Stephen Hawkins Jr.

History 336

Dr. Molly Patterson

Muslim-Jewish Relations and the Constitution of Medina

 History has shown us many things in regards to the Arab world and the influence the religion of Islam has had on it for more than one thousand years. During this time many religious, cultural, and ethnic groups have lived and still live in the area in relative peace. The two groups that still reside in the Arab word today and that are at arms with each other stand out to me as having a crucial relationship in the history of Islam. Muslim-Jewish relations have been a central issue in the Muslim world for hundreds of years and continue to this day to be a major reason for unrest and instability in the Arab world. The relationship between these two groups, as of late, can be categorized by disagreements, religious difference, bloodshed, and conflict over resources. So much so that the average person may be lead to believe this was the way it always has been and how it will continue to be. As depressing as that may seem, the history of this religious relationship is full of many examples of times and places where Jews and Muslims lived in peace with each other. Furthermore, there was a time in the rich history of Islam where these two religious groups, who share many cultural and ethnic similarities[[1]](#footnote-1), engaged in a peaceful contract to live in peace and partnership together in the city of Yathrib or Medina.

Even though hardship continued for these two religious groups after the year 622 C.E., there was an example of partnership between these two groups, which influenced future generations of Arabs to look back and see how Muhammad interacted with other religions. Muhammad was a man known to possess many noble qualities that set him apart for other Arab men, not only was he known as a prophet of Islam to those who believed in him and Allah, but he possessed compassion, dignity, intelligence, righteousness, charitability, and great mediation skills.[[2]](#footnote-2) In addition to these qualities, Muhammad believed deeply in the visions he had and the words he said to his followers. Furthermore, Muhammad was something of a cult of personality for his people. For example, Muhammad’s followers not only asked Muhammad how to pray or practice Islam, but how to properly wash ones hands or how to speak with people.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Muhammad felt that he had a prophetic relationship to God and believed God was giving him the final and correct interpretation of all the other Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and now Islam was to be the end all be all for Monotheism. Muhammad believed with all his being that anyone who practiced a Abrahamic religion that came into contact with Islam would realize its importance and convert to it right away[[4]](#footnote-4), that is why he was shocked when the Jews of Yathrib or Medina he, and the rest of the his followers came into contact with after the Hijra, did not convert to Islam. Muhammad was shocked because he believed, above all, that there were religious reasons to convert to Islam, but in addition to that, Muhammad believed there were political reasons to covert as well.

In this paper I will first go into a brief overview of the interactions Muhammad had with Jews during his life and then provide examples of his interactions with them in Medina. The first main argument that I will discuss is what religious reasons Muhammad had for believing that Islam was the ultimate truth for the people of the book. I will talk about the historical argument that has developed over this fact and highlight some notable scholars opinions about Muhammad’s religious intentions in regards to the Jews. Furthermore, I will then give my own analysis of the arguments about the topic. My last main point will concern the political reasons Muhammad believed there were to converting to Islam. Even though there was great religious freedom for people of the book in the confederation that Muhammad would create in Yathrib, there is still evidence to support that Muhammad may have a had alternative intentions in regards to documents like the so called Constitution of Medina, and other agreements he came to with the Jews in Arabia. To conclude, I will discuss how documents like the Constitution of Medina and Muhammad’s interactions with the Jewish tribes in Arabia set the tone and created a framework for how Muslims and Jews will interact with each other, and I will argue that this framework set up between the Hijra and Muhammad’s death helped usher in a great Islamic empire that ruled over a culture that promoted co-existence between the people of that book and the acceptance of great cultural diversity.

Muhammad and the Jews

 Muhammad, during his life, had a great deal of contact with people from all sorts of religious and cultural backgrounds. This experience helped shape Muhammad into a man that was very worldly and wise. In my opinion and from what I have learned of Muhammad, he was quite the human being. He was fair, honest, trustworthy, etc., but above all, Muhammad possessed something that made people believe what he said. So you might be asking, where do the Jews fit into this? Well, the contact that Muhammad had with Jews really struck a nerve with him. It seemed as if when Muhammad would come into contact with Jewish people he was unable to influence them to his believes, even though he believed the task of getting Monotheists to convert to Islam would be simple. Sometimes this was true, but it seems as if Muhammad would always have trouble with the Jewish community and getting them to convert to Islam. In the next few paragraphs I will discuss Muhammad’s interactions with Jews before the Hijra and then discuss how he interacted with Jews in Medina in the years he was trying to establish himself there.

 Muhammad in his home city of Mecca had some experience with the Jewish community but it is quite possible and very probable that he had contact with Jews in his time working in caravan trading. The Bali was a group of Arabs in the city of Medina that had a long history in Medina that converted to Judaism and had a great impact on the surrounding tribes. This group was well known in Muhammad’s lifetime, and may have introduced him to Monotheistic ideas.[[5]](#footnote-5) This sets the ground work for Muhammad’s interaction with Judaism, but I do not believe Muhammad yet had an opinion about the Jews, on the contrary, I would argue that Muhammad held indifference to them or at most was interested in their lifestyle. Later in Muhammad’s life in Mecca when he professed himself a prophet, some members of the Meccan community consulted Jewish Rabbis in the city of Medina, or at that time Yathrib, in an attempt to prove or disprove the prophethood of Muhammad by consulting historically monotheistic holy men about the legitimacy of Muhammad. The Rabbis consulted gave the Meccans three theological questions to ask Muhammad in an attempt to either prove or disprove his prophethood.[[6]](#footnote-6) As a result of this, I would argue that Muhammad might have felt that he gained some respect of a strong monotheistic tradition, which would be something he would have wanted during his early preaching of Islam. But it is important to note that the Arab Jews of this time were not orthodox by any standard. These groups of Jews were very different from the hardline Jews of the time in the fact that they may have believed in one God, but were not very culturally, linguistically, or socially Jewish.[[7]](#footnote-7)

 Next, the contact Muhammad had with the Jews in Medina was very interesting to say the least. It seems that there was a lot of underlying tension between these two religious groups that, on the surface, seemed to have much in common. Furthermore, at this time Islam was greatly influenced by Judaism in its traditions and practice. Muhammad was first asked to come to Medina and arbiter between the feuding tribes in Medina.[[8]](#footnote-8) For about a century before the arrival of Muhammad, the tribes of Medina had been in conflict with one another, mostly these conflicts were over political power or agricultural lands in the area which resulted in a structure of power with the Jews on top.[[9]](#footnote-9) This created a very interesting situation for someone like Muhammad to come into. I would argue that Muhammad had many feelings about the situation he was facing, some scholars say that he planned to get rid of the Jews from the beginning[[10]](#footnote-10), but I would say he did not hold this believe. Instead, Muhammad was looking to be the middleman in the Medinan conflict that he was asked to resolve which meant that some of the citizens of Medina though very highly of him, in particular the Ansar or helpers. In fact, Muhammad, at this time, started down the road of making Islam more Jewish. For example like the Jews, early Muslims pointed towards Jerusalem to pray, the recognized the fast on Ashura, Friday worship, midday worship, and Muhammad did these things in an attempt to reconcile tensions between himself and the Jews and to as yet another effort to get the Jews to recognize him as a prophet.[[11]](#footnote-11) This creates a very interesting dynamic between these two groups which lead to a very interesting power structure in Medina in the years following the Hijra. Unfortunately, this peaceful; relationship did not last long; it seemed as if Muhammad had enough and after the struggles he had with the Jews their relationship faded and became very violent.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The Historiography of Muhammad’s Religious Interactions With the Jews

It is obvious that Muhammad had much contact with people of the Jewish faith and there are many that would argue that there was much tension between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina. From this, it is important to discuss the feelings Muhammad had towards the Jewish community that ended up occupying a big part in his life after 622. As I stated before, it is clear that Muhammad believed that when people would come into contact with Islam they would convert. Muhammad believed that the Jews in particular would be easy converts because he believed that the Jews and him both realized that the revelations he was receiving where identical to the ones that were received by Jews and Christians.[[13]](#footnote-13) Scholars argue over whether Muhammad had peaceful intentions when it came to contact with Jews or if his intentions were to rid Medina of its most powerful inhabitant[[14]](#footnote-14) by force or conversion. In this section will discuss the conflicting points of view from the examples of a few different scholars and then I will give my own analysis on this historical debate.

 First, I will discuss the argument that Muhammad had an open mind when it came to the Jewish community in Medina, and wanted to work with them from a religious standpoint. For this section I would like to begin with this quote form the Qur’an:

“Say [O Muslims!]: ‘We believe in God’, in that which has been revealed to us; in that which was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants; in that which was given to Moses and Jesus; and in that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and Him we are Muslimun (those who submit to his will). (Qur’an 2:136)[[15]](#footnote-15)

Bismillah Ar Rahman Ar Rahim uses this excerpt from the Qur’an in his article in hopes to help Muslims and Jews of the world today to reconcile their differences. Rahman makes the argument that the Jews and Muslims of today must attempt to break down stereotypes and misinformed understandings of one another in order to stop that particular religious conflict in the Middle East.[[16]](#footnote-16) Furthermore, Rahman argues that for centuries Jews and Muslims have co-existed in the Islamic world and have lived together in peace and that their religious cultures share many similarities like a common patriarch, laws and jurisprudence, many significant values, and dietary restrictions.[[17]](#footnote-17) These facts are important to note because they show us that there is a modern understanding of the relationship between Islam and Judaism that was first formed during the time of the prophet. In addition to Rahim, many other scholars contend that Muhammad had positive intentions with the Jews. For example, the PBS documentary about the Prophet Muhammad entitled, *Muhammad: Legacy of the Prophet*, argues that Muhammad respected the thoughts and opinions of the Jews and Christians; even though they had some major disputes of theological questions, Muhammad looked at these groups as “people of the book”.[[18]](#footnote-18) Also, Bernard Lewis adds to this argument that Muhammad had a positive opinion of the Jews by bringing up the point that many past Islamic scholars have argued that Jewish teachers had instructed Muhammad and greatly influenced his creation of Islam.[[19]](#footnote-19) This is a bit far fetched, but nonetheless, still quite interesting to note.

 There seems to be much information regarding that Muhammad had good intentions when it came to interacting with the Jewish community, but it is important to note that some scholars have held that Muhammad may have had more negative intentions in regards to the Jews. For example Michael Lecker argues in his essay that some scholars stated that before Muhammad even migrated to Medina that he intended to get rid of the Jews.[[20]](#footnote-20) Furthermore, it seems as if Muhammad, through his interactions with the Jews developed a negative outlook about them, resulting in religious and political disagreements to arise. For example, it is known from the previous section that Muhammad borrowed much from Jewish religious ideas, but this was only in an attempt by Muhammad to get the Jews to recognize him as a prophet.[[21]](#footnote-21) Muhammad eventually turned on these ideas and forged ahead changing much about Islam that he borrowed from the Jews at Medina.[[22]](#footnote-22) This shows that, for a variety of reasons, Muhammad eventually became annoyed with the actions of the Jews of Medina, and that coupled with the actions of the Jewish tribes in partnership with the Quraysh, caused Muhammad to exile the Jewish tribes of Medina.[[23]](#footnote-23)

 It is evident that there seems to be a greater argument for the fact that Muhammad had a positive outlook towards the Jewish tribes in Medina. But on the other hand, the argument that Muhammad may have held some negative views about the Jews in Medina is valid to some existent.. Furthermore, there is still a good amount of debate about the life of Muhammad and questions will always be asked in regards to how he felt about a certain group or historical event because he is a very important individual, for not only those who follow him, but historians trying to paint a better picture of life during his time. For me, I believe there was a change that happened in Muhammad from openness to the Jews in attempts to get them to convert to Islam, to indifference about them later in his life. This was not true with all Jews that Muhammad came into contact with, but just the ones he came into contact with in Medina because of the way the received him there. In conclusion, Muhammad was as open-minded as someone of his time was, but real life events and dealings outside the religious realm ultimately lead to tensions between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina.

Muhammad and the Jews of Medina: The Political Relationship

 The relationship between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina extended past just a religious relationship, but into a political one as well. Muhammad played a role in Medina that required him to make political bonds with those around him in the hopes of keeping the peace in Medina and doing the job that he was brought to Medina to do, as well as, further the spread of Islam. In this section I will first, highlight some points of the Constitution of Medina that I find interesting, then I will talk about how it attempted to create a partnership between the Muslims and the Jews in Media and finally, I will discuss how this document relates to the creation of the Islamic community in regards to what it’s significance is and who is included.

 The Constitution of Medina is a document that has been the cause of much debate as to what its relevance is and how, or if, it affected any change in Medina. None the less, it is a document that lays out the framework for a political institution that had never been seen in Arabia before its creation and, in my opinion, is quite forward thinking and ahead of its time. But, I would like to discuss some sections of it that I find particularly interesting in the hopes of giving some context for the rest of this section. The document is split up into sixty-three articles ranging in length and content.[[24]](#footnote-24) This document gave birth to the idea of a geographical nation with borders and sovereignty with a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population that was guaranteed protection of human rights, rights for women, religious freedom, minority rights, and rule of law.[[25]](#footnote-25) Articles 1-3 are interesting because it deals with who is creating this document and whom this document pertains to, as well as, declaring sovereignty from others not involved with this document.[[26]](#footnote-26) Article 16 pertains to the, “collective resistance against injustice, tyranny, and mischief”, meaning that it is the believer’s duty, as a whole, to put down rebellions, stop theft, and control mischief against any believer.[[27]](#footnote-27) Article 20 establishes the idea of minority rights by stating that, for example, any Jew that obeys the authority of the state, shall receive equal protection under the law as long as this Jew does not wrong a believer or conspire with a non-believer against believers.[[28]](#footnote-28) Article 28 is very interesting because it puts Muhammad at the head of state by claiming that, “the final and absolute authority in all disputes vests in the Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad”.[[29]](#footnote-29) Article 30 is interesting because it establishes religious freedom by allowing the Jews of Medina to practice freely, as well as, all, “non-Muslim minorities’, which I would argue, also includes polytheists and other monotheists as well.[[30]](#footnote-30) Article 41 gives all military powers to Muhammad by stating that, “final command and authority in military expeditions vests in the Prophet Muhammad”, effectively making him commander and chief.[[31]](#footnote-31) Finally, I find Article 59 important because it establishes the rule of law by stating that, “no party shall have any right of violation of the constitution.”[[32]](#footnote-32) These are just some highlights of the Constitution of Medina that I feel are very important to understanding what this document was all about and to showcase how the ideas of this document where very new in regards to the tribal system this document was breaking.

 Now that I’ve highlighted some important concepts that are found in the Constitution of Medina, it is important to discuss how this document attempted to create a political relationship between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina. This relationship is key to understanding Muhammad’s interactions with Jews and how this fits into the broader historical context that is early Muslim-Jewish relations. Article 30 of the Constitution of Medina is a good starting point for understanding how the Jews fit into this new Islamic community, it reads:

 “**Article 30: Guarantee of freedom of religion for both the Muslims and non-Muslim minorities (the Jews)**

The Jews of Banu Awf shall be considered a community along with the believers. They shall be guaranteed the right of religious freedom along with the Muslims. The right shall be conferred on their associates as well as themselves except those who are guilty of oppression or the violators of treaties. They will bring evil only to themselves and their family.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

In other words, this passage establishes freedom of religion under this new constitution for the Jews of Medina and successfully brings the Jewish community into a partnership with Muhammad and the Muslims. This is important because this shows that agreements were made between the Jews of Medina and Muhammad that were made legal. But, it is important to mention that when this document refers to Jews it is excluding the three major Jewish tribes in Medina.[[34]](#footnote-34) Furthermore, the Jews that the document are referring to seemed to have lost their tribal affiliation and became more closely related to the Arab tribes that they were in close proximity with.[[35]](#footnote-35) In my opinion, this means that the Constitution did attempt to create a unique partnership between the Jews of Medina and the Muslim immigrants but the Jews in question were Arabized and evidence suggest that they were more friendly and welcoming to Muhammad than the more powerful Jewish tribes in Medina. Lastly, I feel that is important to note that knowing what we now do, it is a safe assumption that the main reason for the creation of this document, in regards to the Jews of Medina, was to establish the position of the Arab tribes in Medina in relation to the Jewish groups that also occupied the area.[[36]](#footnote-36)

 It can’t be stressed enough that the Constitution of Medina established a state that was quite religiously tolerant and, to some degree, worked to include the Jewish community already in Medina, but is important to illustrate what this document did for the Islamic community. To begin, Islam before this document seemed, to me, to be without much shape due to its relative youngness in comparison to a monotheistic tradition like Judaism and the fact that Muslims, at this time, had their backs against the wall and where looking for a place they could settle and control. This is evident in the fact that Muhammad hoped to establish Medina as a haram, which was usually established by a holy person or family with the local inhabitants of the area to treat it as a safe place were people can socialize, do business, settle disagreements, etc., with the intention of preserving a places sanctity and neutrality.[[37]](#footnote-37) Something also interesting is the idea of the Ummah or Islamic community, but even more interesting is the argument about who was included in it. The Ummah is, according to R. B. Serjeant, a political confederation.[[38]](#footnote-38) The Islamic community of this document is made up of Muslims and it is argued that Jews are also included in this community.[[39]](#footnote-39) If this is true, this means that the Jews were held in high favor with Muhammad, which is not a hard idea to believe. But, if this is true, the Ummah that Muhammad hoped to create with this document is no longer a uniquely Islamic community, but an Ummah of believers.[[40]](#footnote-40) Furthermore, at its basic terms, this document was no more than a political-military document created in the hopes of keeping the people of Medina safe form Mecca.[[41]](#footnote-41) This document had many functions and created a framework of inter-religious and inter-political partnership in the hopes of creating a safe place for the Muslims and the people they made agreements with.

 The true importance of this document may never be known but it is the historian’s job to look back in the hopes of being able to connect it with a broader historical argument like I have tried to do here. It is evident that the Constitution of Medina is a highly controversial topic that continues to be debated about today. But, what is important is that this document gives us a window to look through in the hopes of gaining a better understanding of how Muhammad interacted with the Jewish tribes in Medina and what his intentions where as a political figure. Furthermore, form my study of these materials I have come to the conclusion that Muhammad, as a political figure, is a very interesting character. Muhammad found himself in very tough situations and at the end of the day did what he had to do while still trying to set an example for those who followed him.

Muslim-Jewish Relations and the Constitution of Medina: The Legacy

Muhammad was very important to his followers and possibly even more important to those who did not believe in his teachings, but it is impossible to deny the impact he had on the Arab world and the rest of the Middle East in the centuries following his death. Muhammad, with his work as a statesmen and religious leader ushered in a time of great Muslim expansion that lead to mass conversions to Islam and an explosion of culture and knowledge that has few rivals in the res of world history. But, the fact that remains more impressive is how the groundbreaking work Muhammad did with the people different than him helped create an Islamic empire that was multi ethnic, multi cultural, and religiously tolerant; ushering decades of religious, social, and economic prosperity.

It is important to note that Muhammad not only was a great religious figure, but as a leader, he was able to influence many people that came into contact with him and through these interactions, Muhammad was able to lay the groundwork for the Islamic empire. Examples of his leadership ability are many and include open-mindedness, fairness, statesmanship, military ability, and intelligence. Furthermore, Muhammad was able to lead his people to a safe place where they could practice their religion freely without persecution while simultaneously taking part in the creation of Islam as a religion and as cultural phenomenon.

From the framework that Muhammad created with his personal interactions with the Jews, documents like the Constitution of Medina, and is statesmanship, Muslim rulers, after Muhammad, were able to expand off his work to create one of the largest empires that the world had ever seen, ushering in a time of great cultural, intellectual, and social expansion that the entire world was shaped and influenced by. Muslim expansion lead to greater connectivity between groups like the Jews, the spread of the language of Arabic, and the establishment of the Judeo-Islamic tradition that is still such a central part to the Middle East today.[[42]](#footnote-42) What Muhammad did during his lifetime really made a huge different in the history of the world. Muhammad goes down as one of the pivotal figures in all of human history for his noble attributes, righteousness, and leadership ability.

Bibliography

Ansary, Tamin. *Destiny Disrupted: A History of the World Through Islamic Eyes*. New

 York: PublicAffairs, 2009.

Berween, Mohamed, “Al-Wathiqa: The First Islamic State Constitution.” *Journal of*

 *Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (April 2003).

Denny, Frederick M., “Ummah in the Constitution of Medina,” *Journal of Near Eastern*

 *Studies*, Vol. 36, No.1 (Jan., 1977). Pp. 39-47.

Faizer, Rizwi, “Muhammad and the Medinan Jews: A Comparison of the Texts of Ibn

 Ishaq’s Kitab Sirat Rasul Allah with al-Waqidi’s Kitab al-Maghazi,” *Journal of*

 *Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Nov., 1996), pp. 463-489.

Iqbal, Muzaffar, “ The Qur’an and Its Disbelievers,” *Islam and Science*, Vol. 7, No. 2

 (Winter, 2009).

Lecker, Michael, “Waqidi’d Account on the Status of the Jews of Medina: A Study of a

 Combined Report,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 54, No.1 (Jan., 1995),

 pp. 15-32.

Lecker, Michael. “Glimpses of Muhammad’s Medinan Decade.” in *The Cambridge*

 *Companion to Muhammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Cambridge University

 Press, 2010).

Lewis, Bernard. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Peters, F. E., “The Quest for the Historical Muhammad,” *International Journal of Middle*

 *East Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Aug., 1991), pp. 291-315.

Ar Rahman Ar Rahim, Bismillah, “An Open Letter: A Call to Peace, Dialogue and

Understanding Between Muslims and Jews,” *European Judaism*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring, 2008), pp. 148-154.

Qattan, Omar and Michael Schwarz, *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, (New York:PBS,

 2002).

Rubin, Uri, “The “Constitution of Medina” Some Notes,” *Studia Islamica*, No. 62 (1985),

 pp. 5-23.

Serjeant, R.B., “The “Sunnah Jami’ah,” Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the “Tahrim” of

 Yathrib: Analysis and Translations of the Documents Comprised in the So-Called

 “Constitution of Medina”,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,*

 Vol. 41, No. 1 (1978), pp. 1-42.

Watt, Montgomery W. *Muhammad at Medina*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.

Watt, Montgomery W. *Muhammad Prophet and Statesmen*. Oxford University Press,

 1961.

Primary Sources:

The Qur’an

Tahir-ul-Qadri, Muhammad, *The Constitution of Medina*, (Minhaj-ul-Quran

Publications, 2012).

1. Tamin Ansary, *Destiny Disputed: A History of the World Through Islamic Eyes* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 17.

Jews and Arabs before the religion of Islam lived side by side practicing their respective religions, but the two groups were very similar, for example, Jews in the area spoke Arabic and lived in a tribal structure like that of other Arabs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, directed by Omar Al-Qattan and Michael Schwarz (2002; New York, NY: PBS, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Joseph E. Lowry, “The Prophet as Lawgiver and Legal Authority,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp, Cambridge University Press, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesmen*, (Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Michael Lecker, “Glimpses of Muhammad’s Medinan Decade,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp, Cambridge University Press, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, directed by Omar Al-Qattan and Michael Schwarz ( New York, NY: PBS, 2002).

It is interesting because the Jewish Rabbis were satisfied with the answers Muhammad gave but it was the Meccans who still doubted Muhammad as a prophet. But this is a testament to the opinions of the Meccans, I would argue that no matter what the Rabbis said in the eyes of most Meccans Muhammad was not a prophet and nothing could really convince them otherwise at that point. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesmen*, (Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 88-89

The act of bringing Muhammad as an impartial arbiter actually lead to the conversion of some Jews to Islam even before Muhammad’s arrival. This was due to some Jewish ideas of the Jews in the area of the coming messiah, some of them believed Muhammad to be that messiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Watt, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesmen*, p. 85-87

Some events that caused conflict in Medina in the century proceeding the Hijra included: increasing population and unavailability of farmable land, alliances between clans brought many clans into battle, and this culminated in the Battle of Bu’ath in 618. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lecker, “Glimpses of Muhammad’s Medinan Decade,” pp. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 191

I believe it is important to add that Muhammad believed the revelations we was receiving were the same that were received by Jews and Christians. Furthermore, Muhammad believed this would be as obvious to the Jews in Medina as it was to himself. He was horribly mistaken. (p. 195) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 201-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 195*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Michael Lecker, “Waqidi’s Account on the Status of the Jews of Medina: A Study of a Combined Report,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jan., 1995), p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Rahim, Bismillah Ar Rahman, “An Open Letter: A Call To Peace, Dialogue and Understanding Between Muslims and Jews,” *European Judaism*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring, 2008), p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Rahman, “An Open Letter,” p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid, p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, directed by Omar Al-Qattan and Michael Schwarz (2002; New York, NY: PBS, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Lewis, Bernard, *The Jews of Islam*, (Princeton University Press, 1984) p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Michael Lecker, “Glimpses of Muhammad’s Medinan Decade,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Watt, Muhammad at Medina, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 202-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, directed by Omar Al-Qattan and Michael Schwarz (2002; New York, NY: PBS, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Tahir-ul-Qadri, Muhammad, *The Constitution of Medina*, (Minhaj-ul-Quran, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Qadri, *Conts. of Medina*, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid, p.3.

Those involved in the creation of this document are the Muslims of the Quraysh and the people of Medina, including some minor Jewish tribes but not the three main Jewish tribes in Medina, the Qurayzah, an-Nadir, and the Qaynuqa. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid, p. 6.

I would also argue that this article would give a believer the right to stand and go against any system that is unjust even if the system was implemented by Muslim leadership, if it abridges on the rights of believers it should not be allowed to continue. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid, p. 8.

This Article is interesting to me because Muhammad, through this document, has put himself at the head of government and for Muslims, head of religion as well. Giving him immense power for influence and change. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid, p. 13.

This article, in my opinion, is the most important from a political standpoint because it means that no one in Medina, not even Muhammad himself, is above the law of this constitution. This idea is crucial in creating any type of governing institution because it puts full authority into the law and it doesn’t allow powerful people to be able to be above it. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid, p.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Rubin, Uri, “The ‘Constitution of Medina’ Some Notes”, *Studia Islamica*, No. 62 (1985), p.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Rubin, “Constitution of Medina”, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Denny, Frederick, “Ummah in the Constitution of Medina,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No.1 (Jan., 1977), p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Serjeant, R.B., “The ‘Sunnah Jami’ah,’ Pacts With the Yathrib Jews, and the ‘Tahrim’of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-Called ‘Constitution of Medina’”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 41, No.1 (19780, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Denny, “Ummah in the Constitution of Medina,” p. 43.

I feel that is also important to note that it is also sometimes argued that the Jews make up a separate Ummah or a Ummah alongside the Islamic community. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Denny, “Ummah in the Const. of Medina,” p.44. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, p. 75-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)