane, and transfer it to Blachernae in Constantinople, where "a holy shrine to the eternal virgin, the most blessed Mary, the holy Mother of God", was just built and beautifully decorated by the Empress Pulcheria.³³

Another incident in *c.* 530 is reported by the traveller Theodosius, who recounts that Urbicius, a superintendent of the Empire (*praepositus imperii*) who had "crowned Emperors, removed their crowns and chastised them" hewed out the stone upon which Mary sat to rest, located three miles from Jerusalem (i.e. the *kathisma*³⁴), shaped it into an altar and planned to send it to Constantinople. However, the stone would not move further than St Stephen's gate in Jerusalem, and was placed at the Holy Sepulchre serving thereafter for communion.³⁵ This episode reveals the growing tension between Constantinople and Jerusalem regarding the holy relics in possession of the latter. Another important relic which was transferred sometime in the mid-fifth century to Constantinople, perhaps by Eudokia herself, were the bones of St Stephen for whom she had built a special church in Jerusalem just a short while before.³⁶ From the fifth century Constantinople was in fact establishing its own status as "The New Jerusalem".

As early as 446, the Mesopotamian monk Daniel the Stylite, on his way to the coveted Holy Land, was discouraged from proceeding by an old man, "a father and a teacher", who told him: "Do not go to those places, but go to Byzantium and you will see a second Jerusalem (*deutera Iherusalem*), namely Constantinople; there you can enjoy the martyrs' shrines and the great houses of prayer. . .".³⁷ It is evident here that the concept of a metaphoric and spiritual

32 See R. Ousterhout, "Sacred geographies and holy cities: Constantinople as Jerusalem", in A. Lidov (ed.), *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow, 2006), 98–116, esp. 101–4.

33 John of Damascus, "Third homily on the dormition of Mary", IX, 18–9, *PG*, 748–52, citing the lost *Euthymian History*, ch. 40; on these traditions see J. Wortley, "The Marian relics at Constantinople", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45, 2005, 171–87; Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 207–8; S.P. Panagopoulos, "The Byzantine traditions of the Virgin Mary's dormition and assumption", *Studia Patristica* 54, 2012, 1–8.

34 See R. Avner, "The Kathisma: a Christian and Muslim pilgrimage site", *Aram Periodical* 19, 2007, 541–57.

35 See P. Geyer (ed.), *Itinera Hierosolymitana Saeculi III–VIII* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 39, Vienna, 1898), 148; for English translation see J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims* (Jerusalem, 1977), 70–1.

36 See Paul Magdalino, "Aristocratic *Oikoi* in the tenth and eleventh regions of Constantinople", in Nevra Necipoğlu (ed.), *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 61–5.

37 See "Vita Danielis Stylites", ch. 10, 11–16, in H. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites* (Subsidia Hagiographica 14, Brussels, 1923); for trans. see *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*,

Jerusalem, the Heavenly Jerusalem,³⁸ which can reside in anyone's heart, expressed just a century earlier by Gregorius of Nyssa,³⁹ has been commandeered in favour of Constantinople – a specifically chosen earthly substitute.⁴⁰

In a key article on the subject Magdalino has shown that, following the upheavals that shook the Byzantine Empire during the sixth century, the Byzantine rulers took active steps with the aim of establishing the sanctity of the Empire in general, and specifically that of Constantinople. This was done by unprecedented investment in church building and religious endowments which sought to assimilate the earthly Empire with the Kingdom of Heaven. The idea of Constantinople as *Nea Iherusalem* holds an important place in this process and becomes a standard topos in praise of Constantinople.⁴¹

A prominent manifestation of the growing competition between Constantinople and Jerusalem is found in Theodore the Syncellus' homily on the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626 CE.⁴² Throughout this homily Theodore juxtaposes Jerusalem and Constantinople as the "Old Jerusalem" versus the "New Jerusalem". The Avar siege is presented as a realization of the prefiguration found in Kings II 16 (Isaiah's prophecy to Ahaz, King of Judaea regarding the alliance between Aram and Israel against Assyria) (ch. 2), the Avar leader wishing to destroy "this Jerusalem" (ch. 8). Like Jerusalem, Constantinople is protected by God and the Virgin, but "how could our city not obtain help and divine support more than the other Jerusalem", he remarks, having received from God such an Emperor, with another Isaiah beside him? (ch. 3).

The Jews are also introduced into this equation. On the same day upon which they mourn the devastation of their city, says Theodore, our city was saved from the Avars; and just as Zachariah (8: 19) had predicted, we, unlike the Jews, protected by divine love and the Virgin, were brought happiness and joy (ch. 26).

trans. Elizabeth Dawes, and introductions and notes by Norman H. Baynes (London, 1948).

- 38 On the conflict between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, see J. Praver, "Jerusalem in the Jewish and Christian perspective of the early Middle Ages", *Settimane di Studio del S. Centro Italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1980), 253–94; 739–95. For a version of this article in Hebrew, see J. Praver and H. Ben-Shammai, *The History of Jerusalem*, 311–48.
- 39 Epistle 2: 9–10.
- 40 The far-reaching ramifications of this concept, according to which it is Byzantium and its capital Constantinople that are the distinct inheritors of the Jews as the Elect Nation, are discussed in a PhD thesis by Shay Eshel entitled "The concept of the elect nation in Byzantium: evolution of an identity and its socio-political implications" (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016).
- 41 P. Magdalino, "The history of the future and its uses", in Jonathan Shepard (ed.), *The Expansion of Orthodox Europe: Byzantium, the Balkans and Russia* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 29–63, esp. 37–8.
- 42 Ferenc Makk, *Traduction et Commentaire de l'homélie écrite probablement par Théodore le Syncelle sur le siège de Constantinople en 626* (Szeged: Acta Universitatis de Attila Jozsef Nominatae, 1975), French introduction, translation and brief notes, followed by Greek text reprinted from L. Sternbach, *Analecta Avarica* (Cracow, 1900).

The most significant part is found towards the end of the homily: here Theodore interprets Ezekiel 38–9, the prophecy of Gog and Magog, explaining that these in fact are the current events which are taking place in Constantinople and its environs.⁴³ Gog and Magog are the Avars, and the Holy Land they are attacking is in fact Byzantium. If anyone doubts the fact that Byzantium is in fact the Holy Land, Theodore retorts by saying that the goal of war is in general the hope of material gain. Yet “in the land of Israel there is nothing of any sort, neither today nor in the future, that could be such a cause of war”. He continues to say that no other city but Constantinople, the present “navel of the earth”, which serves God and glorifies his name, could fulfil the role of the Land of Israel; its Emperor and his co-reigning son, Heraclius and Constantine III, are indeed the living David and Salomon (ch. 43). It is indeed quite ironic that less than a decade before the Arab conquest, Palestine is presented as a land that is not worth fighting for!

Byzantine attitude towards the Temple Mount and the Temple

I would now like to concentrate especially on one site in Jerusalem which, although far from holy, had become the subject of fierce competition between Constantinople and Jerusalem in the sixth century. This was the site of the historic Temple. As mentioned above, the devastation of the Temple Mount was the living proof of the fulfilment that “not one stone here will be left on another” (Matt. 25: 35–6; Mark 12: 2; Luke 19: 44), serving as living proof of the victory of Christianity over Judaism. Jerome’s humiliating description of the Jews mourning over the ruined Temple is a noted case in point.⁴⁴ Consequently the Mount was turned during the Byzantine period into a dung heap (*sterquilinium*), the dwelling place of nocturnal demons,⁴⁵ intentionally desecrated by the Christians.⁴⁶

Constant Jewish attempts to rebuild the Temple were seen as threats to Christian rule,⁴⁷ and prophecies regarding the rebuilding of the Temple by the Messiah were interpreted contrarily by the Christians as the doings of Antichrist, based on Daniel (9: 27; 11: 1–31; 12: 11) and on II Thess. 2: 4. Such is Cyril of Alexandria’s reaction to Julian the Apostate’s scheme,⁴⁸ and

43 Ch. 41: “I will go up against those which live on the navel of the earth. They are Sheba, Dedan and the traffickers of Chalcedon”. The Septuagint on Ezekiel 38: 13 translates Tarshish as *Karkhdonioi*, justifying in the eyes of Theodore the identification of Chalcedon, i.e. Byzantium, as the goal of Gog and Magog.

44 Jerome, *Commentarium in Sophoniam*, 1: 15, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 76A (Turnhout, 1970), 672–3.

45 Jerome, *Commentarium in Isaiam*, 64: 10, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 73A (Turnhout, 1963), 740; *PL* 24, 626.

46 See Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 67–8, section 81, and n. 70, for full references to the various sources regarding this subject; on Christian attitudes see Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 304–5.

47 See e.g. John Chrysostom’s *Adversus Iudaeos*, V, 11 (*Patrologia Graeca* 48: 900), VI, 2 (*PG* 48: 905); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio V (Contra Iulianum*, second invective, 3), *PG* 35, 667, trans. C.W. King, *Julian the Emperor* (London, 1888), 87–8.

48 Cyril of Alexandria, *Catechesis* 15, *PG*, 889–92.

Theophanes' description of 'Umar's plan to build on the Temple Mount which will be discussed below.⁴⁹

Despite this, the inherent historical sanctity of the Temple, deeply anchored in the Scriptures, made it a challenging goal for Christianity. As has been noted by Averil Cameron, Dagron and recently in an exhaustive and excellent article by Ousterhout, Solomon's Temple was used as a metaphor of the Christian church from the beginning of Christian rule, when churches started to be constructed.⁵⁰ When consecrating Paulinus' church in Tyre, Eusebius in fact follows the descriptions of the Temple in detail.⁵¹ He called Paulinus a new Bezaleel – a Solomon, king of a new and far better Jerusalem, or even a new Zerubbabel, who bestowed far greater glory than the former on the Temple of God.⁵²

The church of the Holy Sepulchre was the object of similar metaphors. The tomb was called the Holy of Holies, and the day of the consecration of the Holy Sepulchre (Encaenia)⁵³ is described by the pilgrim Egeria towards the end of the fourth century as “a feast of special magnificence . . . when the house of God was consecrated, and Solomon stood in prayer before God's altar, as we read in the book of Chronicles”.⁵⁴ Additional metaphorical references abound.⁵⁵ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre also saw itself as the heir of Temple relics such as the anointing horn, Solomon's ring and Abraham's altar, which implied the transition of the site of Isaac's sacrifice from the Temple Mount to the church of the Holy Sepulchre.⁵⁶

In the sixth century, however, this position of the church of the Holy Sepulchre as the “New Temple” was threatened when Constantinople tried to expropriate it and transfer it to the Byzantine capital, thus giving it new life detached from its original physical location in the Old Jerusalem.

49 See *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. De Boor (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883–85), AM 6127 (634/5), p. 339; For English trans. see *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*, translated, with introduction and commentary by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, with the assistance of Geoffrey Greatrex, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 471–2.

50 A. Cameron, “Flavius Cresconius Corippus”, in *Laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* (London, 1976), 204–05; Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 303; R. Ousterhout, “New temples and new Solomons: the rhetoric of Byzantine architecture”, in P. Magdalino and R. Nelson (eds), *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (Washington, DC, 2010), 223–53.

51 See J. Wilkinson, “Paulinus Temple at Tyre”, *JÖB* 32/4, 1982, 553–61; Ousterhout, “New temples”, 226.

52 Eusebius, *Church History*, 10.4.2–72; trans. R. Defferari, *Fathers of the Church* 29 (New York, 1955), 2:244, cited by Ousterhout, “New temples”, 226.

53 The term chosen for the consecration is the specific term found originally in the Septuagint for the dedication of the Temple by Solomon (II Chr. 7: 9) and later used for the rededication of the Temple by the Macabees (I Macc. 4:56 et al.; John, 10:22). This term is not found in the classical Greek sources.

54 Egeria 48: 1, ed. E. Francheschini and R. Weber, *Itinerarium Egeriae*, in *Itineraria et Alia Geographica, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 175, (Turnhout, 1965), 89; English translation of the text in John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Ariel; Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1981), 146.

55 See Ousterhout, “New temples”, 233–7.

56 See J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 36, 59, 83, 177a.

In 527 an impressive church, built by a powerful noblewoman by the name of Anicia Iuliana and dedicated to St Polyeuktos, was consecrated in Constantinople. The dedicatory inscription of the church, whose remains were discovered in 1960, praises Juliana for “having surpassed the wisdom of the celebrated Solomon, raising a temple to receive God” and the measurements of the church seem to have been those of the Temple.⁵⁷ Just a few years later the Emperor Justinian rebuilt the Hagia Sophia; his church was to surpass in size and beauty all others. Describing the Hagia Sophia in his *De Aedificiis* Procopius says that: “God cannot be far away, but must especially love to dwell in this place, which he has chosen”,⁵⁸ a reference no doubt to Solomon’s Temple. In a poem by Corippus written in 568 we find the following: “Let the description of Solomon’s Temple now be stilled”.⁵⁹ This claim will appear again in a much cruder description written in the ninth century, which cites Justinian as saying: “*Enikesa se Solomon*” (Solomon, I have vanquished thee).⁶⁰

Both Dagron and Ousterhout, who have discussed this subject in detail, have raised the question of the relationship between Solomon’s Temple and the Hagia Sophia, and have noted that they are contrasted rather than compared.⁶¹ In fact, the texts are unanimous in the message that there is no need to imitate or compare, since the Hagia Sophia (in fact Anicia Iuliana’s S. Polyeuktos already) surpasses Solomon’s Temple by far.

This is quite a different phenomenon to that which took place in the West during the Carolingian renaissance, when Jerusalem and its Temple serve as the ideal prototype that is the subject of imitation, glorification, at times perhaps also a representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Thus, for example, Alcuin, in a letter written in 798, adduces Jerusalem and its Temple as a metaphor to Aachen and the church of St. Mary which was being built at that time, and the dome of the Germigny-des-Prés church from 806 in which the Ark and the Cherubim are depicted.⁶²

57 See M. Harrison, *Excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul*, 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), vol. 1; M. Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia-Juliana’s Palace Church in Istanbul* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). While Harrison found that the measurements of the church were those of Solomon’s Temple, Milner claimed that in fact the measurements were those of Ezekiel’s visionary Temple at the End of Days. See C. Milner, “The image of the rightful ruler: Anicia Juliana’s Constantine mosaic in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos”, in Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 73–81; I. Shahid, “The Church of Hagios Polyeuktos in Constantinople: some new observations”, *Graeco-Arabica* 9–10, 2004, 343–55.

58 *De Aedificiis*, 1.1.61–2; for text with English translation see H.B. Dewing, (Loeb Classical Library, vol. 7, London: Heinemann, 1971), 26–7; Ousterhout, “New temples”, 239.

59 Flavius Cresconius Corippus, *In Laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, ed. and trans. Averil Cameron (London: The Athlone Press, 1976), text, 81, l. 283, trans. 115.

60 “Le récit sur la construction de Sainte Sophie”, in Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 196–211, esp. 208. On this treatise see *ibid.*, 306–7.

61 Ousterhout, “New temples”, 242; Dagron, “Constantinople imaginaire”, 305.

62 On this see J. Ley and M. Wietheger, “Der karolingische Palast König Davids in Aachen: Neue bauhistorische Untersuchungen zu Königshalle und Granusturm”, in F. Pohle (ed.),

The pretension of surpassing Jerusalem and taking its place is underscored in a hymn written by the most celebrated poet Romanos Melodos who had served for most of his life as sacristan in the Hagia Sophia. Melodos' hymn 54, written on the occasion of the reconstruction of the Hagia Sophia, notes that while the magnificent temple in Jerusalem "that all-wise Solomon . . . raised up . . . was given over to pride and destroyed, it still remains fallen, it was not restored", one can "see the grace of this church that offers eternal life". He then continues and says that "The people of Israel were deprived of their Temple / but we instead of that, / now have the Holy Anastasis and Sion / which Constantine and the faithful Helena / ave to the world / two hundred and fifty years after the fall. / But in our case, just one day after the disaster / work was begun on having the church restored. / It was brilliantly decorated and brought to completion." He then goes on to say that "the very structure of the church / was erected with such excellence / That it imitated Heaven, the divine throne".⁶³ Note that there is a clear hierarchy here: the Jewish Temple at the bottom, then the Holy Sepulchre, and on the highest level the Hagia Sophia – an imitation of God's throne.⁶⁴ A later report recounts that a

Karl der Grosse–Charlemagne. Orte der Macht (Dresden: Sandstein Kommunikation, 2014), 236–45; U. Heckner, "Der Tempel Salomos in Aachen. Neues zur Baugeschichte der Marienkirche", in Pohle (ed.), *Karl der Grosse*, 354–63, esp. 356–8. For the reference to Alcuin's letter see p. 354. Regarding Germigny see L. Nees, "Theodulf's mosaic at Germigny, the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome, and Jerusalem", in Cullen J. Chandler and Steven Stofferahn (eds), *Discovery and Distinction in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of John J. Contreni* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 187–211; E. Revel-Neher, "'Antiquus Populus, Novus Populus': Jerusalem and the People of God in the Germigny-des-Prés Carolingian mosaic", in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 1998), 54–66. The admiration of Jerusalem and its temple is also evident in Bede's writing on the Temple and the Tabernacle in conjunction with the debate on icon worship. See T.F.X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 113–4; 120. It should be noted, however, that Bede is not occupied with a physical representation; rather he is writing an allegorical commentary on the Tabernacle in which it is interpreted as symbolizing the Christian church.

63 Romanos le Mélode, *Hymnes*, ed. J. Grosdidier de Matons, (Paris, 1981), vol. 5, 492–5; trans. M. Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*, vol. 2 (Columbia, MO, 1973), 246–7; cited by Ousterhout, "New temples", 241–2.

64 A similar anonymous kontakion was written for the dedication of the Hagia Sophia in Edessa. This church was built by Justinian after the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople: it bore the same name, had a similar dome, and an identical dedication inscription. The kontakion too imitates that of the Hagia Sophia, repeating its message: "That Temple (i.e. Solomon's) was commonly known as the Place of God . . . and the whole of Israel flooded to it under compulsion . . . but they would certainly have to give us the credit for surpassing them for the very evidence of the senses demonstrates that this divine chef d'oeuvre transcends everything, and its buttress is Christ". In this case, the church is a clear imitation, a duplicate, of the original Hagia Sophia and its dedication ceremony. See A. Palmer, "The inauguration anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa: a new edition and translation with historical and architectural notes and a comparison with a contemporary Constantinopolitan kontakion", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12, 1988, 117–67, esp. 143.

statue of Solomon, having been vanquished, and therefore holding his cheek in sorrow, was placed in the Basilica overlooking the Hagia Sophia.⁶⁵

Ousterhout makes one vital distinction between the general “Solomonic” references to churches wherever they may be, starting with Eusebius, and those relating to the Hagia Sophia. This is the first time, he notes, that the Solomonic reference serves a political objective, turning Constantinople with the Hagia Sophia in its centre into the New Earthly Jerusalem, thus founding Justinian’s imperial authority in the divinely sanctioned kingship of the Old Testament.⁶⁶

It is thus quite evident that not only was the Heavenly Jerusalem comman-deered to Constantinople during the fifth century, but that in the sixth a new political ideology had been instated according to which earthly Jerusalem with a new and improved Solomonic temple, in fact a representation of God’s throne itself, was now to be found in Constantinople! This special status would be further enhanced when Heraclius will at first bring a relic of the Cross to Constantinople, and a few years later, following the Arab conquest, will bring the Cross itself to the New Jerusalem.

Muslim reactions to Byzantine political ideology

Muslim sanctification of the Temple Mount

Most scholars now agree that the initial motivation behind the Muslim sanctifi-cation of the Temple Mount and the building of the Muslim religious monu-ments on it was the return to the sanctified place of the Jewish Temple.⁶⁷ Hence the use of terms such as *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Hebrew *Beit Ha-Miqdash*), a term used for both the temple itself⁶⁸ and the city of Jerusalem, and *Haykal* (Hebrew – *Heykhal*), the search for the Rock of Bayt al-Maqdis and its sancti-fication⁶⁹ and the Muslim tradition regarding the active participation of the Jewish convert Ka’b al-Aḥbār, or, in a later Jewish tradition, the Jews them-selves, in locating the sacred spot.⁷⁰ The fact that they were building “The

65 Dagron, *Constantinople Imaginaire*, 268; Ousterhout, 247, referring to I. Bekker, *Annales*, Bonn 1836, 498; *Patria Konstantinopouleos*, 2.40, ed. Preger, 171.

66 Ousterhout, “New temples”, 248–9.

67 See above, notes 6–12.

68 See Abū al-Ma’ālī al-Musharraf b. al-Murajjā b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī, *Fadā’il bayt al-maqdis wa-al-khatīl wa-fadā’il al-shām*, ed. O. Livne-Kafīrī (Shfaram, 1995), e.g. no. 5, 13, 14; no. 7, p. 15; no. 9, p. 17; nos 10, 11, 18; *passim*.

69 For the use of this term see Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī, *Fadā’il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, ed. I. Hasson (Jerusalem, 1979), 78–9; Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 38, 51.

70 See Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden, 1879–1901), *Ta’rīkh*, I, 2408 with an *isnād* going back to Rajā’ b. Ḥaywah (d. 730), a famous scholar born in Baysān (former Scythopolis) who was in charge of the construction of the Dome of the Rock under ‘Abd al-Malik. In this report it is the Jewish convert to Islam, Ka’b al-Aḥbār who is asked by ‘Umar to designate the place of prayer on the Temple Mount; a fragment from the Cairo Geniza dating probably from the eleventh century contains a story about ‘Umar seeking the Jews’ help in locating the holy site: Cambridge TS Arabic Box 6 (1), fōl. 1, published and translated from Judaeo-Arabic into Hebrew by M. Gil, *Palestine during the First Muslim Period (634–1099)*, Part II – *Cairo Geniza Documents* (Tel-Aviv, 1983), 1–3 (in Hebrew).

Temple of God” (*naos Theou*) is mentioned also by Anastasius the Sinaite, a contemporary Christian source writing at the time of the building of the Dome.⁷¹

More importantly, in ‘Abd al-Malik’s Dome of the Rock the rituals themselves seem initially to have been related to Jewish Temple rituals, including the special attire worn by the performers of the ceremonies, the assignment of a special status to Mondays and Thursdays, days of special importance in Jewish liturgy, purification before the rituals, the mode in which incense was used, the call for prayer and more.⁷² Although this was short-lived, it was nonetheless the obvious reason for choosing this site.⁷³ Based on artistic features corroborated by Islamic sources, some scholars, such as Soucek and Shani, claim in fact that it is specifically the Solomonic temple that was being reconstructed in the building of the Dome of the Rock.⁷⁴

As noted by Livne-Kafri, Muslim sources convey the pain of the Jews over the destruction of the Temple and hopes for its resurrection by Muslims.⁷⁵ Many of these are found especially in the *Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis* (Praises of Jerusalem) literature, now recognized as representing early traditions from the second half of the seventh and the eighth century CE. While these traditions have been preserved only in the compilations of al-Wāsiṭi (d. 1019) and al-Musharraf b. al-Murajjā (d. c. 1055), Kister discovered that many of them are found in the commentary on the Quran by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 768). Moreover, both were careful to note the chain of transmission of the traditions, choosing also to include in their collections *Isrā’iliyyāt*, i.e. traditions received from Jews and converts, which were often criticized and omitted in other sources.⁷⁶

Muslim identification with the Jews regarding the Temple Mount is manifest in a rare tradition, which divulges the initial ties to Jewish sentiment, before its dissociation:⁷⁷

71 B. Flusin, “L’Esplanade du Temple à l’arrivée des arabes d’après deux récits byzantins”, in J. Raby and J. Johns (eds), *Bayt al-Maqdis*, vol. 1, 17–31, esp. 25–6.

72 For references see above, n. 14; on the use of incense see L. Nees, “L’odorat fait-il sens? Quelques réflexions autour de l’encens de l’Antiquité tardive au haut Moyen-Âge”, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 55, 2012, 451–71.

73 See above, notes 6–12, 14.

74 See R. Shani, “Iconography”, 158–207, with a survey of earlier literature regarding the ornamentation, esp. pp. 161–76; P. Soucek, “The temple of Solomon in Islamic art”, in J. Guttman (ed.), *The Temple of Solomon: Archaeological Fact and Medieval Tradition in Christian, Islamic and Jewish Art* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

75 O. Livne-Kafri, “Islamic traditions on Jerusalem between Judaism and Christianity”, in O. Livne-Kafri, “A note on some traditions”, 81–3.

76 On the early date of the *Faḍā’il* literature M.J. Kister, “A comment on the antiquity of traditions praising Jerusalem”, *The Jerusalem Cathedra* 1 (Jerusalem, 1981) 185–6; I. Hasson, “Jerusalem in the Muslim perspective: The Qur’ān and tradition literature”, in Praver and Ben-Shammai (eds), *The History of Jerusalem*, 349–85; Elad, *Medieval Worship*, 6–22; Livne-Kafri, “Early Arabic literary works on Jerusalem”, in idem, *Jerusalem in Early Islam*, 1–6 (in Hebrew). Regarding the development of the *Faḍā’il* genre see S.A. Mourad, “A note on the origin of *Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis* compilations”, *Al-Abhath*, 44, 1996, 31–48; idem, “The symbolism of Jerusalem in early Islam”, in T. Meyer and S.A. Mourad (eds), *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 86–102.

77 As noted by Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 162–3.

From Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, it is written in one of the holy books: “*Ayrūshalāyim*, which means Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*), and the Rock which is called the Temple (*al-haykal*). I shall send to you my servant ‘Abd al-Malik, who will build you and adorn you. I shall surely restore to Bayt al-Maqdis its first kingdom, and I shall crown it with gold and silver and gems. And I shall surely send to you my creatures. And I shall surely place my throne of glory on the Rock, since I am the sovereign God, and David is the King of the Children of Israel”.⁷⁸

Note the use of the name *Ayrūshalayim* in its Biblical form, with a translation of the name, and the *lām* and *nūn al-ta‘ākīd*, laying stress on the verbs, and giving it a prophetic aura. The last sentence has clear Jewish connotations. In fact, according to this tradition the temple will be reinstated by ‘Abd al-Malik after which God will once again place his throne of glory there.⁷⁹ The mention of David, the king of the children of Israel here, leaves no doubt that the aim is to restore the ancient Jewish Temple. This rare tradition exposing the initial connection to Jewish tradition, which was identified as one of the *Isrā’īliyyāt*, was later adapted and censured, leaving out David and the Children of Israel.⁸⁰

The idea that God’s throne was located on the rock is an ancient Jewish idea. The Ark of the Covenant was conceived as God’s throne or footstool and Jeremiah prophesies that the whole of Jerusalem will replace the ark as God’s throne (Jer. 3: 16–7). Jewish legend speaks about the “lower throne” which is found underneath the “heavenly throne” and in fact reaches all the way up to it.⁸¹ This tradition resonates in Muslim literature as well. Ibn al-Murajjā cites

78 Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Musharraf b. al-Murajjā b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī, *Faḍā’il bayt al-maqdis wa-al-khalīl wa-faḍā’il al-shām*, ed. O. Livne-Kafī (Shfāram, 1995), 63, no. 50; see also al-Wāsiṭi, ed. Hasson, 86, no. 138; Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 163. As Elad notes, in the version of al-Wāsiṭi, the expression “in one of the holy books” (*ba‘ḍ al-kutub*) is replaced by “it is written in the Torah” (*maktūb fī al-tawrāt*). See also O. Livne-Kafri, “Christian attitudes reflected in the Muslim literature”, *Proche-Orient Chretien* 54, 2004, 358, n. 52 and p. 365; *idem*, “Jerusalem in early Islam: The eschatological aspect”, *Arabica* 53/3, 2006, 382–403; “On Muslim Jerusalem in the period of its formation”, *Liber Annuus* 55, 2005, 203–16. See also Mourad, “The symbolism of Jerusalem”, 97–8.

79 This tradition was later censured, its Jewish background obscured; see Elad, “Why did ‘Abd al-Malik build”, 38, where he translates a section from Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī’s (1186–1256) *Mira’āt al-Zamān*, as cited by Ibn Kathīr. The second part of this text bears close parallels to the traditions of *Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis* and at its end appears the following version of this tradition: “Rejoice, Oh Jerusalem, which means I shall send to thee my servant, ‘Abd al-Malik, who shall restore to you your first kingdom, and I shall adorn thee with gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones, that is the *Ṣakhra*, and I shall put my throne on thee as it was before. For I am Allah, there is no God but myself alone, no partner have I”.

80 See Elad, “Why did ‘Abd al-Malik build”, 38. Ibn al-Jawzī’s sources are noted as al-Wāqidi (d. 823) and Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819) and his father (d. 763). Other traditions regarding David, which are based on Biblical and later Jewish tradition, are to be found in the *Faḍā’il* literature. See e.g. Mourad, “The symbolism of Jerusalem”, 91–3.

81 Livne-Kafri, *Jerusalem in Early Islam*, 24 and n. 36; for the Jewish sources see V. Aptowitz, “The heavenly temple in the Agada”, *Tarbitz* 2, 1931, 145–9; 271–2 (in

the convert Ka'b al-Aḥbār: "It is said in the Torah that [Allah] said to the Rock of Bayt al-Maqdis: you are my lowest throne and from you I ascended to heaven. . .".⁸² Rosen-Ayalon and Shani claim that the inside of the Dome itself in fact attempts to portray the setting of God's throne.⁸³ This idea goes hand-in-hand with many other features attributed to the *ṣakhra* or to *bayt al-maqdis* in Muslim tradition which originate in Jewish tradition.⁸⁴

Christian reactions to Muslim activity

Christian reactions to building projects on the Temple Mount were soon to follow. Sebeos, writing in the mid-seventh century, reports on "the rebellious Jews, who after gaining some help from the Hagarenes for a brief while, decided to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. Finding a spot called Holy of the Holies they rebuilt it with base and construction as a place for their prayers. But the Ishmaelites, being envious of them, expelled them from that place and called the same house of prayer their own".⁸⁵ Anastasius the Sinaite, writing c. 690, reports that in c. 660 he heard the demons who participated at night in the clearing work of the Temple mount done by the Muslims⁸⁶ and the appendix to the *Pratum Spirituale* of John Moschos, compiled according to Hoyland c. 670, reports that the Muslims took men, some by force and some by their own will, "to clean that place and to build that cursed thing intended for their prayer and which they call a mosque (*midzghitha*)".⁸⁷ Later Christian reports on Muslim activities on the Temple Mount expressed much disdain, employing the traditional Christian interpretation that the rebuilder of the Temple is actually "the abomination of desolation standing in a holy place" mentioned in the book of Daniel (9: 27, 11: 31, and 12: 11) and in the Gospel (Matt. 24: 15; Mark 13: 14) – the embodiment of the Antichrist.⁸⁸ Umar himself is conceived as the "abomination of desolation"; having appeared in Jerusalem showing a "devilish pretense" and "seeking the Temple of the Jews – the one built by Solomon – so that he might make it a place of worship for his own blasphemous religion".⁸⁹

Hebrew); Solomon is described in I Chronicles 29: 23 as sitting on God's throne ("So Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David").

On the concept of God's throne and its centrality in Jewish literature see M. Bar Ilan, "God's throne – what is underneath it, against it, and next to it", *Daat, Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah*, 15, 1985, 21–35, and additional bibliography there (Hebrew).

82 See Livne-Kafri, *Jerusalem in Early Islam*, 24, n. 36 (Hebrew), citing Ibn al-Murajjā, 106, no. 113.

83 M. Rosen-Ayalon, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif: An Iconographic Study* (Jerusalem, 1989), 54, 62; Shani, "Iconography", 176.

84 See Van Ess, "'Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock", esp. pp. 89; 95–8; Livne-Kafri, "A note on some traditions".

85 See Busse, "The Temple of Jerusalem", 24; Sebeos, ch. 43, in *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, trans. and annot. by R.W. Thomson (Liverpool, 1999), vol. 1, 102.

86 See B. Flusin, "L'Esplanade du Temple", 25–6; R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* (Princeton: Darwin Press 1997, 100–1).

87 Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 63.

88 Congourdeau, "Jérusalem et Constantinople", 128–9.

89 See Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 339, AM 6127 (634/5), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 471–2.

This report is adduced by Theophanes Confessor writing in the late eighth–early ninth century. Although the attribution to ‘Umar may be mythical, the attitude exhibited here is nevertheless quite clear. Later sources including Theophanes, Pseudo-Dionysius and the Ch. Ad 1234 all relying on the Common Source alias Theophilus,⁹⁰ report that at the time of the building, in 642–3 CE according to this story, the structure would not stand and began to fall (or kept falling down) and was only stabilized after the Muslims followed the advice of the Jews and ordered the Christians to take down the Cross from the church (of the Ascension)⁹¹ on the Mount of Olives. Though this tradition may be an expression of the negative attitude of Theophilus towards the Jews, it may in fact reflect the reality of the co-operation between the Jews and the Muslims in the early part of this venture.⁹²

Muslim attitude towards Byzantine activity on the Temple Mount

As has been noted by Livne-Kafri, when one reads the Muslim sources carefully it becomes quite clear that according to various traditions the Muslims are driven by a desire to settle the scores of the Jews with the Christians. It also becomes apparent that the culprits in this story are the Roman rulers and their Byzantine successors.⁹³ Thus, the Christians helped Nebuchadnezzar destroy the (first) Temple (sic.), and were therefore punished by humiliation under Muslim rule.⁹⁴ But the blame is placed principally upon the Roman/Byzantine Empire. According to one tradition, Titus son of Vespasian (Ṭaṭarā b. Ashimanus) attacked the sons of Israel, took them captive, and carried the vessels of the Temple in 1,900 ships to Rome, and the Prophet said that the Mahdī will return them to Jerusalem in 1,700 ships which will moor in Jaffa.⁹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī relates that: “He [Constantine] banished the remaining Children of Israel from Filsaṭīn and al-Urdunn, because as he asserted, they had killed Jesus”.⁹⁶

The fact that the Romans had not only destroyed the Temple, but had also made a point of desecrating it is emphasized here.⁹⁷ The intentional humiliation

90 On Theophilus as a historical source see J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 194–236, esp. 206–36; regarding ‘Umar in Jerusalem see pp. 15–6; for the text based on its various derivative sources see R. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 126–7. See also Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 31.

91 See Hoyland, *Theophilus*, n. 299.

92 For a survey of these sources see now also L. Nees, *Perspectives*, 8–13.

93 See Livne-Kafri, *Jerusalem in Early Islam*, 14 (Hebrew); Cook, *Muslim Apocalyptic*, 65–6.

94 Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 30, p. 40; see also the tradition attributed to al-Suddī in al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, I, 717. Livne-Kafri, “Islamic traditions”, 14 (in Hebrew). For an English version see O. Livne-Kafri, “A note on some traditions”, 71–83.

95 See *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (Cairo, 1943), vol. 15, 16, and Ibn al-Murajjā, 35, no. 24, who does not mention Jaffa; Livne-Kafri, “Islamic traditions”, 14–5, and parallel sources there.

96 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, I, 706; trans. M. Perlmann, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. IV (Albany, NY, 1987), 98.

97 Gil, “The political history of Jerusalem in the early Muslim period”, in *The History of Jerusalem*, 196; Livne-Kafri, *Jerusalem in Early Islam*, 10 (Hebrew); J. Prawer, “Jerusalem in Christian and Jewish perspective in the early middle ages”, *Cathedra* 17, 1990, 51 (in Hebrew).

of the Holy site, which had greatly pained the Jews, is put forth in Islamic tradition.⁹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī describes, in the name of Rajā' b. Ḥaywa who was in charge of the building of the Dome, how 'Umar cleared the rubbish (*kunāsa*) on the Temple Mount using the edges of his mantle.⁹⁹ Al-Wāsiṭī adduces several *Faḍā'il* traditions regarding the clearing of what he terms "the dung-heap" (*mazbala*) by 'Umar, one of which, going back to Shaddād b. Aws (d. c. 58–64 h)¹⁰⁰ grandfather, recounts that "when 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb conquered Bayt al-Maqdis he found on the *ṣakhra* much dung which the Romans (*Rūm*) had thrown there in order to infuriate the Children of Israel".¹⁰¹ Note here the blame, which is clearly directed at the Roman Empire (*Rūm*) rather than the Christians (*Naṣārā*). Even if the attribution of this act to 'Umar himself is legendary, and it should be attributed to 'Abd al-Malik, the hostility and the blame directed at the Romans is nevertheless genuine.

The targetting of the Roman Empire, as opposed to the local Christians, is made quite evident in an even more extreme version of this same story, adduced in two parallel traditions by Ibn al-Murajjā: in the first,¹⁰² Heraclius,¹⁰³ during his visit in Jerusalem, sees "the *mazbala* covering *miḥrāb da'ūd* which the Christians (*Naṣārā*) had thrown there in order to offend the Jews; (the offence is) such that the women would send their menstrual rags from *Rūmiyya* to be thrown there".¹⁰⁴ Heraclius writing a letter reprimands the Romans for having desecrated the holy place, saying: "Oh, men of Rome (*Rhomaioi*), you should be killed on this *mazbala* because you violated the sanctity of this temple (*masjid*) just as the Children of Israel were killed over the blood of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā". He orders that it be cleaned up but only a third is cleaned by the time of 'Umar's arrival. The parallel tradition relates the same mode of desecration by the Christians, in the context of their uprooting of the *Ṣakhra*, and the looting of the stones of the Temple Mount for the purpose of building the church of the Holy Sepulchre. When the job is completed, the Temple Mount is

98 See Livne-Kafri, "A note on some traditions", 81–3.

99 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta' rīkh*, I, 2409.

100 On him see Gil, *History of Palestine*, section 158, p. 122.

101 Al-Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, 78–9, no. 131.

102 Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 38, 51–2.

103 Heraclius, it should be noted, is consistently portrayed in Muslim sources as a positive Emperor, unlike all his predecessors and successors, having vindicated, according to Muslim tradition the *umma* and legitimized the Prophet; see Nadia Maria El-Sheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 39–54.

104 The use of the name *Rūmiyya* refers to the Roman Empire, both before its Christianization, when Rome was its capital, and afterwards, when the capital was transferred to Constantinople. The term Byzantium is an early modern one, intended to create such a differentiation, while in Late Antiquity and the middle ages the name of the empire remained the same throughout.

See e.g. Ibn al-Murajjā' no. 38, 51–2; no. 231, 168; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta' rīkh*, I, 706 where the name refers to the Empire after Constantine, while in no. 24, 35 no. 218, 162, the name clearly refers to the city of Rome during the first century. See also "Pirkei Mashiach", *Midrashei Geula*, ed. Y. Even Shmuel, (Tel-Aviv, 1943), 320 (in Hebrew): "ויבא משיח בן יוסף ויתגרה מלחמתו עם מלך אדום וינצח את אדום, ויהרוג מהם תלים. ויהרג את מלך אדום, ויהריב מדינת רומי, ויוציא קצת כלי המקדש, שהם גנזוים בבית יוליאנוס. ויקסר ויבא לירושלים."

desecrated “to the extent that the women would send their menstrual rags to be thrown on it from Constantinople (*qusṭantiṇiyya*)”.¹⁰⁵ It should be stressed here that the heroines of this story are the women of Constantinople rather than the local Christian women or the Christians in general. In all of these traditions, and especially in the latter two, the villain is clearly defined: it is the Roman Empire and its people, and specifically Constantinople, rather than just the Christians.

The blame thrown at Constantinople is stated clearly in a tradition cited by al-Ṭabarī. The *isnād* of this tradition goes back to the famous scholar Rajā’ b. Ḥaywa (d. 112/730) from Baysān (present Beit She’an, Byzantine Scythopolis), who was actually in charge of the construction of the Dome of the Rock, and whose report originates in those who took part in the Conquest of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ The tradition dovetails with the story of the cleaning of the Mount by ‘Umar, put in the mouth of Ka’b al-Aḥḅār.

The Romans (*Rūm*) attacked the sons of Israel, were given victory over them, and buried the Temple. Then they were given another victory, but they did not attend to the Temple until the Persians attacked them. The Persians oppressed the Sons of Israel. Later the Romans (*Rūm*) were given victory over the Persians. Then you came to rule. God sent a prophet to the [city buried in] rubbish and said: “Rejoice O Jerusalem (*Urī shalam*)!”¹⁰⁷ Al-Farūq will come to you and cleanse you”. Another prophet was sent to Constantinople. He stood on a hill belonging to the city and said: “O Constantinople, what did your people do to My House?”¹⁰⁸ They ruined it, presented you as if you were similar to My Throne and made interpretations contrary to My purpose. I have determined to make you one day unfortified (and defenceless)¹⁰⁹ (*jalḥā’*). Nobody will seek shelter from you, nor rest in your shade. [I shall make you unfortified] at the hands of Banū al-Qāḍhir, Sabā and Waddān”.¹¹⁰

Al-Ṭabarī then adds a parallel tradition: “al-Farūq (‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb) came to you with my obedient army. They will take revenge upon the Byzantines on

105 Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 29, p. 39. This tradition is told also by the Qaraites Salmon b. Yeruḥim, *Commentary on Lamentation XLIV*, in Gil, *History of Palestine*, Section 81, 67, n. 70.

106 See Elad, *Medieval Worship*, 19, 45, 54, 56.

107 Probably a reference to Isaiah 60:1 (“כי הגה החשך”; “Arise, shine, for your light has dawned; the Presence of the Lord has shone upon you! Behold! Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick clouds the peoples; But upon you the Lord will shine, And his Presence be seen over you”). The English translation is taken from the new *Jewish Publication Society Hebrew–English Tanakh* (Philadelphia, 2003).

108 “My House” is the Biblical term often used for the Temple in Jerusalem.

109 A more literal translation would be “bald and bare”. See D. Cook, *Muslim Apocalyptic*, 60, where he translates this expression in a parallel tradition in Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād as “bald and bare”.

110 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, I, 2409; trans. Y. Friedmann, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 13, 196 with one change for *shabbahūki* “likened you to My Throne” rather than “presented you as if you were similar to My Throne”.

behalf of your people (*wa-yudrikūna li-ahlikī bi-tha'riki*) (i.e. the people of Jerusalem). Regarding Constantinople he said: I shall leave you unfortified and exposed to the sun; nobody will seek shelter from you, and you will not cast your shade on anyone".¹¹¹

These two traditions reveal a close connection between the desecration of the Temple Mount by the Byzantines, the motivation to cleanse it and rebuild the Temple, and the need to take revenge upon the Byzantines on behalf of its people.

This prophecy, styled like a Biblical prophecy, is put in the mouth of the Jewish convert to Islam, Ka'b al-Aḥbār. It makes it evident that the Muslims, most probably via the Jews and/or converts from Judaism who co-operated with them, were well aware of the fact that Constantinople claimed to be New Jerusalem, and its people the New Israel; and that Constantinople, referring most probably specifically to the Hagia Sophia as noted in Romanos Melodos' hymn (above), was conceived as a representation of God's Throne. This is accentuated in the sentence: "O Constantinople, what did your people do to My House? They ruined it, presented you as if you were similar to My Throne and made interpretations contrary to My purpose". It is for this haughtiness and hubris, for thinking that it can actually replace Jerusalem, the temple and its people, that Constantinople shall be punished according to this tradition. This conclusion is greatly strengthened by the tradition that is yet to be adduced below.

The end of the prophecy "[I shall make you unfortified] at the hands of Banū al-Qādhir, Sabā and Waddān" cites the names of three peoples from Arabia mentioned in Ezekiel 27: 19–22,¹¹² referring to the rich and proud metropolis Tyre. It has already been noted by Uri Rubin that the prophecy on Tyre, beginning in Ezekiel 26, which will be demolished for gloating over the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, is analogous here to Constantinople who will be punished for glorying over Jerusalem.¹¹³ Rubin notes in fact that the analogy between Tyre and Constantinople is made outright by Nu'aym b. Hammād (d. 229 h/844CE) in *kitāb al-ḥitan*.¹¹⁴ There are in fact two traits mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecy which make Tyre a suitable model for Constantinople. The first is its pride and haughtiness: "In the eleventh of the month the word of the Lord came to me: O mortal, because Tyre gloated over Jerusalem, Aha! The gateway of the peoples is broken, it has become mine; I shall be filled

111 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*.

112 See Friedmann, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, n. 732, citing H. Busse, "'Omar b. al-Khaṭṭāb in Jerusalem", *JSAI* 5, 1984, 92 n. 72; Sabā and Qādhir are mentioned also in a prophecy on the destruction of Constantinople in Nu'aym b. Hammād, *Ḥitan*, 285, following another such prophecy which names Yaman and Qays as the protagonists. Cook, *Muslim Apocalyptic*, 62, and n. 108, notes that Sabā is identified with Yemenite Arabs while Qādhir (= Kedar) is usually equated with Quraysh. In Abū 'Abdallāh Nu'aym b. Hammād b. Marwān al-Khuzā'ī al-Marwazī, *Kitāb al-ḥitan* (Beirut, 1993), 299, Sabā is equated with *ahl al-yaman*.

113 U. Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'an: the Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 20–26; see also, Cook, *Muslim Apocalyptic*, 61–2.

114 In a letter attributed to Ka'b al-Aḥbār: "قل لصور مدينة الروم، وهي تسمى باسماء كثيرة" Nu'aym b. Hammād, *Kitāb al-ḥitan*, 299; Cook, *Muslim Apocalyptic*, 61.

now that it is laid in ruin” (Ezek. 26: 1–2); “Oh Tyre, you boasted ‘I am perfect in beauty’. Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection” (Ezek. 27: 3).

A still more revealing passage is found in the next chapter, addressed to the prince of Tyre: “Because you have been so haughty and have said, ‘I am a god; I sit enthroned like a god in the heart of the seas’” (Ezek. 28: 2). Constantinople, like Tyre, believes that it is God’s throne. This last passage also refers to the fact that Tyre, like Constantinople, sits in “the heart of the seas”. In the prophecy regarding Tyre brought by Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, Tyre, which is called outrightly *madīnat al-Rūm*, is blamed for likening its sky to “My Throne” (*tamthulīna falakakī bi-‘arshī*).¹¹⁵

I would not have elaborated on this prophecy so much, were it not for the following tradition regarding Constantinople brought by Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād also in the name of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, which has several other versions in other sources. The *isnād* of this tradition goes back to Sharīḥ b. ‘Ubayd al-Ḥimṣī.¹¹⁶

Constantinople heard of the destruction of Bayt al-Maqdis, and she became proud and insolent and so was called the haughty. She said: the throne of my Lord is built upon the waters, and she was (or: and I am) built upon the waters. God promised punishment [for it] on the Day of Resurrection and said: “I will

115 Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-fitan*, 299.

116 For Sharīḥ b. ‘Ubayd see *Tahdīb*, vol. 4, p. 328; Livne-Kafri, *Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis*, no. 9, n. 3; no. 326, n. 1.

The version brought here is Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-fitan*, 284. The translation is based on David Cook, *Muslim Apocalyptic*, 60–61 with a few changes; for parallel versions see also Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 342, 231–2. The text there is somewhat problematic, and the *isnād* goes back to al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157/774) (on him, see F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1967), 516–7; J. Schacht, “al-Awzā‘ī”, *EF*²); also Yūsūf b. Yahyā al-Sulamī, *‘Aqd al-durar fī akhbār al-muntaẓar* (Beirut, 1983), 225; Ibn al-Fakīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. De Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1885), p. 146, cited by N. el-Cheikh, “Constantinople through Arab eyes”, in A. Neuwirth et al., *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature – Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach: Proceedings of the International Symposium in Beirut, June 25th–June 30th, 1996* (Beirut, 1999), 528.

What follows is Ibn al-Murajjā’s version: Constantinople gloated over the destruction of *Bayt al-Maqdis* since they were avaricious(?). [The text reads الحاروا, maybe a corrupt form of تلحز [الحز, تلحز] “And she behaved proudly and was insolent and haughty and God called her the insolent and the arrogant because she gloated over (the destruction of) *Bayt al-Maqdis* (saying) that God’s throne is on the waters and explained that it was she who is on the waters. And God became angry at her and promised to punish her and the exalted one said to her: ‘I swear (to you), oh haughty (city), because you disobeyed my command and were insolent, I will send to you my servants, believers from dispersed dwellings, and I will fill their hearts with courage until I will cause them to be like the hearts of lions coming out of the forest. Then I will terrify the hearts of your people with the fear of the blasphemers. I will then take off your ornaments, your silk vestments and your splendid garments and will abandon you, and no one shall cry: “Woe to thee”, and your dove shall not hatch its eggs. Then I will bring down on you three fires from the sky: a fire of tar, and a fire of bitumen, and a fire of naphtha; and I shall leave you desolate, bare, and bald. Because it has been a long time already that I have been shared (by other gods) in you, that others have been worshipped, and that I have been maligne, therefore I will ignore you until the day of your repentance, you will not hasten, oh haughty (city), but I shall not fail to attain my wish”.

tear away your decoration, and your silk, and your veil, and I will leave you when there is [not even] a rooster crowing in you, and I will make you uninhabited except for foxes, and unplanted except for mallows, and the thorny carob, and I will cause to rain down upon you three [types] of fire: fire of pitch, fire of Sulphur, and fire of naphta, and I will leave you bald and bare, with nothing between you and the heavens. Your voice and your smoke will reach me in heavens. Because you have for such a long time associated other deities with God and worshipped other than Him. Girls who will have never seen the sun because of their beauty will be deflowered, and none of you who arrive will be able to walk to the palace (*balāṭ*) of their king [because of the amount of loot] – you will find in it the treasure of twelve kings of theirs, each of them more and none less than it [the one before], in the form of statues of cows or horses of bronze, with water flowing on their heads – dividing up their treasures, weighing them in shield and cutting them with axes. This will be because of the fire promised by God that makes you hurry, and you will carry what of their treasures you can so you can divide them up in al-Qarqadūna (Chalcedon).”

According to early Muslim tradition, crystallized before the mid-eighth century, it was to be the role of *al-Fārūq*, that is ‘Umar, to cleanse the Mount, and ‘Abd al-Malik’s to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and thus to turn the wheel back and put things right again. The tradition cited above regarding ‘Abd al-Malik: “I shall send to you my servant ‘Abd al-Malik, who will build you and adorn you. I shall surely restore to Bayt al-Maqdis its first kingdom ... And I shall surely place my throne of glory on the Rock” should be placed side-by-side with the tradition regarding Constantinople’s claim to this same throne. In fact, ‘Abd al-Malik’s building inscription dated 692 CE, consisting mainly of Quranic quotations, quotes twice the beginning of the Throne verse (*Ayat al-kursī*, Sura 2: 255f.) which states that “His Kursi (throne) extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not”.¹¹⁷

These events are portrayed as part of the events of the end of time, which are already occurring. Rosen-Ayalon, Elad, and other scholars, have already stressed the centrality of the Last Days, the Day of Judgement, and Paradise both in the iconography and in the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock as well as in various other monuments and features in the area of the Ḥaram.¹¹⁸

The fall of Constantinople and its destruction is a central part of the scheme of the Last Days. As such it plays a major part in Muslim apocalyptic literature and is considered one of *ashraṭ al-sa‘a*, the six portents of the hour.¹¹⁹ The

117 A. Neuwirth, “The spiritual meaning of Jerusalem in Islam”, in N. Rosovsky (ed.), *City of the Great King* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 93–116, esp. p. 109; see also now M. Milwright, *The Dome of the Rock*, 77–9.

118 See M. Rosen-Ayalon, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif*; Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, index “Last Days”; Neuwirth, “The spiritual meaning of Jerusalem”, esp. 109–12; Necipoğlu, “The Dome of the Rock as palimpsest”, 28–36.

119 On this see S. Bashear, “Apocalyptic and other materials on early Muslim–Byzantine wars: a review of Arabic sources”, *JRAS*, series 3.2, 1991, 173–207; El-Sheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 65–71; Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur‘ān*, 20–31; Livne-Kafri, *Jerusalem in Early Islam*, 14, 29, 63–4, 66, 67 (Hebrew). On Constantinople in Byzantine apocalyptic literature see A. Külzer, “Konstantinopel in der apokalyptischen Literatur der Byzantiner”, in H. Hunger and W. Hörandner

dramatic events that were taking place were in fact being interpreted as a link in this eschatological chain of events. Bayt al-Maqdis will vanquish Constantinople and its newly rebuilt Temple will replace the Hagia Sophia.¹²⁰

Conclusion

In this paper I have surveyed the formation of Byzantine ideology according to which Constantinople is the New Jerusalem and its church, the Hagia Sophia is God's Throne as well as the central place of the Jewish Temple and the need to redeem its dignity which, according to Muslim tradition, was violated by the Byzantines. The rebuilding of the "Temple of Solomon" fulfilled the need of the Muslims for a significant holy place of their own in the newly conquered lands: this place could both compete successfully with the revered Ka'ba in Mecca, controlled in those years by the rebellious 'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr, and could at the same time be a monument to challenge the sanctity of Constantinople and its outstanding church which claimed to have surpassed in beauty Solomon's temple.

The competition over the location of "God's Throne" should be seen against the background of continuous Muslim attacks and raids on Byzantium, as well as two sieges on Constantinople during the reigns of Mu'awiya, 'Abd al-Malik and his sons al-Walid, Sulayman, Hisham, and most famously Maslama, who led many expeditions against the Byzantines, climaxing in the second siege on Constantinople (717–718).¹²¹ In fact, 691/2, the year in which the Dome of the Rock was either begun or completed,¹²² was the same year in which 'Abd al-Malik defeated Justinian II at Sebastopolis, and freed himself from the annual tribute to the Byzantines. The Muslims who had admired Byzantine art and architecture, imitating it in various places,¹²³ now harnessed its architectural and artistic tradition to its service,¹²⁴ in order to obtain superiority over Constantinople. They chose to build this stunning monument in the tradition of the classical Roman–Byzantine commematoria, and to embellish it with the finest mosaics in the best style of Byzantine artistic tradition.

Muslim competition with Constantinople through architectural and iconographic mimesis in the Mosque of Damascus as well as in the Dome of the

(eds), *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* (Vienna, 2000), 51–76; Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*.

120 For the Hagia Sophia as the symbol of Constantinople see E. Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (Munich, 1968), 201, 214.

121 See W.E. Kaegi, "Confronting Islam: emperors versus caliphs (641–c. 850)", *Cambridge History of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2008), 369–86; G. Rotter, "Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan", *EF²*, vol. 6 (Leiden: Brill), 740.

122 See Blair, "What is the date of the Dome of the Rock?"; Milwright, *Dome of the Rock*, 65–6.

123 See e.g. Khirbat al-Mafjir, the paintings in Quşayr 'Amra; various Roman bathhouses, e.g. Hammath Gader; it has been claimed that the Dome of the Rock is modelled after the Anastasis of the Holy Sepulchre: see K. Bieberstein and H. Bloedhorn, "Jerusalem: Grundzüge der Baugeschichte von Chalkolithikum bis zur Frühzeit der osmanischen Herrschaft", in *Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients Reihe B, N* (Wiesbaden, 1994), vol. 3, 72–92.

124 See El-Sheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 56–9.

Rock, has been demonstrated by Flood in his book on the Damascus Mosque.¹²⁵ Flood notes that these extravagant elements in the Damascus Mosque were later to be rejected and criticized by the Muslims. Al-Walīd was in fact blamed for building church-like mosques, a claim which, in Flood's words, reveals the "translational character of his experiment".¹²⁶ Milwright demonstrates architectural influence of Late Antique monuments in the Dome of the Rock's inscriptional pattern.¹²⁷

The restitution of "God's Throne" in Jerusalem by 'Abd al-Malik is thus motivated not only by inner political and religious considerations such as his competition with 'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr, but also by a political ideology which complements the ambitious military goals of the Umayyad rulers until the devastation which followed the siege of Constantinople. The Dome of the Rock is therefore also the answer to the haughty and presumptuous Constantinople and its church the Hagia Sophia, whose builder had actually purported to have vanquished Solomon's temple. 'Abd al-Malik's target was to be the new Solomon, to rebuild a Temple that will equal, if not outdo, the church and its city which insolently claimed to have inherited God's Throne.

125 F.B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 228–45, 78–9.

126 Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*, 243.

127 See Milwright, *The Dome of the Rock*, ch. 7, 172–213.