



INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM
of **MUSLIM**
CULTURES

Muslims, Christians and Jews

An Exhibition of Covenants & Coexistence

The Prophet Muhammed was a revered religious and civic leader with a true desire for pluralistic, multi-religious communities to peacefully coexist both in his own city of Medina and abroad as Islam spread across nations.

After the flight (hijra) from Mecca to Medina in the years between 622 and 632, with the support of all the various communities of Medina, Muhammed, the Prophet and Head of State, arranged the drafting of a constitution, the first in human history. The Constitution of Medina spelled out the rights and duties of each segment of society and called for peace and protection of human rights of all citizens, including women and minorities. The Arab and Jewish tribes of Medina accepted the Constitution in good faith thereby bringing peace to a city prone to civil war and dismantling. This was the antecedent to several treaties and covenants with different nations and religious leaders that ensured peace and protection, predating the Magna Carta by some 600 years and perhaps a model for our own constitution here in the United States of America.

The Constitution of Medina, and the covenants and treaties written and implemented by the Prophet Muhammed will be displayed in this unique exhibit along with portrayals of present-day peaceful coexistence between religious communities and others. The exhibit will present how the Islamic movement ushered in the Golden Age of tolerance and enlightenment; and how the wars

and political divisions that ensued are reflected in many of the issues confronting the world today. Audience engagement is encouraged through opportunities to collect data and opinions and to share them in interactive digital displays.



EXHIBIT GOALS

- To introduce the visitor to the peacebuilding leadership of Muhammed, the Prophet and Head of State, and his covenants and treaties with religious minorities and neighboring nations.
- To share the concept of peaceful understanding and coexistence demonstrated in a place where religious tolerance, racial and ethnic pluralism has been practiced for centuries.
- To share the Constitution of Medina, the covenants, and the treaties that helped build societies of tolerance and peaceful living among Muslims, Jews, Christians and others. It will also demonstrate how subsequent events on the world's political stage have undermined those covenants.

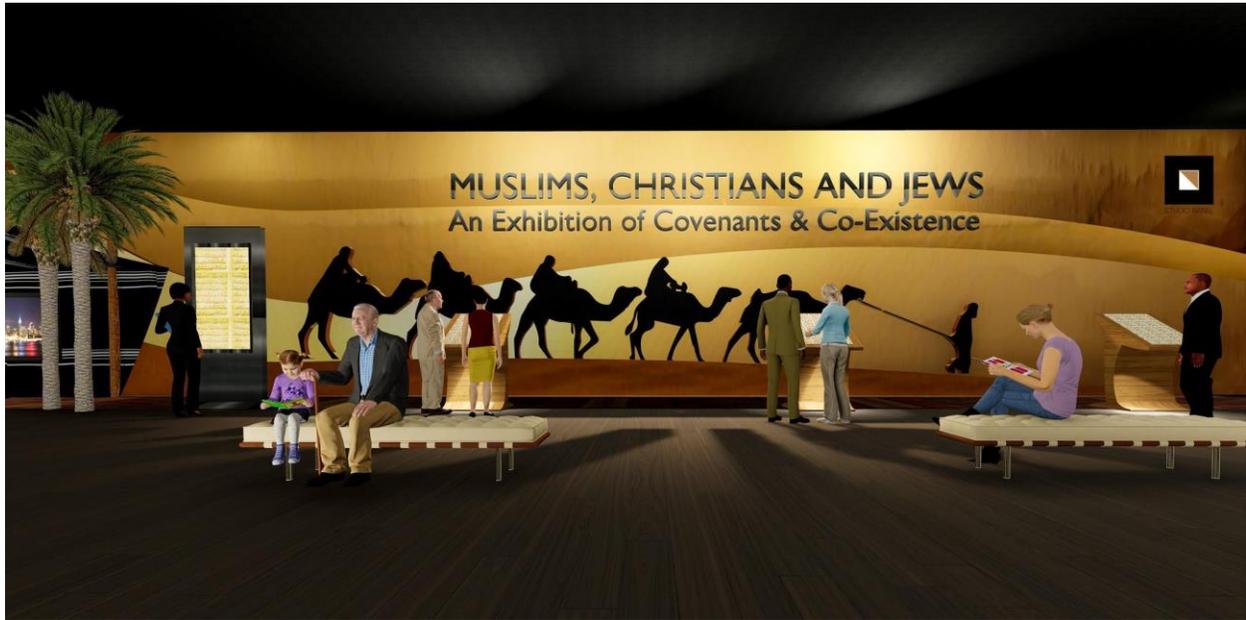
- To offer steps for strengthening understanding across faith traditions, racial and ethnic relations through finding common ground.
- To be designed and produced as a traveling exhibit utilizing high-tech graphical displays and user interfaces, compelling photographic imagery, imaginative experiences, and easily transportable fabrication materials.
- To allow audience interaction with opportunities to collect and display data on the current status quo of Islam in the world.

EXHIBIT EXPERIENCE

Ambient lighting, faint calls to prayer and ringing church bells set the stage for a grand entrance into an area with a silhouetted travelling trade caravan in the desert connecting a Muslim bedouin tent in the Arabian Peninsula in one corner with a Christian monastery in the Sinai region in another corner.

The visitor can sit under a bedouin tent to watch special production videos followed by a humbling experience of getting to know who the Prophet Muhammed truly was via panel and digital displays of images and information including Arabic and English renditions of the Constitution of Medina and many of the peacebuilding covenants and treaties of coexistence introduced by the Prophet.

Manifestations of the treaties in the forms of present day “stories” are presented along with an opportunity to learn about the work of scholars and organizations that are preserving the message of the Prophet’s covenants and finally, visitors are given the opportunity to engage with the exhibit by offering feedback, answering questions and submitting opinions into tabulating graphical software.



Zone 1

Visitors are introduced to the exhibit with an information board and images of religious coexistence and graphical interpretations of the Constitution of Medina in both English and Arabic calligraphy on either side of two walls leading up to a backlit map of the holy sites of Judaism, Christianity and Islam including Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Sinai, the Jordan Valley, Mecca and Medina in the middle of an Islamic styled geometric shape, thereby creating a footpath to direct visitor traffic in two directions.



Zone 2

1. Crossing a threshold of arches (an element of ancient and Islamic architecture), visitors see a desert background, a layered 2D effect of a camel trade caravan that connects a bedouin tent in one corner to a monastery in another corner. There is significant symbolism in this depiction as it portrays the spread of Islam and the formation of relationships between the Prophet Muhammed and many Christian and Jewish rulers and religious leaders.
2. The tent sets the scene for learning about the trade routes across Arabia, North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East that helped spread Islam.



3. A replica of St. Catherine's Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site built in the 6th century and one of the oldest operating Christian monasteries in the world is presented in the backdrop of the Sinai mountains. The model features details such as the Biblical "burning bush" and the paralleled minaret and church tower alongside presentations of the Prophet Muhammed's communications with the monks of St. Catherine and displays presenting the works of Dr. John Morrow and the relevant covenants pertaining to the monastery and other Christian leaders and groups.



Kiosks and information panels:

- 1) A copy of the *Ashtiname*, the covenant with the monks of St. Catherine with translations in Arabic, Turkish and English.
- 2) Background information on the significance of the region and the monastery including background information about the *rubus sanctus*, which in biblical tradition, was consumed by fire but did not burn.
- 3) Display of the *Epitome of Nektarios of Sinai*, which includes a Greek translation of the Covenant of the Prophet Muhammed from 1677. A text panel will explain that over fifty copies of the *Covenant of the Prophet Muhammed with the Monks of Mount Sinai* spanning over five hundred years are in existence.
- 4) *Tarikh Sinai* or *The History of the Sinai* by Nu'aun Shuqayr, which provides a powerful defense of the *Ashtiname* by an Arab Christian historian will also be on display.

- 5) Background information on the footprint of the Prophet Aaron; the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah; the Stairway of Repentance; the Gate of Repentance; the Cave of Moses and Muhammed; the Church of the Holy Trinity; the footprint of Buraq, the mystical creature that carried the Prophet on his Night Journey; and the campsite of the Children of Israel, among others. The visitor will understand that these sites are sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Documentary Style Video

A looped video documentary will be played on a tv screen inside the tent in Zone 2. The video will include subjects and questions for visitors to contemplate as they complete their journey through the exhibit. It will introduce the Prophet Muhammed and the rise of Islam, foreshadowing the Islamic Golden Age, its decline, and the events that followed. Among the questions visitors will be asked to consider are what happened to Islamic civilization at its height, what happened to the concept of pluralism, tolerance, education and intellectual pursuit once practiced widely, what is Sharia law, what does Islam have to say about violence and the oppression of women, and why are some people fearful of Muslims.



Zone 3

This zone introduces the Prophet Muhammed and the establishment of the Muslim empire in Medina where Muslims and Jews coexisted under the Constitution of Medina, which will be on display alongside a customized logo of the Covenants of Muhammed with Arabic calligraphy.

Letters, covenants and manuscripts will be displayed digitally, on text panels and in a backlit elongated exhibit case against backdrop photographs of present day Mecca and Medina.

This area also showcases the advent of the Quran including excerpts from Thomas Cleary's "The Qur'an: A New Translation, (Starlatch Press). For example, an excerpt from the Introduction, Cleary states:

"The name Qur'an means the Recital or the Reading. According to its own word, the Qur'an is a revealed Book in the spiritual tradition of the Torah and Gospel transmitted by Moses and Jesus.

Connecting itself and these distinguished predecessors to even earlier dispensations of original religion, the Qur'an represents its teaching as confirming and clarifying the truth of what was in those previous messages.

Reference to historian Michael Hart's *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* (1978), which has sold more than 500,000 copies and been translated into 15 languages. The first person on Hart's list was the Prophet Muhammed, chosen over Jesus and Moses, peace be upon them all.

"My choice of Muhammed to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels...it is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammed to be considered the most influential single figure in human history". Michael Hart

Other non-Muslim references to the Prophet Muhammed will also be on display.

"In 569 a man was born in Mecca, Arabia, the man who of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race...to be the religious head of many empires, to guide the daily life of one-third of the human race, may perhaps justify the title of Messenger of God." John William Draper

Covenants on Display

- *Constitution of Medina* (English and Arabic versions) in which the Prophet granted equal rights to polytheists, Jews, and Muslims
- *Covenant of the Prophet Muhammed from the Monastery at Mount Athos in Greece*
- *Covenant of the Prophet Muhammed with the Coptic Christians*
- *Covenant of the Prophet Muhammed with the Christians of the World*
- *Letter to King Najashi of Ethiopia*

These and other documents and their English translations will be available on a computer kiosk in this zone for visitors who wish to do more thorough review and study.

Significant books will be referenced and displayed in glass vetrina style caes, including:

Al-Watha'iq or *The Treaties* by Muhammed Hamidullah, a compilation of all of the Prophet's letters, treaties, and covenants, in the Arabic language; and copies of *The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammed with the Christians of the World*, *Six Covenants of the Prophet Muhammed with the Christians of His Time*, and *Critical Studies on the Covenants of the Prophet* by Dr. John Andrew Morrow, which provided essential background material and framework for this exhibit.

Zone 4

This zone begins to take on a more modern form with wall panels featuring the new elements of “storytelling” with the following separate subjects that are manifestations of the coexistence brought upon by the covenants of the Prophet Muhammed:

1. *The Muslim church key holders of the Holy Land:*

*According to tradition, the Nusaybah family took its name from a female companion or Sahabah of the Islamic prophet Muhammed named Nusaybah. She was a member of the Ansar who transferred their political power in Medina over to the prophet. **Nusayba fought along with Mohammed in battle and was an early example of women taking leadership roles in Islam.** Since the arrival of Islam in Jerusalem in the seventh century, the Sunni Muslim family has held the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre alongside the Al-Goudia family. This arrangement emerged during the days of the second Muslim caliph, Umar Ibn al-Khattab, who hoped to avoid clashes among rival Christian sects for control over the church. Although symbolic, the arrangement has provided the stability the Christians of the city needed, and is a symbol of tolerance and inter-religious harmony.*

2. Present day Muslim and Christian coexistence in the holy land with a photo essay from the Spirit of Ramadan photo of the Christian "musaharati".

3. Efforts of the Covenants of the Prophet Foundation, Dialogue Institute of the Southwest and the Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference, the Marrakesh Declaration, the Jakarta Declaration, the Global Faith Forum's work, the Open Letter to Baghdadi, Faiths Against Hate work of the Parliament of the World's Religions, The Forcolade Movement, Imam Warith Deen Mohamed and Community.

4. Copies of the Covenants Initiative, the Genocide Initiative, and Mississippi Voice Against Extremism Declaration will be displayed. Visitors will be asked to add their names to the other signatories of the documents and encourage others to visit the exhibit to learn more about this historic pilgrimage of interfaith understanding.

This area also offers a contemplative space where visitors will be asked to examine the work of groups around the world seeking peaceful coexistence and an end to aggression, animosity, and discord. Soft music and subdued lighting will add to the thoughtful experience. The expectation is that visitors will want to put their convictions into practice.

In this zone visitors will also learn more about how world events of the last 150 years have played a part in the destruction of the political stability and peaceful coexistence once practiced across the globe and how western powers played a role in this. The political divisions that were the end products of Colonialism and World Wars I and II will be described.

The exhibit will also point out how the minority groups put into power and the new constitutions established in these new nations by western leaders led to revolts, refugee displacement, genocide, and desecration of human rights. Visitors will also come to understand how these atrocities are related to the violence being perpetrated in the name of Islam today, totally

contradictory to the tenets of the faith. They will be asked to suggest solutions. The questions raised in the video will be asked, and visitors will have an opportunity to respond electronically.

Throughout the world, individuals and organizations that support interfaith initiatives are standing up and speaking out. They are working to foster understanding among people of different backgrounds, faiths, and viewpoints and to support collaborative efforts to denounce fear and hatred, violence and retribution. This final zone will introduce visitors to some of these efforts and invite them to join in interfaith, multi-racial, ethnic and cultural advocacy and activism.

@ @ @