NOTES ET DOCUMENTS

JERUSALEM IN EARLY ISLAM:
THE ESCHATOLOGICAL ASPECT

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The development of the idea of the sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam is mainly reflected in Muslim traditions belonging to the literary genre of fadā’il bayt al-maqdis (The Praises of Jerusalem), most of which were composed during the seventh and the eighth centuries. An extremely important aspect of these traditions was the city's unique role in the eschatological picture and in the day of judgement. In fact Muslim attitude to the matter of the end is reflected in a large complex of conceptions such as reward and punishment, heaven and hell, this world and the world to come, resurrection and the day of judgement, messianism, redemption, and more. Such conceptions likewise developed under the influence of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and against the background of the historical reality of the Muslim community, especially during the seventh and the eighth centuries (first two centuries of the hīgra). In the framework of this article I emphasize those aspects which elicit the issue of Jerusalem, but I shall not be able to enlarge the other issues.

a. Jerusalem itself is not mentioned or hinted in the Qur'ān as the scene of the last drama of humankind. The connection of Jerusalem (and of other cities and places), to the matters of the end emerged in the Qur'ānic interpretation and in the hadīth literature after Muhammad's death, also as a part of study and absorption of Jewish and Christian materials. An important place in that literature was reserved


2 Cf. idem, 'Some Notes Concerning Muslim Apocalyptic Tradition', Quaderni di Studi Arabi 17 (1999), pp. 71-94; idem, 'Some Notes on Muslim Apocalyptic Literature in Light of the Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Traditions' (accepted for publication in Studia Islamica).

3 Not without controversy; see M.J. Kister, "ḥaddithu 'an bani isrā’ila wa-la-haraja', Israel Oriental Studies 2 (1972), pp. 215-239, where he discusses in detail the debate among Muslim scholars on whether or not it is lawful to rely on Jewish or Christian sources. Cf. J.W. Hirschberg, 'The Sources of Muslim Traditions concerning Jerusalem', Rocznik

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Arabica, tome LIII,3

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for the fitan and malāhīm, to which the ‘Canonical Collections’ of ḥadīṣ also dedicated special chapters. Prophecy and fortune telling were likewise assigned a place in Muslim apocalyptic literature, which also deals with the mahdī, a kind of Muslim messiah, who sometimes appears identical with ʿĪsā (Jesus) and an anti-messiah, a Muslim antichrist generally called al-dāqūq, neither of which is mentioned in the Qurʾān. As in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions, basically two major levels are distinguished in the eschatological picture of Jerusalem: a. the remote events of the day of judgement and the period leading up to it, generally replete with disaster and horror (aʿrāf al-sāʿa, the signs of the hour [of the resurrection]) and b. the very actual reality of the Muslim community presented in apocalyptic depictions, which accordingly reflect religious, social, and political conditions.4

b. The main groups involved in the Muslim apocalyptic traditions on Jerusalem were Jewish converts to Islam, political circles, including Umayyad caliphs, ascetics, and Qurʾānic commentators,5 although various scholars, mainly in the field of hadīṣ, or qussās, storytellers, and preachers, contributed as well.6 Some of the relevant information follows.

b1. Jewish converts

Jews who converted to Islam were an extremely important factor in the creation of the Muslim apocalyptic traditions, including those on Jerusalem. Jewish knowledge (including of Hebrew) could support interpretations of Qurʾānic verses; Jews could also identify ancient sacred sites (or sites perceived as such), or identify their apocalyptic importance. They were also perceived as competent men who combined personal ability to predict the future with the knowledge of old prophecies in the scriptures. The most important personality was Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, a Yemenite Jewish scholar who converted to Islam during the caliphate of Abū Bakr or ʿUmar, and who for many years lived in the Syrian town of Hims.7 According to an old prophecy related by Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, Jerusalem was promised that al-fārāq (the epithet of the caliph ʿUmar) would clear away the dunghill that the Byzantines put...
on Temple Mount. Indeed some hadith passages in ‘biblical style’, or paraphrases, such as ‘in a revealed book of God’, ‘it is written in the Torah’, and the like, might refer to the current affairs of the Muslim community. An example is the description in eschatological coloration of the ceaseless warfare against the Byzantines on the coasts of Palestine and Syria during the seventh and the eighth centuries AD. This tradition speaks of Palestine and Jerusalem, the destinations of Abraham’s migration (muhāgār Ibrāhīm), as God’s most beloved places. In a promise to the patriarch Abraham, God said, ‘In the end of days [idā kāna āḥir al-zamān] I will bring there the best of my servants to fight the sons of Esau [the Byzantines].’ Ibrāhīm asked: O Lord, in which place there? He answered, On the shore which is at the southern side of Jerusalem.

In one tradition Jerusalem as the place of the resurrection is connected to Safiyya, a widow of the prophet Muḥammad, who visited the Mount of Olives and prayed there. According to some versions she said that this was the place where the people would be separated on the day of resurrection for heaven and for hell. If we accept the authenticity of the tradition, this might be connected with the Jewish
origin of Safiyya. Some traditions introduced by Jewish converts show how much they were still attached to their Jewish heritage, as they express typical Jewish expectations of redemption, lament the destruction of the Temple, and yearn for the rebuilding of the Temple. These traditions were also styled in an apocalyptic manner, and they seem to echo a certain eschatological tension among Jews who embraced Islam. An important tradition of this sort is also attributed to Ka‘b al-Aḥbār. Of him it is said, ‘He found in one of the books: Rejoice, Jerusalem (Irišalayim), that is to say bayt al-maqdis and the Rock (al-‘awra) and it is called the Temple [al-haykal: ḥeṭal in Hebrew]. I will send you my servant ‘Abd al-Malik and he will build you and embellish you, and I shall restore bayt al-maqdis to its former sovereignty (mulk) and I shall crown it with gold and silver and pearls, and I shall send to you my people, and I shall place my throne on the Rock, and I am God, the Lord, and David is the king of the sons of Israel’. This is an obvious expression of expectations of the Jews, who linked the reconstruction of the Temple to a renewal of worldly rule. The Temple is identified with the Dome of the Rock, ‘a new Temple’; ‘Abd al-Malik is executing a divine command. The conclusion of the tradition introduces another important element in Jewish eschatology, the ‘House of David’.

Other traditions connect the rebuilding of the Temple with the rise of Islam, and this may be an echo of eschatological tension in circles of Jewish converts. Ibn Sa’d (d. 230/845) quoted the following tradition on the authority of Muhammad b. Ka‘b al-Qurazi, a man of Jewish origin: ‘God revealed Himself to Jacob and said: I shall send from your descendants kings and prophets, till I send the Prophet

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13 See V. Vacca, ‘Saḥiya bint Ḥuayai‘, *EF*.
16 Cf. A. Linder, *Jerusalem as a Focal Point in the Conflict between Judaism and Christianity*, *Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*, ed. B.Z. Kedar, (Jerusalem, 1979) p. 8, discussing Constantine the Great in Greek and Eastern liturgy in the form of the figures of David and Solomon, the builders of biblical Jerusalem. See a tradition which tells about a man who was asked why was he moving to Jerusalem. He answered: ‘It came to my knowledge that there is always in Jerusalem (or: there is still) a man who acts according to the way of the family (the descendants) of David’. This may reflect the conception of the perpetuity of the House of David in its messianic sense. See Ibn al-Muragga (above, note 5), p. 185, no. 264; Fadā’il Bayt al-Maṣqīd wa-l-Sām (anon.), MS Cambridge Qq 91/2, f. 36b; Ibrāhīm b. Yahlāyā al-MiKNĀSĪ, Kitāb fīhi Fadā’il Bayt al-Maṣqīd wa-Fadā’il al-Sām, MS Tübingen 25, f. 27a; Ahmād b. Muḥammad b. Surūr al-Maṣqīsī, Kitāb MuṣṭIR al-Garām bi-Fadā’il al-Quds wa-l-Sām, MS Paris 1667, f. 89b; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Kaṅgī, Fadā’il Bayt al-Maṣqīd wa-Fadāl al-Ṣalāt fīhā, MS Tübingen 26, f. 81b.
of the haram whose nation will build the Temple (haykal) of Jerusalem, and he is the seal of the prophets and his name is Ahmad'. In the name of Ka'b al-Ahbar, the Jewish convert, a kind of 'new covenant' with the nation of Muhammad is spoken of: 'This House (hayt al-maqdis) complained before God, may He be exalted, about the destruction, and God revealed Himself: I manifest to you a new Torah, which means, the Qur'an, and new inhabitants, which means the nation of Muhammad, peace be upon him. They will hover towards you like the hovering of the eagle, and they will long for you as the dove longs for its eggs and they will enter you prostrating and bowing ...'.

As noted Jews could also identify ancient sacred sites (or sites perceived as such) and identify their apocalyptic importance.

b2. Ascetics

The zuhhüd, Muslim ascetics, were greatly interested in the Jewish and Christian heritage, and apparently were especially influenced by the model of Christian monks and hermits. Many ascetics were occupied with eschatological matters, mainly the individual aspect, because of their great piety and their intense fear of God's judgement, which might send people to the fire of hell. The idea of the sanctity of Jerusalem was largely developed by ascetic circles. According to one tradition, the famous ascetic, Ibrahim b. Adham (d. ca. 780), regarded his period as 'the time of the punishments', most probably in an apocalyptic perception. He urged his friends to leave 'this world' and go to the Holy Land and the mountains of Jerusalem... and he pointed to the mountain of Jerusalem... This tradition also refers to the ascetic ideal of retirement from the company of men in order to devote attention entirely to God, but sometimes to avoid participating in the civil wars that were depicted as a part of the last events. Here the location was the environs of Jerusalem, a dwelling place of Christian monks as well. The tradition might also echo another important concept, basically derived from the Judaeo-

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19 According to a tradition, Ka'b al-Ahbar (originally a Jew himself), had to pay to a certain Jewish scholar in Jerusalem (probably an inhabitant of the city) so that he would show him the site of 'the rock upon which Solomon son of David stood on the day when he completed the building of the Mosque [the Temple]' (Ibn al-Muragga [above, note 5], p. 129, no. 158). Ka'b's stepson is the informant who enumerated the apocalyptic traits of Jerusalem before the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (cf. note 27).
Christian tradition: a place of refuge for believers in apocalyptic periods. Many traditions emphasize the importance of Jerusalem and Syria in that respect.\(^22\)

b3. The Umayyads

Various political tendencies were involved in the creation of apocalyptic traditions. Eschatology played an extremely important role in the sanctification of Syria-Palestine and Jerusalem, and this aspect was promoted by great Umayyad rulers: Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty (661-680), 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (685-705) the builder of the Dome of the Rock, and his son al-Walīd (705-715).\(^{23}\)

Jerusalem appears in many Muslim traditions as the land of the gathering for the final judgement and of the resurrection (\textit{ard al-mahṣar wa-l-mansār}), following similar conceptions in Judaism and Christianity.\(^{24}\)

The importance of Jerusalem and al-Ṣa'īm as \textit{ard al-mahṣar wa-l-mansār} seems in fact to be an early feature in the glorification of the Holy Land. This eschatological element is extremely important in the halo of sanctity attached to Jerusalem, and was also used as an argument in political controversies. Mu'āwiya, the first Umayyad caliph bent on extolling his own position, said to a delegation from Iraq: 'You have come to the best caliph, and to the Holy Land and to the land of the gathering (for the resurrection) and you have come to a land in which are the graves of the prophets'.\(^{25}\) The Rock is eschatologically identified as the stage of the final drama of humanity, namely the resurrection and the last judgement.\(^{26}\) This is also associated to the narratives about the caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who showed personal interest in this aspect of Jerusalem and the Rock. One tradition concerns Nūf al-Bakkālī, who was the son of Ka'b's wife. In answer to 'Abd al-Malik's question he enumerated the merits of Jerusalem in eschatological terms.\(^{27}\)

A rare piece of information found in the commentary (\textit{tafsīr}) of Muhammad b. Ǧarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) alludes to 'Abd al-Malik's involvement in favor of the Rock, upon which he built the impressive (and expensive) Dome. It tells of a debate over the meaning of a Qur'ānic verse about the leveling of the mountains in the end 'They ask thee concerning the mountains; say: My Lord will uproot them and scatter them as dust' (\textit{Su}. 70-71, 105). One of the attendants said that the Rock

\(^{22}\) See Cf. our notes 86-93.


\(^{24}\) Cf. e.g., Livne-Kafri, \textit{Diversity and Complexity} (above, note 1), pp. 182-184.


(al-sāhīra) would not have a special role on the day of resurrection, contrary to Ka'b al-Aḥbār who claimed that 'in the day of resurrection the Rock shall be the place for the foot of Allāh (al-Raḥmān). 'Abd al-Malik's silence seems to signify support of Ka'b's view.28

These are only some examples of the circles involved in the creation of an apocalyptic tradition concerning Jerusalem. As stated, it is not easy to distinguish these circles sharply.

c. The last drama of humankind: some pictures

As mentioned, Jerusalem and al-Šām appear in many Muslim traditions as the land of the gathering for the last judgement and of the resurrection (ard al-maḥšar wa-l-mansār). The main site is generally the Rock, the place of the judgement. One tradition that affirms the legitimacy of such a role for the Rock, also reflects a controversy:

'Have you perceived what the people believe regarding this rock? Is it true that we have to follow, or is it something originating from the book [of Jews or Christians], so that we should leave it? Both of them said: Glory be to God! Who doubts about it? When God, may He be exalted, ascended from it (istawa) to Heaven, He said to the Rock of Jerusalem: This is my place (maqām), and the place of my Throne in the day of resurrection (yaum al-qiyāma), and of the assembly of my servants, and this is the place of my paradise at its right side, and my hell at its left side, and I shall set my scales in front of it; I am God, the Judge of judgement-day (dayyān yaum al-dīn). After that He ascended to Heaven'.29

c1. The Rock is the place of sounding the trumpet

Some Qur'anic verses regarding the events of the last day obtain 'geographical expression' in Jerusalem. Some commentaries on the sounding of the trumpet, mentioned in the Qur'ān calling to resurrection, identify the Rock as the place of sounding. An interpretation of the verse, 'And listen thou for the day when the caller shall call from a near place' (Su. Qa', 41) is cited by Ibn al-Murağğā (eleventh century AD) from Muqāṭīl b. Sulaymān, an early Qur'ān commentator (d. 159/768):

'[The angel] Isra'īl shall stand on the rock of Jerusalem and he will blow the trumpet and say: 0 you, the rotten bones and the skins torn to pieces, and the cut hair! Your God orders you to assemble for the reckoning [of the day of judgement].'

Muqāṭīl also identifies the blower of the trumpet as 'Isrā'īl, may peace be

on him, standing on the rock of Jerusalem which is the nearest place on earth to heaven, at a distance of eighteen miles, and all the creatures will hear and they will assemble in Jerusalem and it is the middle of the earth, and this is the “nearer place”... 31 The identification of the Rock as the sounding place appears in other traditions in Ibn al-Murağğa’s book and in different commentaries to the Qur’an.32

One tradition quotes Ibn ‘Abbas concerning the ‘near place’:

“This is a day in which God will order Israfil who will stand on the Rock of Jerusalem and say to him: Blow the trumpet... and he will lengthen it and spread it [the trumpet]... he will call and the call will be heard to a distance of one thousand years and that is his saying: ‘from a near place’; and concerning what you asked which is the thing Israfil will call with... he will call while the trumpet is in his mouth and the width of the circle of his mouth is like the width of heaven and earth and it is made of light, and then he will call: O you, the rotten bones and the skins torn to pieces, and the cut hair! Arise to your Lord...”.33

Another Qur’anic verse which speaks of the infidels, who ‘shall come forth from the tombs hastily, as if they were hurrying unto a waymark’ (Su. al-Ma’drt, 43), is also connected to the Rock. According to a certain interpretation they will hurry to the Rock of Jerusalem.34 According to another tradition, ‘hell will be opened from this valley, namely the valley of ḡahannam [hell] and paradise will be opened from the mosque, namely the mosque of Jerusalem’.35

c2. As mentioned before, hell is stated to be located beside paradise in Jerusalem. Here it seems that Muslim commentaries on the Qur’an and the hadîth were influenced by Jewish and Christian conceptions (the proximity to the resurrection and place of the judgement, after which the wicked will go to hell and the righteous will inherit paradise). There are many traditions that speak of Jerusalem and the Rock


34 Ibid., p. 112, no. 127; p. 239, no. 355.

35 Ibid., p. 254, no. 387. In a commentary to Su. Ḥûd, 40 (‘Until, when Our command came, and the oven boiled...’) Muqatîl states, ‘Allah, may He be exalted, said to Moses: Go to Jerusalem, because my fire of hell is there and my light and my oven’ (Muqatîl, Tafsîr [above, note 31], f. 120a; cf. Ibn al-Murağğa (above, note 5), p. 259, no. 399.)
(al-sahra) as the place of paradise, the source of the four rivers of paradise; it is
told of a divine light descending from Eden to the mosque of Jerusalem and of
an open gate from paradise, from which mercy and pity come down on Jerusalem;
Jerusalem is one of paradise’s cities in this world; the source of drinking water in
this world is located under the Rock; there is a symmetry and parallel lines between
paradise in the seventh heaven (or a temple in the seventh heaven) and bayt al-
maqdis and the Rock, etc.36

Following the Jewish legend, the place of hell is identified with the Valley of
Joshaphat, but is confused with the Valley of Hinnom, because the Arabic name
of the Valley of Joshaphat is wādī ǧahannam (the valley of hell).37 It was related that
‘the wall’ which Allāh mentioned in the Qur’ān (Su. al-ḥadīd, 13) ‘and a wall shall
be set up between them, having a door in the inward whereof is mercy, and the
outward thereof is chastisement’ — is the eastern wall of the the mosque of
Jerusalem, ‘in the inward whereof is mercy, and the outward thereof is chastise-
ment’, namely wādī ǧahannam.38 It was told of ‘Ubāda b. al-Šāmit that he was seen
standing on the eastern wall of Jerusalem and weeping. The reason was explained
by a saying of his: ‘The messenger of God brought to our knowledge that he saw
hell from here’;39 or according to another tradition that ‘he saw from here an angel
upturning burning-coals’.40 Some traditions are connected with a judicial question
of whether praying in the churches of the Christians in the Valley of Joshaphat is
lawful (probably against similar practices amongs Muslims). Legitimacy is requested
in the actions of the caliph ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb. One tradition tells that ‘Umar,
‘after he conquered Jerusalem, he passed by the Church of Mary may Peace be
on her, which is located in the valley, and he prayed there; later on he repented
and said: that is because of a saying of the Prophet, may peace be on him: this
valley is from the valleys of hell’. Another tradition says that he prayed twice in

36 O. Livne-Kafri, ‘Jerusalem, the Navel of the World in Muslim Tradition’, Cathedra
37 On the Valley of Jehoshaphat see Z. Vilnai, The Legends of Palestine: Jerusalem and
ing of the sages that the entrance to hell is in the Valley of Ben Hinnom in the south-
ern side of Jerusalem. On the confusion between the Valley of Ben Hinnom and the
Valley of Jehoshaphat in the Christian tradition see O. Limor, Christian Traditions of
Mount Olives in the Byzantine and Arab Period, M.A. Thesis, The Hebrew University,
17; al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-Manṭūr (above, note 30), vol. 6, p. 174. Cf. al-Zasmaḥṣari, al-
4, p. 309. Ibn Kathīr has reservations as regards Ka’b al-Aḥbār’s saying that the gate
mentioned in the Qur’ān is The Gate of Mercy in Jerusalem, ‘because of his isrā’īlāyāt
and his nonsenses’.
14. ‘Ubāda b. al-Šāmit d. in 34 AH. He was the judge of Fīlasṭīn and it is even
said concerning him that he was ‘in charge’ of Jerusalem (Ibn al-Muragga [above note
5], p. 193, no. 277). See on him Ḥayr al-Dīn al-Zirīkī, al-ʿAštām (Beirut, 1980), vol. 3,
p. 258.
40 Ibn al-Muragga, (above, note 5), no. 161; cf. al-Wāṣīṭī (above, note 15), no. 16;
al-Luqaymī, Latāʾif al-Uns (above, note 12), f. 19a.
the church which is in wādī ṣaḥānam and he said later on: ‘It was written of us that I should kneel praying . . . on a gate from the gates of hell’.41 A clear reservation against prayer in the Christians sites of the Valley of Josaphat and on the Mount of Olives is also expressed in a saying attributed to Ka'b al-Aḥbār.42 Dreams are also a source of information concerning hell and paradise in Jerusalem, for example a dream of the Prophet Muḥammad on a night journey to the Holy Land43 and a night dream of a man who was considered to be one of the abdāl-saints on ‘Aṣūrā’ night of 335 AH.44 In the Guide to the Pilgrims included in ‘The Praises of Jerusalem’ of Ibn al-Muṣarāf, the Gate of Mercy (bāb al-raḥma) overlooking the valley of Josaphat was chosen to be the place in which the pilgrims ‘should ask of Allāh paradise, and ask of him a shelter from the fire of hell’, ‘because the wādī which is behind it is the wādī of hell and it is the place about which Allāh, may He be exalted, said ‘And a wall shall be set up between them, having a door in the inward whereof is mercy, and the outward thereof is chastisement’.45

Commentators tried also to identify the place of the sāhira in Su. al-Nāẓrāt 14, which speaks of the creatures on the day of judgement. Wahb b. Munabbih spoke about that verse when he stayed in Jerusalem: ‘Here is al-sāhira, that means, al-Quds’.46 There is also an identification of al-sāhira with ‘the piece of land which is under the monastery, where the road to Jerusalem is [most probably the road up to Jerusalem from the east]’.47 It was also said that al-sāhira was ‘a mountain near Jerusalem’, and some identifications connect it with al-Sām in general.48 One tradition on the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad states, “The people will be gathered by groups; the believer will not mix with the infidel and the infidel will not be mixed with the believer, and the angel of the trumpet will descend and stand on the Rock of Jerusalem, and the people will be gathered barefoot, naked and uncircumcised, and the sun will approach their heads while between it and

47 Ibn al-Muṣarāf (above, note 5), p. 235, no. 348. It was said also that al-sāhira is ‘the piece of land which is beside the Mountain, the Mount of Olives’. See al-Wāṣīṭī (above, note 15), p. 48, no. 71; Ibn al-Fikrāḥ, Bāṭ ṭ al-Nūfūs (above, note 12), pa. 72, line 5.
them there is a distance of sixty years... and they will come to the piece of land which is called al-sāhira and it is in the vicinity of Jerusalem...'.

c3. Ibn al-Muragga in his Guide to the Pilgrim recommends that the pilgrim go up the sāhira which is 'the Mountain of Olives'. He links this to an old tradition on Ṣafiyya, the widow of the Prophet Muhammad, who went to Jerusalem, climbed the Mount of Olives, and prayed there. This is connected with traditions mentioned above that Ṣafiyya visited the Mount of Olives and prayed there, and said that this was the place where the people would be separated on the day of resurrection for heaven and hell. Indeed, The Mount of Olives became a site for pilgrimage, and it is mentioned among the sacred mountains in commentaries to the Qur'ān and in the hadīth.

d. Heavenly Jerusalem and the bridal metaphor
Some Muslim traditions speak of a heavenly Jerusalem, the most important of them referring to a heavenly Temple directed towards the earthly one. The origin of this idea is most probably Jewish, and it is also associated with the idea of a heavenly shrine opposite the Ka'ba in Mecca.

Some of these traditions speak of precious stones in Jerusalem of the Future and a partial connection at least seems to exist with Revelation in the New Testament. One of these traditions expresses the idea that the hour of resurrection will not come until seven walls of precious stones, gold, silver, clouds, and light are set around Jerusalem. According to another tradition 'Allāh, may He be exalted, will send four winds from the sea in the direction of Jerusalem; they will uncover every stone and building and they will purify them from all the damages of men. Then he will build around it seven walls: a wall of light, upon which are the angels of holiness, and a wall of clouds and a wall of topaz and a wall of sapphire and a wall of pearls and a wall of gold. It will be like a lamp. And the religion at that time will be the religion of truth, and truth will appear and Jesus son of Mary and the believers in him from this nation [the Muslims] will be the ones who will manifest the true religion, and he will be then in Jerusalem...'.


52 Livne-Kafri, Navel (above, note 36), pp. 97-98.


Or:

‘Allāh said to Jerusalem: Days and nights will not pass until I send down on you a dome from heaven, that I shall build with my own hands, and the angels will carry it. It will shine on you as the light of the sun and no human being will enter to it . . . and I will place around you a wall and a fence of clouds and five walls of topaz and sapphire and pearls and gold and silver. To you is the gathering (for the resurrection) and from you is the resurrection.’

It was also transmitted that it was written in the Torah that Allāh said to Bayt al-Maqdis: ‘. . . I shall send to you water from beneath the Throne of Glory, and I shall wash you until I leave you like crystal [this is only one meaning of the word maha] and I shall put around you a wall of clouds, its width twelve miles, and a fence of fire. I shall put on you a dome that I created with my hands . . .’

The last two traditions appear with certain changes also regarding the Rock of Jerusalem. Unlike Revelation 21, the Muslim traditions do not mention the city descending from heaven, but like what is said there they mention precious stones and the number twelve. There is also a connection between the Muslim traditions and what is said in Revelation as regards the width of the wall, the lack of need of sunlight, and water issuing from the Throne of Glory. According to another tradition, the Rock, which on the day of judgement will be the place of the Throne of Glory and the place of the judgement, will turn into a white pearl, and its width will be like the width of heaven and earth. According to an apocalypse of Ka‘b al-Ahībār mentioned earlier, the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik will build Jerusalem (Irūšalā‘īyīm), which

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59 On the width of the wall see Revelation 21:12 ff. On not being in need to the light of the sun see ibid., verse 23; water coming from the Throne of Glory cf. ibid., 22:1.
is Bayt al-Maqdis and the Rock, which is called al-haykal (he4al in Hebrew: the Temple) with gold, silver and pearls...'.61

The ‘bride motif’, which appears in Revelation (‘I saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband’),62 appears differently in the Muslim traditions. According to one of them, which carries an obvious Jewish character (such as in the phrase ‘I shall not forget you until I forget my right hand’; cf. Psalms 137:5), Allāh says to the Rock: ‘. . . Days and nights will not pass unless each mosque in which the name of Allāh was mentioned, will gather to you. They will surround you the same way the riders surround the bride when she is carried to the house of her family . . .’.63

This image is reserved to the Ka'ba, which on the day of resurrection will be conducted to Jerusalem like a bride conducted to her husband, and it will intercede for the people who went on a pilgrimage to it.64 One tradition relates that the Ka'ba will visit Jerusalem on the day of judgement, and then both of them will be conducted to heaven with their inhabitants.65 This is not the descent of a heavenly Jerusalem to earth, but the ascension of the Ka'ba and Jerusalem to heaven.

The bride motif was applied to other towns also,66 especially those in constant conflict with external enemies (ribâtât; tugûr). This is particularly evident in the traditions regarding the last day:

‘Alexandria and Ascalon are two brides, and Alexandria is of a higher rank. When the day of judgement comes, it will be conducted as a bride to Jerusalem, along with its inhabitants’.67

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62 Revelation 21:2. According to Werblowski, clear evidence on heavenly Jerusalem as a bride (or a mother) is not found in ancient Jewish sources, but he believes that this idea already existed in the period of the Second Temple. See R.J.Z. Werblowski, ‘Metropolis for All the Countries’, Jerusalem Ledoroteha (above, note 8), p. 75.


66 Cf., e.g., Ibn al-Faqîh, Kitâb al-Buldân (above, note 25), p. 104: ‘the two brides of this world are Ray and Damascus’; al-Dahâbbî, Mizân al-Fistul fi Naqd al-Riǧâl (Cairo, 1325 AH), vol. 1, p. 285: ‘Ascalon is the bride of paradise’.

67 ‘Uṯmân b. al-Šâḥâ, Fadâ’il al-Iškandariyya wa-‘Asqalân, MS Berlin 198, f. 2b. See also Ibn ‘Arâq, Tanẓîl al-Šarâ’a al-Ma‘rûfa ‘an al-Aḫâdet al-Mawdû’a (Cairo, 1378 AH), vol. 2, p. 62 regarding the glorification of Qazvîn that ‘will become on the day of
The precious stones of Jerusalem, which descend from heaven, also appear in respect of the frontier towns: 'On the Day of Resurrection, Allāh will turn three towns into topaz, and they will be conducted as brides to their husbands. These are Ascalon, Alexandria, and Qazvīn'.

The custom of burial in Jerusalem and in Holy Land is old, most probably as early as the end of the first century of the hījra. Its roots lie partly in eschatological conceptions in Jewish and Christian traditions. This issue is not discussed in detail here.

f. The Signs of the Last Day (aṣrāt al-sā'a)

Before the last judgement a period of terrible events is supposed to happen. The name aṣrāt al-sā'a, the 'signs of the hour' (of the resurrection), was given to the specific circumstances (like social and political crises, wars, cosmic changes) that must precede the last judgement. In Judaism the parallel to aṣrāt al-sā'a might be the terms haaveli masiḥ or ymot maṣiḥ. Some events, like the appearance of Gog and Magog, are mentioned already in the Qur'ān, although important conceptions such as that of a mahdī (messiah), or of an antichrist, generally called al-dāqqāl, are not mentioned there. The figure of this false Messiah, sometimes with the title of al-Suyūtī, has attracted the attention of many scholars, notably regarding the political aspects of the traditions. A special Muslim terminology emerged to denote apocalyptic ideas, such as fitan ('trials', sing. fitna), generally relating to inner tribulations arising from major disturbances, civil wars, and schism within the Muslim community, and of malāḥim ('wars', sing. malhama) concerning warfare, generally with eschatological connotations, also against the infidels, principally the Byzantines.

resurrection, having two wings with which it will hover between earth and heaven; it will be a white pearl. Carrying its inhabitants ... it will declare: I am Qazvīn, a part of paradise. I will intercede for those who came to me'. On the role of the Ka'ba interceding for the pilgrims, see Ibn al-Muragga (above, note 5), pp. 212-213, no. 309. Cf. A.E. Gruber, Fforden and Rang, die Fađđī al als literarisches und gesellschaftliches Problem im Islam (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1975), p. 61. On the entire issue see also Livne-Kafri, Diversity and Complexity (above, note 1), pp. 173-181; idem, 'Jerusalem and the Sanctity of the Frontier Cities in Islam', Cathedra 94 (1999), pp. 75-88 (in Hebrew).

Ibid., p. 82; idem, Diversity and Complexity (above, note 1), p. 180. Cf. Ġālāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, 'al-'Urf al-Wardī ft Akhār al-Mahdī, in al-Hašrī II-I-Fāūwā (Cairo, 1351), vol. 2, p. 223: The people will gather around the mahdī (the Messiah) 'and they will conduct him like the bride conducted to her husband the day she gets married'.


Livne-Kafri, Muslim Apocalyptic Tradition (above, note 2), pp. 72-75.
In the Qur’an, the descriptions of the last day are not connected to Jerusalem and in the hadith literature this vision is not necessarily associated with Jerusalem. The signs of the hour mentioned in the Qur’an, such as the appearance of Gog and Magog, are widely described in the hadith. Besides the Qur’anic portrayal, the hadith literature absorbed Jewish and Christian materials, like the antichrist legend or the Jewish equivalent Armilus, and other materials.73

f2. General picture of the signs
The following tradition is attributed to ‘Awf b. Mālik, a friend of the prophet Muḥammad:

‘I came to the prophet of God, may God bless him and grant him salvation, while he was in a certain building of his, and I saluted him, and he said:

Is that you, ‘Awf? and I said, Yes, O prophet of God. And he said, come in . . . And he said, Count, ‘Awf, six [signs] before the hour of the resurrection, of which the first is the death of your prophet (and I started to cry because of that, until the prophet of God started to hush me), say: One. And the second is: The conquest of Jerusalem, say: Two. And a death which will be amongst my nation which is like the murrain of the sheep,74 say: Three. And the fourth will be a fitna in the midst of my nation (and he emphasized its severity), say: Four. And the fifth: Money will be in abundance, until a man will be given one hundred dinars and he will be unsatisfied, say: Five. And the sixth a ceasefire that will be between you and baniu al-asfar [the Byzantines],75 and they will march against you under eight flags, under each flag twelve thousand men; the shelter place for the Muslims [fustat al-muslimin]76 will be then a place called al-Gūta, in a town called Damascus . . .’77

To describe events which happen to the Muslims, this tradition uses also motifs known from Jewish and Christian traditions; however, one should not necessarily seek a historical parallel for every detail in this kind of literature. The death of Muḥammad (the first sign) opens a new era in the history of mankind, up to its


74 Or: a mortal disease or a murrain that befalls camels or sheep and the like: see: mutān (or ma‘āwān) in E.W. Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon (London 1865-1893), vol. 7, p. 2742; also: a sudden death [al-Wāsiṭi [above, note 15], p. 53, no. 86, note 5).

75 See Lane (previous note), s.v. ‘asfar’, the expression ‘banū al-asfar’, also: from the descendants of asfar, the son of Rūm the son of Esau (al-ruim: the Greeks [the Byzantines]).

76 See Ibn al-Aṭīr, al-Nihāya fi GARĪB AL-HADITH (Cairo, 1311), p. 200 (s.v. fṣt).

77 See Lane (previous note), s.v. ‘asfar’, the expression ‘banū al-asfar’, also: from the descendants of asfar, the son of Rūm the son of Esau (al-ruim: the Greeks [the Byzantines]).
end in the resurrection. The conquest of Jerusalem appears in an eschatological connection in the New Testament (and also in Jewish sources), but there it carries a negative connotation, contrary to the positive attitude of the city's conquest in the time of 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb. The plague (mentioned in ḥewelī masāḥah in the Jewish tradition and in the New Testament) caused the death of many Muslims warriors of Syria and Palestine. The ḥītna, the fourth sign, is related most probably to one of the civil wars of the first century AH (civil wars are also mentioned in the Jewish and the Christian apocalyptic). The fifth sign might be connected to the 'easy money' that people had following the great conquests, and the sixth sign is related to a certain stage of the fighting with the Byzantines, and its indecisive continuation. Damascus appears as the central stronghold of Islam, and here the Umayyad element plays a part as well.

f3. Examples of specific issues

f3.1. Place of refuge

The last sign, 'the shelter place for the Muslims [fustāt al-muslimān] will be then a place called al-Ḡūta, in a town called Damascus...', is related to a much cited tradition which emphasizes the role of Damascus also in eschatology: 'The messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him salvation, said: al-Ṣ̄d̄m will be conquered for you and you have to go out to a city named Damascus and it is among the best towns of al-Ṣ̄d̄m, and it is a shelter for the Muslims from the

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78 See: '... I am the last prophet, and you are the last among the nations, and he [the daqqāq, the antichrist of the Muslim tradition], will certainly appear among you' (Ibn Māgā, Sunan [Cairo, 1952-1953], vol. 2, p. 1359); cf. Abū Nu'aym al-Īṣbahānī, Aḥbār Isbahān (Leiden, 1931-1934), p. 281.

79 See: D. Flusser, Judaism and the Sources of Christianity (Tel Aviv, 1979), p. 253 ff. (A Prophecy on Jerusalem in the New Testament; the article was published at first under the title 'A Prophecy on the freeing of Jerusalem in the New Testament', in Eretz Israel 10 [1971], pp. 226 ff. [in Hebrew]).

80 See, e.g., Matthew 24:7; Even Shmuel (above, note 10), The Book of Elijah, p. 44.


82 Cf., e.g., The Hebrew Encyclopaedia, s.v. 'aḥarit hayamīm'; Matthew 24:10; Mark 13:12.

83 Compare: 'If someone tells you: take land that is worth one thousand dinars for [only] one dinar—do not take' (according to H.Z. Hirschberg, 'The Footprints of the Messiah in Arabia the Fifth and the Sixth Centuries' in The Memorial Volume to the Rabbinical Bet Hamidrash in Vienna [Jerusalem, 1946], p. 112, note 2 [in Hebrew]).

84 It is hard to determine a definite date for this matter. For an example of a non-belligerency agreement with the Byzantines on hard conditions of taxation and humiliation at the time of 'Abd al-Malik, see Muḥammad b. Ǧarīr al-Ṭabarī, Taʿrīḥ al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk (Leiden, 1879-1901), ed. De Goeje, second series, vol. 2, p. 796.

malāḥim; and fustāṭ al-muslimin will be then a land called al-Ġūta, in a town called Damascus, and their shelter from al-dağğāl is Jerusalem, and the shelter from Gog and Magog is the Mountain. This tradition might be combined with a large body of traditions in which al-Sām and Jerusalem appear as a refuge place for those who follow the right path, from the time of Abraham to the time of the messiah. As mentioned, ascetic perceptions, Umayyad interest, motifs of local-patriotism, and the absorption of Jewish and Christian material formed the background for the creation of such traditions. Jerusalem and the mountain parallel Damascus; the dağğāl, the antichrist of the Muslim legend, and Gog and Magog, who will bring destruction to the world, will not be victorious everywhere. Certain holy geographical places will serve as strongholds against them. This element of protection through the very stay in Jerusalem was transferred in many traditions to Mecca and Medina, but also to other places.

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87 Cf. Even Shmuel (above, note 10), p. 103, and there regarding Biblical verses according to which there will be a ‘remnant’ (pleta) in Mount Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 3:5; Obadiah 17) to prove that Upper Galilee will be a refuge for the Jews. Concerning Jerusalem, compare what was said about ʿHefṣība, the mother of messiah Menahem ben ʿAmiel standing in the Eastern Gate, where that wicked one [Armilus] shall not enter’ (ibid., pp. 80-81). Cf. our note 89 below.


According to a tradition attributed to the prophet Muḥammad: ‘The building of Bayt al-Maqdis (būyān bayt al-maqdis) is the destruction of Yaṭrib [Medina], and the destruction of Yaṭrib is the coming of the malhama, and the coming of the malhama is the conquest of Constantinople, and the conquest of Constantinople is the coming out of the ḍāḡāl’ [Medina]. The traditions reflects the decline of Medina in the Umayyad period, parallel to the extensive building activities in Jerusalem in the seventies of the first century AH. M.J. Kister thinks that the creation of that ḥadīṣ belongs to that period.90 The wish for a decisive victory over the Byzantines (al-ṭūr), maybe hinting at a specific event,91 appears in many traditions. The conquest of Constantinople proves to have an important role in the eschatological picture, and this might also be linked to the attitude to the fall of Rome in the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic. A commentary to a Qur’ānic verse states about the Byzantines that their disgrace in this world will be the conquest of Constantinople in the time of the messiah, the mahdi.92 The mahdi will return to Jerusalem the treasures of the Temple taken to Rome by Titus; according to one tradition he will fight the Byzantines and bring out from a cave in Antioch the Ark of the Covenant (tāḥūt al-sakīna).93

b. Abī Bakr al-Hayṭami, Maṣma‘ al-Ẓawā‘īd (Cairo, 1352-1353), vol. 3, p. 298; Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Iṣlāḥī, ‘Ubd al-ʿĀmīl wa-Ḥulāsāt al-Afā‘īl, MS Paris 1632, f. 29a. On the Ši‘ite holy city of Qum, see al-Maḡlisī, Bihār al-Anwār (Ismā‘īl, 1301-1315), vol. 14, p. 308. Note a saying that Galilee was a refuge for the prophets of Israel in times of fitan (Ibn Saddād, al-ʿĀlāq al-Ḥaṭīra [above, note 27], p. 38); this might be compared with the story about the gathering of the Jews in Galilee around the messiah, son of Joseph; see Even Shmuel (above, note 10), pp. 103, 121, 135; cf. above, note 87.


93 Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, ‘Urf al-Wardī (above, note 68), pp. 234-235. According to a tradition, in Antioch are hidden the Torah, the staff of Moses, the broken Tablets of the Covenant, and the table of Solomon (Ṣams al-Dīn al-Ḍahābī, Taḏkiraṭ al-Ḥuffāz [Hyderabad, 1375-1377], vol. 2, p. 765). Cf. similarly: Muḥammad b. Ḥiḇbān al-Bustī, Kitāb al-Maḏrāḥīn (Hyderabad, 1970), vol. 2, p. 37. According to this tradition Antioch will be the abode of a scion of the house of Muḥammad who will bring justice on earth. Antioch also has a role in the Jewish eschatological image (see Midrash Zerubbavel, in Even Shmuel [above, note 10], pp. 77, 81), and ‘the staff with which the signs were made’ (Aharon’s staff), will be delivered to the Messiah Menahem ben Amiel by his mother Ḥeftsiba (ibid.). Cf. Ibn al-Muragga (above, note 5), p. 35, no. 24; al-Wāṣīṭī (above, note 15), p. 37, no. 49; Fadā‘īl Bayt al-Maqdis (anonym., above, note 16), f. 83b.
3.2. The dāğgāl

The dāğgāl, the false messiah, the antichrist of the Muslim tradition, is not mentioned in the Qur’ān. Its descriptions in the ḥadīth literature are connected to Jewish, and still more to Christian traditions.94 He is represented in one tradition in the image of a terrifying monstrous giant that ‘... The earth will be folded for him and for his friends [i.e., distances will be shortened for him] and he will level the places of its gathering and return the waterplaces to their origin’. Exceptions are the four mosques: the mosque of Mecca, and the mosque of Medina, the mosque of Jerusalem, and the mosque of the mountain [Mount Sinai]. Here the four mosques appear as the only refuge places at the end, and this is also related to the struggle on the sanctity over the mosques as described by Prof. Kister.95

One tradition emphasizes that ‘there has never been a fitna more severe than that of the dāğgāl’. It says that Jesus (Īsā) will come to Jerusalem at the time of dawn-prayer. The imām who leads the prayer will step back so that Jesus may lead the prayer, but Jesus will leave him to do it. Then Jesus will order the gate to be opened; there will be the dāğgāl along with seventy thousand Jews all girding swords. When the dāğgāl looks at Jesus he will melt like salt in water and he will try to run away, but Jesus will reach him at the Lod Gate (Bāb Ludd). The Jews will be killed by the Muslims as well’.96

In another tradition Jesus as the Muslim messiah will win a victory over the dāğgāl in Jerusalem. He will first appear in the mosque of Damascus, where the Muslims, Christians, and Jews will gather, each group hoping to have Jesus for itself. A lottery by arrow will decide in favor of the Muslims. Jesus will come from Damascus to Jerusalem when the city is besieged by the dāğgāl. He will order the gates opened and he will follow the dāğgāl to the Lod Gate. The dāğgāl will melt like wax and Jesus will kill him with one blow. After thirty or forty years Gog and Magog will appear, and Jesus will destroy them as well. Then ‘the earth will restore its blessing to the point that a group of people will gather at one bunch of grapes! and at one pomegranate! God will extract the poison from all serpents; the serpent will be in the company of a boy, and the lion with the cattle...’.97

94 Cf. Hirschberg, Footprints (above, note 83), p. 120; Even Shmuel (above, note 10), pp. 79, 96. There might be a loan from the Muslim legend here as well. See ibid., p. 177, editor’s introduction to Nistarot Rabbi Simon Bar Yohai.
tradition tells that Elisha and Elijah (Alhsa' and Ilyas) will warn the people against the dağgâl. He will pretend to be God, but they will deny it. The angel Michael will prevent him from entering Mecca and Gabriel will protect Medina. The dağgâl will flee along with the munâfûqûn (hypocrites). At that time there will be in Jerusalem 'the group through whom God conquered Constantinople', and other Muslims that will join them. A warner (naḏîr) will come to warn them against the dağgâl, who will seize him and kill him; then he will resurrect him in order to prove his divinity, but he will fail to do it a second time and the people will start doubting him. The dağgâl will hurry to Jerusalem, where Jesus will kill him at the Lod Gate.98

According to this tradition God will make the earth short so that the distance to Lod Gate will be half an hour; the intention seems to be Lod, the town. But according to one tradition, 'Bâb Ludd (Lod Gate) in which as related by the prophet, may peace be on him, Jesus son of Mary will kill the dağgâl, is not the gate of the church in Ramla, but it is the western Gate of David which is at the mirhâb of David, may peace be on him; it is called the Gate of Lod'.99 It is possible that there was a certain belief connected to Lod or Ramla, which was transferred to Jerusalem.100

These traditions seem to reflect the legend of the antichrist, including its anti-Jewish tone.101 It is interesting to note that the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, according to apocalyptic Christian conceptions, turns into their conversion to Islam.
in the Muslim tradition. ‘The Ark of the Covenant (tābūt al-sakīna) will be revealed by the mahdī in the lake of Tiberias, and it will be carried and set before the mahdī in Bayt al-Maqdis; when the Jews will look at it they will become Muslims, except for a few. After that the mahdī will die.’

Jews as well as Christians are rejected in the ‘lottery tradition’, and the Muslims appropriated the vision of ‘the wolf will live with the lamb...’ (Isaiah 11:6). Jesus appears as a Muslim messenger, who elsewhere is described as breaking the symbols of Christianity and leading the world in the ways of Muslim prayer.

Other elements mentioned in the traditions, like the appearance of Elisha and Elijah, the revival of the dead and the killing of al-Ḥāḍir, and the angel Michael serving as a shield against the dāgāl, basically return to the Christian legend, but also to the Jewish legend. The figure of the just imam might be paralleled somehow with the emperor of the last day, who will destroy the enemies of Christianity and will abdicate his place in favor of the Divine rule. Another important sign connected with Jerusalem (Gog and Magog).


104 Compare the appearance of Elijah and Enoch (who never died, according to the Biblical text), to protect the Christians from the antichrist and their revival. See, e.g., McGinn (above, note 101), pp. 50, 87; Limor (above, note 37), p. 138. On the role of Michael against the antichrist, see McGinn, p. 87. On the figure of Elijah as the prophet of the end see also Flusser (above, note 79), pp. 281-282. On Elijah as the herald of the Messiah according to Jewish tradition, see, e.g., Cf. The Hebrew Encyclopedia, s.v. ‘aharit hayamim’, col. 457; Even Shmuel (above, note 10), e.g., pp. 86, 122, 131, 136, 223; Hirschberg, Footprints (above, note 83), pp. 119-120. On the figure of Michael see, e.g., Even Shmuel, pp. 131, 224-225. For ‘melting the dāgāl’ see Isaiah 11:4 ‘...with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked’. Cf. The Hebrew Encyclopedia, col. 449 below; Even Shmuel, p. 87 concerning Menahem ben Amiel (the messiah) who will kill Arminus in this way, or Messiah son of David (p. 97, and the editor’s notes on p. 92). The number ‘forty’ (forty years of ymot maṣāḥ) in the tradition mentioned (above, note 97), returns to the Jewish tradition. See, e.g., The Hebrew Encyclopedia, col. 455, chapter 4; Even Shmuel), pp. 137, 224. In the traditions In Praise of Syria and Damascus it is said that al-Sām will be destroyed forty years after the destruction of the world (Ibn al-Murāğgā [above, note 5], p. 320, no. 531), and likewise Damascus (al-Raba‘ī [above, note 86]), p. 38, no. 66; Ibn ‘Asakīr, Maḏnāt Dimashq (above, note 86), vol. 1, part 2, p. 7 below). On the stay of the dāgāl on earth see, e.g., Ibn Ḥanbal (above, note 77), vol. 6, p. 454, line 12; p. 459, line 16. Compare a saying of a Jew to Yazid b. ‘Abd al-Malik that he will rule for forty years (G. Van Floten, Recherches sur la domination arabe, le Chitisme et croyances messianiques sous le califat des Omeyyades [Amsterdam, 1984], p. 56). See also al-Suwīṭī, Al-‘Urf al-Wardī (above, note 68), pp. 238-239; al-Suwīṭī, al-Durr al-Maṣṭūr (above, note 30), vol. 3, p. 113.

105 On the development of the legend of the last emperor see, e.g., Limor (above, note 37), p. 139 ff.; B. McGinn, (above, note 101), pp. 49-50; 75-76.
will not be discussed here in detail. Gog and Magog (ya'gūg wa-ma'gūg) are mentioned in the Qurʾān but not in connection with Jerusalem. The Alexander legend of peoples arrested beyond a wall or a dam does have a parallel in the Qurʾān, and the picture in the commentaries to it and in the hadīt generally shows them rising at the end to destroy the world. As in the book of Ezekiel, Gog and Magog appear as the enemies of God behaving arrogantly towards Him, and God is the one who will fight them and overthrow them near Jerusalem.106

g. Political eschatology in the Muslim traditions on Jerusalem

The emergence of the mahdī, the messiah of the last days, partly reflecting Jewish and Christian perceptions, was not necessarily connected with cosmic changes or with the resurrection. A large body of relevant political traditions replete with apocalyptic portrayals was created, primarily during the seventh and the eighth centuries AD. The claim to power and the problem of legitimacy of authority, not only of the descendants of ‘Ali, was the setting for the creation of such traditions. Such traditions on Jerusalem reflect the struggle of tribes participating in the political and military confrontations during the Umayyad period (661-750), for example, the tribe of Kalb, the emergence of the ‘Abbāsids from Ḥurāsān, rebellions of ‘Alīids and pro-Umayyad groups in Syria against the ‘Abbāsids, and more. In these apocalyptic traditions Jerusalem is presented as the final goal and the place of victory of the powers of justice over the powers of evil, just as it is in the universal picture of the end. The whole subject will be treated at length in a separate article.107

True enough, Jerusalem has a unique role in eschatology according to the Muslim traditions 'In Praise of Jerusalem'. This is an extremely important aspect of the sanctification of Jerusalem in early Islam, as propagated by Muslim scholars, rulers, ascetics, converted Jews, and others. It concerns spiritual ideas as well as customs and cults, and it is reflected in the religious sites of the city. The basic teaching of the Qurʾān on apocalyptic matters was combined, mainly in the hadīt literature and commentaries to the Qurʾān, with the Jewish and Christian legacy; the outcome is a diverse picture, still within the framework of the Muslim value system, which elevates the status of Jerusalem but is associated with other aspects of eschatological views as a whole in Islam. Traditions related to the end of days and Jerusalem should not be studied separately from other diverse features of the sanctification of Jerusalem in early Islam, such as the place of the city in cosmology, the debate over its place as a center of pilgrimage, or the character of the circles that contributed to the shaping of the idea of its sanctity.

106 See e.g., Livne-Kafri, Jerusalem in Muslim Traditions (above, note 11), pp. 49-50.
107 See in detail, ibid., pp. 50-56. The conception of a Sufyānī (begun in the Umayyad period, and named after Abū Sufyān, father of Muʿāwiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty) plays an important role in such traditions, some of which were created during the first ‘Abbāsid period. He appears both as a figure of the dağgāl and as a hero, depending on the trend reflected. Cf. note 71.