

# DOES QURAN HARBOR HATRED TOWARDS JEWS? (Hermeneutical Exploration of Surah Al-Baqarah: 120)

**Irwan Ahmad Akbar**

Universitas KH. A. Wahab Hasbullah Jombang, Indonesia  
[irwan@unwaha.ac.id](mailto:irwan@unwaha.ac.id)

**Abstract:** This research explores the verses related to Jews in the Quran, particularly in Surah al-Baqarah verse 120. Some groups claim this verse to be evidence that the Quran harbors hatred towards Jews. This research utilizes a historical and semantic approach to thoroughly examine the verses in the Quran that pertain to Jews. This is conducted to produce a definitive answer to the question: does the Quran indeed hate Jews? Using a qualitative approach with data from classical and modern Islamic literature, this research concludes that the Jews referred to in the Quran, especially in Surah al-Baqarah verse 120, are a prototype of an antagonistic character. Through a semantic-historical analysis, it is determined that the Jews referred to in the Quran do not represent all Jews, but specifically denote the Jewish groups in Medina. The Quran does not hate Jews; rather, it criticizes their behavior, not their race or religion. In summary, the Quran critiques bad behavior from any individual, regardless of who they are.

**Keywords:** Jews, History, Semantics.

## Introduction

Recently, the news has been overshadowed by the heartbreaking tragedy in Gaza, leaving us breathless. Numerous lives have been lost due to the collateral damage in the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Due to this, many harbor a deep-seated hatred towards the people of Israel, viewing them as adversaries of Islam. This sentiment is fueled by the belief that the Quran condemns the Jews. They argue passionately, citing Q.2:120 as the foundation of their conviction. Q.2:120 asserts that individuals from the Jewish communities will never willingly accept Muslims unless the latter conform to their respective groups. The interpretation is then considered a form of condemnation by the Quran towards the Jewish communities as a whole, regardless of the era. Up to this point, it appears that the Quran harbors strong animosity towards the Jews, among other sentiments.

Abu Ja'far holds the view regarding Q.2:120 which elucidates the notion that the Jewish and Christian groups will never content Prophet Muhammad.<sup>1</sup> Al-Thabari interprets Q.2:120 as a warning to Muhammad not to seek approval from Jews and Christians, as they would only be satisfied if he followed their beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Regarding the term "*millah*", al-Thabari refers to religion. This interpretation is further supported by al-Baghawi, who cites the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas. He conveyed that Q.2:120 is related to the change of *Qibla* (the direction Muslims face during prayer).<sup>3</sup> It is explained that Christians from Najran and Jews from Medina pressured Muhammad to shift to their respective *Qibla*.<sup>4</sup> This perspective is bolstered by al-Wahidi's clarification, who explains that Muhammad was asked to rescind the directive to change the *Qibla*.<sup>5</sup> This classical interpretation has subsequently shaped people's perception, leading them to believe that Jews will never be pleased with the Muslim community. Perhaps, due to this, conflicts arise. Jews may believe that Muslims harbor animosity towards them, while Muslims may perceive a divine curse on Jews. It perpetuates a cycle of endless hostility.

In the last five years, several studies have delved into Q.2:120. Amir's research (2022) centers on the significance of the relationships

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<sup>1</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an*, ed. Mahmud Muhammad Shakir (Aleppo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> (Al-Thabari, 1995)

<sup>3</sup> (Al-Baghawi, n.d.)

<sup>4</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Husaini ibn Mas'ud al-Baghawi, *Ma'alim at-Tanzil* (Beirut: Dar Taybah, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Wahidi, *Asbab Nuzul Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991).

between Muslims, Christians, and Jews within the context of Q.2:120.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Nasution and Mawardi's study (2023) adopts a historical approach, using classical tafsir literature to explore the Late Antiquity context regarding the Christians and Jews referred to in Q.2:120.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Muin et al.'s research (2023) focuses on interpreting Q.2:120 from the perspectives of Hamka and Hosen.<sup>8</sup> While each conducted study has its unique contributions and novelty, we have not observed a groundbreaking breakthrough in any of them. In our view, none of the studies has adequately addressed the contextual aspects of the deep-rooted animosity among Muslims towards Jews. This is why our research aims to elucidate this dimension. The question is, does the Quran encourage hatred for Jews?

To address this question, our research will draw upon literary sources using a qualitative approach. The literature in question is not restricted to classical texts but also encompasses modern works. When historical data surfaces, we will employ a semantic approach to Q.2:120 to discern its literal meaning. Once the literal meaning is established, it will be correlated with historical data, and a cohesive narrative will be woven with contemporary context. Ultimately, the initial question will be comprehensively answered, contributing academically to further research. Most importantly, it aims to provide an understanding to the public that the Quran does not advocate hatred towards anyone. While acknowledging the utopian nature of this endeavor, we express our sincere hope that through this work, we can contribute to breaking the age-old chain of hatred.

## Result And Discussion

### Who is the Jews?

One crucial aspect in addressing this research is to elucidate the keyword in Q.2:120, namely the term "*al-yahudi*" (the Jews). Does it refer

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<sup>6</sup> Abdul Muiz Amir, "How Muslims-Christians-Jews Relations in the Qur'an? (Critical Interpretation of Q. Al-Baqarah/2:120 Using Ma'nā-Cum-Magzā Approach)," *Al Hikmah International Journal of Islamic Studies and Human Sciences* 5, no. 1 (February 28, 2022): 100–123, <https://doi.org/10.46722/hkmh.5.1.22e>.

<sup>7</sup> Alhafidh Nasution and Mawardi Mawardi, "MAKNA PERSAHABATAN DENGAN KAUM NASRANI DALAM SURAT AL-BAQARAH AYAT 120 DAN AL-MAIDAH AYAT 82," *AT-TAISIR: Journal of Indonesian Tafsir Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 18, 2023): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.51875/attaisir.v2i1.85>.

<sup>8</sup> Abd Muin, Riksan Riksan, and Umar Zakka, "Pergeseran Wacana Penafsiran Hubungan Antara Muslim Dengan Ahli Kitab Di Indonesia: Perbandingan Penafsiran Hamka Dan Nadirsyah Hosen Terhadap Surah Al-Baqarah/2:120," *SUHUF* 15, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v15i2.758>.

to the racial or religious meaning? From this question, a new postulate emerges: if "*al-yahudu*" pertains to the racial aspect of Jews, then "*al-nashara*" should similarly imply a racial designation. Conversely, if "*al-yahudu*" is oriented towards the religious and theological aspects, then the spectrum of "*al-nashara*" should also be religious in nature. This raises the pivotal question of whether these terms primarily denote ethnicity or religious affiliation in the context of Q.2:120. One approach to answer this is to employ a semantic and historical approach to break down the intended meaning. This involves a detailed analysis of the linguistic and contextual aspects of the terms "*al-yahudu*" in order to discern whether they primarily signify racial or religious connotations within the context of Q.2:120.

Concerning the phrase "*wa lan tardha*" (and never will be pleased), some scholars explain that the term "*lan*" in this context serves as an emphatic negation, signifying an absolute and endless denial.<sup>9</sup> This interpretation is in line with the explanation provided by al-Isfahani.<sup>10</sup> As for the term "*tardha*", it incorporates the pronoun "she" with a female gender reference (*biya*), specifically pointing to "*al-yahudu wa al-nashara*" (the Jews and the Christians) as the addressed subject (*mukhathab*) in the communication. This is then interpreted to mean that the Jews and Christians will not be pleased.

Regarding the term "*'anka al-yahudu wa al-nashara*" (from you, the Jews and the Christians), almost all scholars unanimously agree and explain that "*'ka*" (you) in this context refers to Prophet Muhammad.<sup>11</sup> It is quite challenging to find interpretations that suggest it refers to the entire Muslim community. Referring to the preceding verse, Q.2:119, which discusses Muhammad's specific role as the Messenger of Allah in delivering revelations, this responsibility pertains to all of humanity.<sup>12</sup> Moving to the next verse, Q.2:121, Allah conveys to Muhammad that the Jews and Christians are people of the sacred scriptures, and they should understand Muhammad's mission as the Messenger of Allah.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad Ibn Manzur, *Lisan Al-'Arab* (Kairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Zahrotu Al-Tafasir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, n.d.), [https://islamweb.net/ar/library/index.php?page=bookcontents&ID=135&flag=1&bk\\_no=221&surano=2&ayano=222](https://islamweb.net/ar/library/index.php?page=bookcontents&ID=135&flag=1&bk_no=221&surano=2&ayano=222).

<sup>11</sup> Fakhr ad-Din Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghaib*, ed. Muhammad 'Ali Baidlawi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *Al-Tafasir Al-Munir*, ed. Malik Ibrahim, First (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Tafsir Al-Manar*, ed. Muhammad Abduh (Kairo: al-Hay'ah al-Misriyyah li al-Kitab, 1990).

Therefore, it can be concluded that interpretations suggesting "*ka*" refers to the followers of Muhammad or the Muslim community at large are misconceptions.

The term "*al-yahudu*" appears eight times in the Quran—twice in Surah al-Baqarah (verses 113, 120), four times in Surah al-Maidah (verses 18, 51, 64, 82), and once in Surah al-Taubah (verse 30). The overall usage of the term "*al-yahudu*" does not consistently denote adherence to the Abrahamic religion but rather refers to a communal orientation. One notable observation is that whenever the Quran employs the term "*al-yahudu*", it invariably refers to the Jewish community in Medina, indicating conflict or issues with Muhammad, the Muslim community, or other groups. That is why, when the term "*al-yahudu*" appears, the nuance that arises is that Allah consistently issues warnings to the Jewish people, referring to the community rather than their doctrine or religion. This argument can be verified in each mentioned verse. Furthermore, this interpretation is reinforced by explanations in classical commentaries such as those of Thabari, Baghawi, Muqatil, and others.<sup>14</sup>

If "*al-yahudu*" in Q.2:120 is meant to refer to the community rather than the religion, does it then apply uniformly to all Jewish communities wherever and whenever? In this regard, a more in-depth analysis of the term "*al*" (*alif lam*) in the phrase "*al-yahudu*" is necessary. According to Thabari's explanation, Q.2:120 relates to the Jewish and Christian groups in Medina who compelled Muhammad to change the *Qibla* according to their desires. Therefore, the "*al*" (*alif lam*) here specifies the Jewish group in Medina at that time.<sup>15</sup> This is further reinforced by the pronoun "*ka*" (you), which refers to Muhammad. Moreover, in the eight verses where the term appears, the referenced Jews are the Jewish community in Medina at that time. This indicates that "*al-yahudu*" in this verse does not interpret as the entire Jewish community from the past to the present, but only Medinan Jews.

## The Jews in the Quran

Based on the author's reading, 21 verses specifically mention Jews. These verses include Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 62, 111, 113, 120, 135, 140, Q.S. Ali Imran (3): 67, Q.S. al-Nisa' (4): 46, 160, Q.S. al-Maidah (5): 18, 41, 44, 51, 64, 69, 82, Q.S. al-An'am (6): 6, Q.S. al-Taubah (9): 30, Q.S.

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<sup>14</sup> Muqatil ibn Sulayman, *Tafsir Muqatil Ibn Sulayman*, ed. Ahmad Farid, 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Irwan Akbar and Roibin Roibin, "CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR BLASPHEMY IN THE HADITH OF THE PROPHET: A Perspective through the Common Link Theory," *Rivayah : Jurnal Studi Hadis* 10, no. 1 (2024): 167–86.

al-Nahl (16): 118, Q.S. al-Hajj (22): 18, Q.S. al-Jum'ah (62): 6. Many of these verses discuss the deviant behavior of the Jews (Q.S. 2: 111, 113, 120, 135, 140), prohibit Muslims from taking Jews as allies (Q.S. 5: 51), and even curse the Jews (Q.S. 5: 64). However, there are also verses that offer praise, acknowledging the Jews as a righteous group (Q.S. 2: 62).

The product of tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) that seemingly discriminates against Jewish groups has existed for a long time, even since the classical era of tafsir. One example is the interpretation of Q.S. al-Maidah (5): 82. This verse explains that Jews and polytheists (mushrik) are enemies of Muhammad and his followers, while Christians (Nasara) are considered friends of Muhammad and his followers. Ibn Jarir and al-Qurtubi, in their interpretations of this verse, did not elaborate much on why the Jews and polytheists became enemies of the Muslims.<sup>16</sup> Instead, they mostly cited traditions explaining that Q.S. 5: 82 was revealed when Muslims migrated to Najashi and were warmly received by the Christians there.

Why did the Jews and polytheists become enemies of the Muslims? Ibn Kathir and Abduh provided the rationale that the Jews were stubborn and had other reprehensible traits, including their frequent killing of God's messengers (rasuls).<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Kathir quotes a narration from Abu Hurairah that the Jews had the intent to kill Muslims. This serves as the reason for the enmity between Islam and Judaism. This contrasts with Christians, as demonstrated in the migration to Najashi, where Christians were supportive of Muslims. This is the basis for the friendship between Muslims and Christians.

Another example is the interpretation of Q.S. al-Nisa' (4): 46, which explains that the Jews altered the holy scriptures that had been revealed to them. Ibn Jarir interpreted this verse in correlation with Q.S. 4: 44. He explained that the alteration of the holy scriptures refers to changing the scriptures, with the Torah being the specific text in question. Ibn Kathir interpreted this verse alongside the preceding verses (Q.S. 4: 44-45). For Ibn Kathir, the Jews are a people cursed by God until the Day of Judgment, as they interpret and explain the holy scriptures contrary to their original teachings.<sup>18</sup> According to him, they are people who trade their religion for worldly gains. Al-Baghawi added

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<sup>16</sup> Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an*; Qurthubî and Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al- Al-Khazrajî, *Al-Jâmi' Li Ahkam Al-Qur'an*, vol. 10 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Rida, *Tafsir Al-Manar*, Abu al-Fida' 'Imad ad-Din Isma'il ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azim* (Kairo: Dar ibn al-Haytham, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azim*.

that the alteration of the scriptures referred specifically to the verses concerning the coming of the final messenger, Muhammad.<sup>19</sup>

If we summarize the thematic focus of the 21 verses in the Qur'an about Jews as analyzed in the thesis, they can be grouped into five distinct typologies:

1. The right of Islam, Jews, Christians, and Sabians to enter heaven  
This typology emphasizes inclusivity in salvation based on faith and righteous deeds, rather than on religious affiliation. The verses (*Q.* 2:62, *Q.* 5:69, *Q.* 22:17) suggest that believers from various religions, including Jews, Christians, and Sabians, are eligible for salvation if they live according to the principles of faith and good deeds.
2. Theological debates between Jews, Christians, And Muslims  
This category deals with theological arguments and debates (*Q.* 2:111-113, *Q.* 2:120, *Q.* 2:135, *Q.* 2:140, *Q.* 3:67) between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The focus is on how these debates, especially among Jewish and Christian communities, often became politicized. The Qur'an critiques the use of religion as a tool for political gain, rather than sincere engagement with faith.
3. The concept of Jews as the "Beloved of God" or "Sons of God"  
These verses (*Q.* 5:18, *Q.* 5:51, *Q.* 5:64, *Q.* 9:30, *Q.* 62:6) address Jewish claims of divine favoritism. The Qur'an refutes the idea of any inherent superiority based on religious or ethnic identity, promoting humility and the idea that God's judgment is based on righteousness and moral actions, not inherited status.
4. The relationship between the Jews and the Torah  
This typology (*Q.* 4:46, *Q.* 5:41, *Q.* 5:44) examines the accusation that some Jews manipulated or altered their sacred texts. The Qur'an condemns the distortion of divine revelation for worldly gain and stresses the need for fidelity to God's message.
5. Dietary laws in the Quran  
The final typology (*Q.* 4:160, *Q.* 6:146, *Q.* 16:118) addresses dietary restrictions imposed on Jews, often framed as a consequence of their actions. The deeper message is that religious laws, including dietary restrictions, serve as a moral discipline meant to lead to spiritual awareness and should not be seen as arbitrary or burdensome.

## The Jews in Medina

Before Muhammad's migration, Medina was known as the city of Yathrib.<sup>20</sup> Geographically, Yathrib had two areas, the upper slope and

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<sup>19</sup> Baghawi, *Ma'alim at-Tanzil*.

the lower slope.<sup>21</sup> The city of Yathrib was heterogeneous, with various ethnicities residing there, including the Jewish community.<sup>22</sup> Several assumptions have been made about the arrival of the Jewish people in Yathrib. According to some opinions, the Jews came during the time of prophets like Simeon, Moses, David, and Solomon.<sup>23</sup> However, this opinion is not supported by strong evidence. The most plausible opinion, supported by evidence, is attributed to Gatje. He suggests that Jews dispersed to Yathrib after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 135 CE during the Bar Kochba revolt, where Cassius Dio, a second-century Roman historian, claimed that the Romans killed 580,000 Jews.<sup>24</sup>

Supposedly, after the tragedy of the fall of Jerusalem, many Jews dispersed to various places, including Yathrib.<sup>25</sup> In essence, the Jewish community had existed for centuries before Muhammad arrived in Yathrib, even predating Muhammad's birth. Although there are opinions suggesting that the Jews in Yathrib were originally Arab people who converted to Judaism, this viewpoint lacks strong supporting evidence<sup>26</sup>. There is also an assertion that their motive for settling in Yathrib was to await the arrival of the last Prophet<sup>27</sup>. However, this opinion lacks strong supporting evidence. The more robust viewpoint, accompanied by substantial evidence, is that the diaspora was motivated by a desire to escape the Roman invasion of Jerusalem.

Jews resided on the upper slope of the city of Yathrib, known for its abundant natural resources.<sup>28</sup> Typically, groups living on the upper slope were considered elite. According to Sandgren, the Jewish population in Yathrib numbered between 36,000 and 42,000

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<sup>20</sup> Tabari, *Tarikh Al-Umam Wa Al-Mulk*.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Lecker, *Muslims, Jews and Pagans, Muslims, Jews and Pagans*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004491014>.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Lecker, "Were the Jewish Tribes in Arabia Clients of Arab Tribes?," in *Studies on the Life of Muhammad and the Dawn of Islam*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003374824-11>.

<sup>23</sup> Yasin Ghadban, *Madinah Yasrib Qabla Islam*, 1st ed. (Amman: Dar al-Basyir, 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Helmut Gätje, "Arabische Lexikographie Ein Historischer Überblick," *Historiographia Linguistica* 12, no. 1–2 (1985), <https://doi.org/10.1075/hl.12.1-2.06gat>.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Lecker, "Waqidi's Account on the Status of the Jews of Medina: A Study of a Combined Report," in *The Life of Muhammad*, vol. 4, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1086/373718>.

<sup>26</sup> Muhammad at-Tahir Ibn 'Ashur, *Al-Tabrir Wa Al-Tamwir* (Tunis: Dar Sahnun, n.d.).

<sup>27</sup> Tabari, *Tarikh Al-Umam Wa Al-Mulk*.

<sup>28</sup> Dilshad Karim, "Demographics of Medina- Yathrib- (Jews as a Model)," *Journal of Garmian University* 10, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.24271/garmian.2023.10258>.

individuals.<sup>29</sup> Allegedly, there were 20 tribes in Yathrib, and three of them were Qainuqa', Nadhir, and Quraidlah.<sup>30</sup> According to Lecker, the Jews had strong kinship ties, so robust that they monopolized the entire network of resources in Yathrib. Economically, they wielded significant power.<sup>31</sup> Due to their economic strength, access to political power and influence was undoubtedly easy for the Jews in Yathrib. Sociologically, they practically dominated the economic and political power in Yathrib. However, this control did not last long. Since Muhammad was asked by a group of Yathrib residents from the Banu Khazraj to become a peacemaker there, the position of the Jews began to fade, unlike before.<sup>32</sup>

The Banu Khazraj were the group primarily responsible for bringing Muhammad to Yathrib.<sup>33</sup> Their motive was exhaustion from the longstanding fraternal wars that had been ongoing for centuries.<sup>34</sup> Geographically, the Banu Khazraj occupied the lower slopes. Despite their larger numbers, the Jewish monopoly on the economy meant that they did not significantly influence the politics of Yathrib. In our opinion, the Banu Khazraj were driven to bring Muhammad not only as a peacemaker but also as a catalyst for greater egalitarian access to resources in Yathrib. Since Muhammad's arrival, Yathrib demonstrated a new vibrancy. One of Muhammad's efforts was to create an effective agreement for the people of Yathrib. The Constitution of Medina was established as the initial sign of this political transformation. With this agreement, the city of Yathrib transformed into Madinah, meaning the city of civilization.

Certainly, Muhammad's presence posed a threat to the political power of the Jews in Madinah. Many incidents occurred where Muhammad's influence was seen as too hegemonic. The Jews, with their

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<sup>29</sup> Joshua Ezra Burns, "Leo Duprée Sandgren. Vines Intertwined: A History of Jews and Christians from the Babylonian Exile to the Advent of Islam," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 6, no. 1 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v6i1.1589>.

<sup>30</sup> Salime Leyla Gürkan, "Jews in the Qur'ān: An Evaluation of the Naming and the Content," *Ilahiyat Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.12730/13091719.2016.72.148>.

<sup>31</sup> Fina Nuriah and Rohimatil Umah, "Reinterpretasi Ayat Al- Qur ' an Tentang Hubungan Muslim-Non Muslim (Aplikasi Pendekatan Ma ' Na Cum Maghza Terhadap QS . Ali Imran [ 3 ] : 118-120)," *Jurnal Mashahif* 1, no. 1 (2021): 118–20, <http://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/mashahif/article/view/784>.

<sup>32</sup> George Kirk, "The Arabs in History," *International Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1951): 253–253, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2606232>.

<sup>33</sup> Muhammad ibn Sa'd ibn Mani' al- Zuhri, *Al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, n.d.).

<sup>34</sup> Greg Fisher, *Rome, Persia, and Arabia*, Rome, Persia, and Arabia, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429356483>.

longstanding intellectual abilities, had traditionally been political leaders in Madinah. This was partly due to their literacy, a skill that had been lacking among the native Arabs.<sup>35</sup> This literacy gap created an intellectual disparity between the Jews and the indigenous people of Madinah. Initially, the Jews held excessive power, influencing the community in communication, lifestyle, and even ideology.<sup>36</sup> Even the Arabs themselves adopted their way of life.<sup>37</sup> However, gradually, with the presence of Muhammad in Madinah, their influence waned. They no longer held the same sway as before. That's why when Q.2:120 was revealed, the political landscape in Madinah began to be colored by the influence of Muhammad.

Q.2:120 was revealed by Allah regarding His command to change the direction of prayer, originally from Baitul Maqdis in Palestine to the Kaaba in Mecca<sup>38</sup>. Periodically, this change in the direction of prayer occurred around the second year of Muhammad's residence in Madinah. Certainly, Muhammad's influence was starting to flourish at that time, as evidenced by the existence of the Constitution of Madinah from the early days of his stay there. In our view, the presence of the Constitution of Madinah indicates the political strength of Muhammad deeply rooted in Madinah. When the Jews learned about this change, they requested Muhammad to keep aligning the direction of prayer towards Jerusalem. This elicited a response from the Quran, essentially stating that they desire to be followed. In our opinion, this motive stems from a psychosociological perspective where their position holds significant influence both politically and ideologically. The change was undesirable for the Jews as it indicated that ideologically, they were no longer being followed. This shift in the direction of prayer, in our view, posed a threat to their ideological influence in Madinah. That's why the Quran refers to the Jewish faction using the term "millah."

As a result, with this change in the direction of prayer, it signifies that Islam is not dictated by the Jewish group. Islam is an independent religion. The Jews did not favor this change because socio-politically, they held significant power in Madinah. With the difference in the direction of prayer, the Jews perceived that Muhammad's ideological preferences were in opposition to theirs. This marked the beginning of

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<sup>35</sup> J. A.O.C. Brown and Bryan Gibson, *A History of the Arab Peoples, A History of the Arab Peoples*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781912281527>.

<sup>36</sup> Philip K Hitti, *History of Arabs Terj, History of Arabs Terj*, vol. 53, 2005.

<sup>37</sup> Nabih Amin Faris., "History of the Arabs," *The Muslim World* 27, no. 4 (1937): 389–99, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1937.tb00371.x>.

<sup>38</sup> Nasiruddin al- Baidhawi, *Anwar Al-Tanzil Wa Asrar Al-Takwil* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' Turath, 1997).

what would later be interpreted as Muhammad's opposition to the Jews, even though Muhammad never considered it as an act of hostility. Muhammad was merely a messenger conveying a divine mission; nothing more.

## Conclusion

Q.2:120 elucidates the independent position of Islam from the political and ideological influence of the Jewish groups in Madinah. With this change in the direction of prayer, the Jews perceived Muhammad as their opponent, although Muhammad was only conveying the truth and goodness. The Jews referred to in the Quran are not Jews throughout all times and places; rather, the Quran uses the Jews of Medina as an example because, coincidentally, the antagonistic group at that time happened to be the Jews of Medina. The verse doesn't center around the wickedness of the Jews but rather focuses on their deeds that lack goodness. Even in goodness, there will always be those who oppose. In the end, the assumption that the Quran condones hatred towards Jews based on Q.2:120 is inaccurate and misguided.

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