

## History of Jerusalem: Periods of Tolerance and Intolerance by the Three Abrahamic Faiths

Jerusalem has had a history of both tolerance and intolerance since its earliest days. Today, I will briefly provide you with examples from the three Abrahamic faiths when Jerusalem was and wasn't shared religiously. I'll begin with Islam, the most recent religion of the three.

1. Example of Muslim intolerance: In 1009 AD, Caliph Hakim ordered the destruction of both synagogues and churches, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and pressured non-Muslims, especially Christians, to convert to Islam. Word got back to Rome about these desecrations and the Pope ordered a "Crusade" to rescue the Holy Sites and the Christians from "non-believers" or infidels.
2. An example of Moslem tolerance is when Arab Muslims conquered the city in 638 and the Caliph Umar personally went to Jerusalem to celebrate this momentous victory because it was the place where Mohammed ascended to heaven on the site of the Jewish Temple according to the Hadith, Islam's second holiest book. He also allowed the Jews re-entry in the city and freedom to worship, along with its Christian residents. [Note: The Covenant of Umar, by Christian request, called for a continued prohibition on Jewish residency in Jerusalem, in addition to very extensive protection of Christian property and rights. However, Umar reneged on the Jewish exclusion provision.]
3. Most of the history of Christian control over Jerusalem—under the Byzantines and Crusaders-- is characterized by extreme and often very violent intolerance. One marked exception is the period from 438 to 460. In 438, Empress Eudocia, the wife of the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II was instrumental in allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem after a long, forced exclusion by the Romans. Eudocia later retired from the position of Empress, moved to Jerusalem, and played a leading role in expanding the city and building churches, hospitals and other public institutions there.
4. Earlier, Roman and Byzantine Christian emperors and kings prohibited Jews from living in Jerusalem for about 350 years and only allowed them to re-enter the city one day a year where they could weep at the Temple's only remaining wall, known today as the "Wailing Wall". In 1099, when the first Crusaders captured Jerusalem, they slaughtered most of its Muslim and Jewish residents as well as many of the City's local Christians. Needless to say, these European Christians were generally very intolerant of Jews, Muslims and Eastern Christians during their nearly 100 year reign. David conquered the very small city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites around 1000 BC.
5. Under the rule of David and his son, Solomon, Jerusalem experienced a peaceful and prosperous coexistence between the new Jewish population and the original Jebusite inhabitants. For example, many of King David's top army officers were non-Jews and King Solomon was famous for entertaining rulers and other non-Jewish guests from throughout the Middle East in his palace. By the end of Solomon's reign, Jerusalem was no longer a minor Canaanite city, but a cosmopolitan capital of the Jewish Empire.
6. Between 1948 and 1967, Jerusalem was divided between Israeli control of West Jerusalem and Jordanian control of East Jerusalem. During the 1967 War, Israel occupied Arab East Jerusalem and greatly expanded the boundaries of the city, annexing Palestinian suburbs and villages. Israel built exclusively Jewish settlements on land taken from the Palestinians, in defiance of international law. It severely restricted housing development by Palestinians, and thousands of Palestinian homes were demolished. Under Israeli control, members of other religions are-- theoretically-- granted access to their holy sites. In fact, however, there are severe limitations placed on Palestinian Muslims and Christians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip from accessing holy sites, even during holy days such as Easter and Ramadan. Ironically, this policy tightened since the beginning of the Oslo peace process in 1993 and has become much worse with the advent of suicide bombers and the construction of the wall around East Jerusalem.
7. Lessons learned from this historical account of the three Abrahamic religions: Any time one religion acquires an "illusion" that Jerusalem belongs exclusively to one people or religion, it has always

proven to be disastrous for all the residents of the city. There is no such thing as “purity” of religion or of a nation. We are all mixed peoples with many different histories.