

Interreligious Polemics in Medieval Spain: Biblical Interpretation between Ibn Ḥazm, Shlomoh ibn Adret, and Shim'on ben Šemaḥ Duran

by
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While the dispute about the “correct” exegesis of the Hebrew Bible was essential in the Jewish-Christian encounter, it seems to have been incidental in Jewish-Muslim relations – at least at first glance. Islam did not adopt the Jewish Bible as part of its Scriptures and did not incorporate its traditions wholesale. Yet, the Qur’ān accuses the “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitāb*) – a term mostly related to Jews and Christians in a general sense – of having distorted their Scriptures. These arguments were elaborately formed by the eleventh-century Muslim scholar, Ibn Ḥazm of Córdoba. Pointing to some of the Hebrew Bible’s inconsistencies and to theological problems such as anthropomorphic depictions of God, Ibn Ḥazm claimed that the Torah as preserved by Judaism cannot be identical with the text revealed to Moses but must be a later corruption.

While Jewish authors in Muslim countries reflected these exegetical-polemical statements, they were reluctant to attack them explicitly. The only two, full surviving Jewish monographs dealing specifically with Ibn Ḥazm’s arguments were written by Shlomo ibn Adret of Barcelona in the thirteenth century and Shim'on b. Šemaḥ Duran at the turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth century. While Ibn Ḥazm lived in Muslim al-Andalus, Ibn Adret and Duran were born in Christian Spain, a fact to be considered when interpreting their polemical writings against Islam.

Although Ibn Adret and Duran criticize the *Islamic* doctrine according to which the Torah was abrogated by the Qur’ān, the contemporary background of their argumentations against Ibn Ḥazm seems to be the *Christian-*

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Jewish dispute, as the following analysis of their works intends to show. Moreover, Ibn Adret's and Duran's responses to Muslim criticism will turn out to be just one example of a multilingual polemical genre rooted in the specific cultural milieu of Medieval Spain, a genre that always involved three traditions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In order to prove these points I will first of all summarize the major arguments of Islamic biblical criticism and then discuss their refutation by Ibn Adret and Duran.¹

Early Muslims claimed that Muhammad had restored the original monotheism of the biblical prophets to its pristine truth, which was supposed to be identical with the tenets of Islam, while Jews and Christians had altered their Scriptures. Inter alia, these arguments were used in order to explain the differences between related biblical and Qur'anic narratives and to strengthen the claim that the original text of the Bible did in fact include explicit predictions of the rise of Muhammad as the ultimate prophet. Muslim scholars were certainly aware of the contradiction between the two claims, that the Jews, on the one hand, had falsified the biblical text and yet the Torah, on the other hand, allegedly contained predictions of the advent of Muhammad. The problem was solved by a theory, according to which the Jews omitted the obvious references to the advent of the Arab prophet, whereas some more cryptic hints of that kind had escaped the textual manipulation.

Eventually, this theme developed into the Islamic doctrine of *tahrif* and *tabdil*, according to which the text of the Torah as preserved by the Rabbis represented a "distorted" and "altered version" of the original revelation, and was finally abrogated (*naskh*) by the Qur'an.² These accusations were scholarly elaborated by the aforementioned Ibn Ḥazm of Córdoba (384/994–456/1064). Known to a broader public through his delightful treatise on profane love (*Tauq al-ḥamāma*, "The Ring of the Dove"), Ibn Ḥazm was also a zealous Muslim theologian with pronounced literalist (i.e., *Zāhirī*) convictions.³ They are especially expressed in his lengthy treatise on Jewish

1 Cf. *Sūra* 3:78.

2 For the doctrine of *tahrif* see R. Caspar, J.-M. Gaudeul, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le *tahrif* (falsification) des Écritures", *Islamochristiana*, 6 (1980), pp. 61–104; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Interwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, 1992), esp. pp. 19–35; *EP*, vol. 10, pp. 111–112, s.v. *Tahrif* (eadem); Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabbūn to Ibn Ḥazm* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1996), pp. 223–248; for the doctrine of *naskh* see Lazarus-Yafeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 35–41; Adang, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–222.

3 See the classical work by Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Zāhirīten, ihr Lehrsystem und ihre Geschichte: Beitrag zur Geschichte der muhammedanischen Theologie* (Leipzig, 1884 [repr. Hildesheim, 1967]), esp. pp. 117–130 (English translation by Wolfgang Behn, *The Zāhirīs, Their Doctrine and Their History: A Contribution to the History of Islamic*

and Christian Scriptures, called *Iḥār tabdil al-yahūd wa' l-naṣāra lil-taurā wa' l-injīl* ("Exposure of the alterations made by the Jews and the Christians to the Torah and the Gospel and demonstration of the contradictions contained in their Scriptures, which allow no metaphorical interpretation"). This work of his youth did not survive as a separate composition, but was later incorporated in his comparative work on world religions, the *Kitāb al-faṣl fī l-milal wa' l-ahwā' wa' l-niḥal* ("Book of Distinctions of Religions, Sects, and Heresies").⁴ Writing the fullest Bible criticism of any Muslim scholar, Ibn Ḥazm claims that the Hebrew Bible cannot be identical with the original text revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai but must be a later corruption.⁵

In this sense, he points to the Hebrew Bible's chronological and geographical inconsistencies, to theological problems such as anthropomorphisms, and to stories attributing immoral behavior to biblical patriarchs and kings –

Theology [Leiden, 1971], pp. 110–123; Miguel Asín Palacios, *Abenliscām de Córdoba y su historia crítica de las ideas religiosas*, 5 vols. (Madrid, 1927–1932 [repr. 1984]), esp. vol. 1, which contains a biography and an introduction into the intellectual world of Ibn Ḥazm; Roger Arnaldez, *Grammaire et théologie chez Ibn Ḥazm de Cordoue: essai sur la structure et les conditions de la pensée musulmane* (Paris, 1984), providing an analysis of Ibn Ḥazm's philosophy of language as the key to his thought; *EP*, vol. 3, 790–799, s.v. "Ibn Ḥazm" (idem); Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Potemkin Discourse: Ibn Ḥazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta, 1998), esp. pp. 8–9.

Sometimes it is spelled *Kitāb al-faṣl*; I use the Cairo edition in 5 volumes. (1317–21/1899–1903 [repr. Beirut 1395/1975]). There the critique of Judaism and Christianity has the heading *Faṣl fī mināḡaḡāi zāhira...* ("Treatise on the obvious contradictions and evident lies in the book which the Jews call the Torah and in the four Gospels") and is separated between vol. 1, pp. 116–224 (on Judaism), and vol. 2, pp. 1–91 (on Christianity). For a (Spanish) translation, see Asín Palacios, *Abenliscām de Córdoba*, vols. 2–5; for the Biblical criticism see, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 238–392, vol. 3, pp. 9–146. For a thorough study of the *Iḥār*, see now Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse, op. cit.*

5 Many of the arguments recur in Ibn Ḥazm's *Radd 'alā' bn al-Naghārā al-Yahūdī*, ed. by Ihsān 'Abbās (Cairo, 1380/1960); Sarah Stroumsa, "From Muslim Heresy to Jewish-Muslim Polemics: Ibn al-Rāwandī's *Kitāb Al-Dāniḡī*", *JAO*, 107 (1987), pp. 767–772, has questioned the common assumption according to which this work was an attack against an anti-Islamic tract authored by Shmuel ha-Nagid of Granada; cf. eadem, "Jewish Polemics against Islam", pp. 244–245. On Ibn Ḥazm's polemic against Judaism, see also the classical articles by Ignaz Goldziher, "Ueber muhammedanische Polemik gegen Aḥl al-Kitāb", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (ZDMG), 32 (1878), pp. 341–387; Moshe Peitmann, "Eleventh-Century Andalusian Authors on the Jews of Granada", *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* (PAAJR) 18, (1948–49), pp. 269–290; Norman Roth, "Forgery and Abrogation of the Torah: A Theme in Muslim and Christian Polemic in Spain", *PAAJR*, 54 (1987), pp. 203–236.

many of whom are considered prophets in Islam.⁶ Using arguments some of which are already known from antique polemicists against Judaism and Christianity (like Porphyry and Celsus)⁷ or Christian polemics against Judaism,⁸ Ibn Ḥazm claims that the received Hebrew text was the work of Ezra the Scribe, who allegedly authored the Bible anew after its original version vanished due to the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE and the Babylonian exile. Here, we need not follow the details of Ibn Ḥazm's argumentation, which has recently been treated by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Camilla Adang and Theodore Pulcini,⁹ but I will give a few examples when discussing the Jewish response to it.

Although Jewish Bible commentaries and philosophical treatises originating in Muslim countries reflect a certain awareness of Muslim exegetical-polemical statements, they do not make them their central topics.¹⁰ One reason might have been the fear of being dragged into Qur'ān-criticism. This would have been a highly dangerous venture for a member of the so-called *dhimmi*-people – the Jewish and Christian minorities in Muslim society enjoying "protection" under certain conditions which included the explicit prohibition to question the Qur'ān. Undoubtedly, certain aspects of Muslim anti-

6 For a detailed description of Ibn Ḥazm's arguments against Jewish Scripture, see Pulcini, *Exegesis*, pp. 57–95.

7 See Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 30, 63, 132.

8 See William Adler, "The Jews as Falsifiers: Charges of Tendentious Emendations in Anti-Jewish Christian Polemic", in: *Translation of Scripture: Proceedings of a Conference at the Annenberg Research Institute, May 15–16, 1989* (Philadelphia, 1990) [*Jewish Quarterly Review* (JQR) Supplement], pp. 1–27.

9 See above notes 2 and 4.

10 For Jewish polemical writings against Islam see the following classical studies: Moritz Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden* (Leipzig, 1877), pp. 244–388; Martin Schreiner, "Zur Geschichte der Polemik zwischen Juden und Muhammadanern", *ZDMG*, 42 (1888), pp. 591–675 (repr. in: idem, *Gesammelte Schriften: Islamische und jüdisch-islamische Studien*, ed. Moshe Perlmann [Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York, 1983], pp. 75–159); and Moshe Perlmann, "The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism", in: Shlomo D. Goitein (ed.), *Religion in a Religious Age* (Cambridge, [Mass.] 1974), pp. 103–138; to the works listed by Steinschneider, Schreiner, and Perlmann a number of Judaeo-Arabic Geniza fragments, mainly of Qaraite origin, have to be added, see Sarah Stroumsa, "Jewish Polemics against Islam and Christianity in the Light of Judaeo-Arabic Texts", in: N. Golb (ed.), *Judaeo-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies* (Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 241–250, esp. p. 243, note 11; eadem, "Ha-islam be-tetsat ha-historiah shel hogim yehudim bi-yeme ha-benayim ha-'araviyim", in: Nchemya Levitzion et al. (eds.), *Sefer zikaron le-Hava Lazarus-Yafeh* (forthcoming). I am indebted to the author for letting me read the unpublished paper; on Shmu'el b. Hofni, see below note 13.

Jewish polemics were addressed by Sa'adyah Ga'on,¹¹ the Qaraite Ya'aqūb al-Qirṣānī,¹² Shemu'el b. Hofni,¹³ Yehudah ha-Levi¹⁴ and Maimonides,¹⁵ to name the most important examples. However, a systematic refutation of Muslim Bible criticism was first done by Jews living in Christian Spain. This has to be explained by two factors: First, the heritage of the Arab (Muslim and Jewish) culture was still prevalent in Christian Spain, and, second, the literary form of inter-religious polemics was shaped there by the forced disputations between the friars and the Jews.¹⁶ The only two, full surviving

11 Sa'adyah refers to the alleged abrogation of the Torah in his *Amānāt wa-ḥiqāqāt*, chapters 7–9, see the edition *Ha-niḥyār be-enuat ve-de'ot le-rabbenu Sa'adyah ben Yosef Fayyumi*, ed. Yosef Qapah (Jerusalem and New York, 1970), pp. 131–143 (Arabic text and Hebrew translation); see also *Saadia's Polemic against Hiwi al-Balkhi*, ed. Israel Davidson (New York, 1915), and the discussion by Adang, *Muslim Writers*, pp. 198–202.

12 See the discussion by Haggai Ben-Shammai, "The Attitude of Some Early Karaites towards Islam", in: Isadore Twersky (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Ma., 1984), pp. 3–40, esp. pp. 23–38; Adang, *Muslim Writers*, pp. 202–210.

13 Only fragments of his work have survived, see Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, pp. 102–103; Stroumsa, "Jewish Polemics", p. 244; for Shmu'el b. Hofni's *Treatise on Abrogation of the Law*, see David E. Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofni Gaon and His Cultural World* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1996), pp. 28–29; idem, "Responses to Islamic Polemics by Jewish Mutakallimān in the Tenth Century", in: *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. H. Lazarus-Yafeh et al. (Wiesbaden, 1999), pp. 137–161.

14 See the brief discussion of Christianity and Islam in the *Kuzari* 1.4–6, in the edition by David H. Baneth, Haggai Ben-Shammai, *Kiṭāb al-raḍā wa'l-dalīl fi'l-dīn al-dhālil* (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 6–9.

15 See his *Epistle to Yemen* in the edition by Abraham S. Halkin, *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen: The Arabic Original and the Three Hebrew Versions* (New York, 1952), esp. pp. 14–16 (on the "madman", see below), 38–39 (on Deuteronomy 18:15, see below); for Maimonides' attitude towards Islam, see George F. Hourani, "Maimonides and Islam", William M. Brinner, Stephen D. Ricks, (eds.), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions*, vol. 1 (Atlanta, 1986), pp. 153–165; David Novak, "The Treatment of Islam and Muslims in the Legal Writings of Maimonides", *ibid.*, pp. 233–250; Eliezer Schlossberg, "The Attitude of Maimonides towards Islam" (Heb.), *Pez'mim*, 42 (1990), pp. 38–60.

16 For the development of mendicant anti-Judaism, see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca and London, 1986). Jewish polemical literature provides many examples of how ideas traversed the boundaries between the "realm of Ishmael" and the "realm of Edom": As Lasker shows, Jewish polemical treatises against Christianity written in Christian Spain made use of earlier Jewish works originating from the Islamic world, see Daniel J. Lasker, "The Jewish Critique of Christianity under Islam in the Middle Ages", *PAARJ*, 57 (1991), pp. 121–153; id., "The Jewish-Christian Debate in Transition: From the Land of Ishmael to the Land of Edom",

Jewish monographs which deal specifically with the mentioned polemical-exegetical doctrines were written by the aforementioned Shlomo ben Adret of Barcelona and by Shim'on b. Šemah Duran.

Serving his Barcelona community for almost half a century, Rabbi Shlomo ben Adret (the "Rashba", ca. 1235–1310) inherited the mantle of the Ramban, whose student he was, in the latter's leading position in Spanish Jewry and was recognized as the outstanding Halakic authority of his generation on the Iberian Peninsula and beyond.¹⁷ Relying on a Breslau manuscript, Joseph Perles published Ibn Adret's anti-Islamic treatise in 1863 under the title *Ma'amar 'al yishma'el she-ħibber 'al ha-datot ve-hu ksil she-dibber af 'al datenu ha-shlema, ve-hu la-rav ha-gadol rabbenu Shlomo ben Avraham ben Adret*,¹⁸ which might be translated as "treatise against the Muslim who

in: *Judaism and Islam – Boundaries, Communication and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes, Fred Astren (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 2000), pp. 53–65.

17 Already Josef Karo started to collect the *Responsa* of Ibn Adret, which were partly published in 7 different printed editions and other collections; see now the new edition *She'elot u-teshuvot ha-Rashba... 'al pi defusim rishonim ve-khve yad, 7 in 5 vols.* (Jerusalem, 1996–2001.). On the *Responsa*, see Isidore Epstein, *The Responsa of Rabbi Solomon b. Adret of Barcelona as a Source of the History of Spain* (London, 1925 [repr. 1968]). The classical introduction into Ibn Adret's life and activities is Yizhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1961 [repr. 1978]), pp. 281–305; for Ibn Adret as a talmudic authority, see Israel M. Ta-Shma, *Talmudic Commentary in Europe and North Africa: Part Two: 1200–1400* (Heb. [Jerusalem, 2000]), pp. 55–66; for Ibn Adret's links with the Royal court, see, Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry* (London, 1997), pp. 311–314; *idem*, *Jewish Economy in the Medieval Crown of Aragon, 1213–1327* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1997), p. 47.

18 See the appendix of J. Perles, *R. Salomo b. Avraham b. Adereth: Sein Leben und seine Schriften nebst handschriftlichen Beilagen* (Breslau, 1863), Hebrew section, pp. 1–24 [repr. in: *Teshuvot ha-Rashba le-Rabenu Shelomoh b. R. Avraham ben Adret*, ed. Hayim Z. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 115–158, with some useful notes by Dimitrowsky]. Perles based his edition of the treatise on Codex Saraval 26a, fols. 79a–106b, the only known manuscript of the *Ma'amar*, which went missing due to the pillaging of the library by the Nazis; see the original catalogue of the Seminar by B. Zuckermann, "Katalog der Seminar-Bibliothek", in: *Jahresbericht des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars 'Fraenckel'scher Stiftung'*, 15 (1870), p. 7., no. 59, II–VIII; and the reconstruction of the holdings by D. S. Loewinger, B. D. Weinryb, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Library of the Juedisch-Theologisches Seminar in Breslau* (Wiesbaden, 1965), p. 165, No. 234.7; cf. G. E. Weil, "Sur une bibliothèque systématiquement pillée par les Nazis: Le catalogue des manuscrits et incunables retrouvé de la Bibliothèque des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars in Breslau", in: G. Nahon, C. Touati (eds.), *Hommage à Georges Vajda* (Louvain, 1980), pp. 579–603.

wrote about the religions, and being an idiot spoke also about our perfect faith, by the great rabbi, our master, Shlomo ben Avraham ben Adret".

This title is clearly secondary, and not only the authorship by Ibn Adret, but also the addressee might not be taken for granted – although Martin Schreiner noticed already in 1894 the closeness between the arguments attributed here to the anonymous *Yishma'el* and Ibn Hazm's polemical work.¹⁹ This was taken by Moshe Zucker as evidence that the tract must have been written close to Ibn Hazm's time by an author who knew Arabic and not two centuries later in Christian Spain.²⁰ However, Norman Roth (1987) proved Rashba's authorship conclusively by highlighting striking similarities between the anti-Muslim treatise and some of Ibn Adret's *Responsa*.²¹

That the tract is aimed against Ibn Hazm seems to be hinted in the phrase according to which the unnamed *Yishma'el* "wrote about the religions", a description matching very well the *Kitāb al-faṣl*. On the other hand, Ibn Adret calls his Muslim opponent also the "madman" (*ha-meshuga'*), thereby using the common Hebrew polemical term for Muhammad.²² It is based on Hosea 9:7, *evil ha-navi' meshugga' ish ha-ruah*, ("the prophet was foolish, the inspired man driven mad"), and might have been originally an allusion to the Arabic adjective *madjūn*, "possessed", hurled at Muhammad by some of his disbelieving Arab contemporaries.²³

The fact that Ibn Adret calls his opponent "the madman" could indicate that he had no idea against whom he was arguing. Moreover, it is clear that Ibn Adret had no access to the original version of Ibn Hazm's *Izhār tabdīl al-yahūd* as his knowledge of Arabic has to be doubted.²⁴ However, the hat-

19 Martin Schreiner, "Die apologetische Schrift des Salomo b. Adret gegen Muhammad medaner", *ZDMG*, 48 (1894), pp. 39–42 (repr. in: *idem*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 271–274).

20 See Moshe Zucker, "Birurim be-toledot ha-wikkuaḥ im ha-datiyim she-ben ha-yahadut ve-ha-islam", in: *Festschrift Armand Kaminka zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag* (Vienna, 1973), Hebrew part, pp. 31–48, esp. pp. 36–37 and 43, note 1. Zucker relied thereby on Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, pp. 3 and 363.

21 Roth, "Forgey", p. 225.

22 This polemical term is already to be found in the "French recension" of *Iggeret Rav Sherira Ga'on*, see the edition by B. M. Lewin (Haifa, 1921 [repr. Jerusalem, 1972]), p. 100; and Ms. Berlin, facsimile reprint in: Margarete Schlüter, *Auf welche Weise wurde die Mishna geschrieben? Das Antwortschreiben des Rav Sherira Gaon* (Tübingen, 1993), p. 34; cf. Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, pp. 302–303. Cf. *Sūra* 7:184, 37:36, where Muhammad is compared to a "possessed poet" (*al-ḥāṭirīn madjūnīn*).

23 See already Schreiner, "Apologetische Schrift", p. 42. Raphael Jospe argues concerning Ramban (Nahmanides), Ibn Adret's teacher, that he used Arabic sources. With Ibn Adret living a generation later, it is, however, highly doubtful that he knew Arabic. For Ramban,

mony in views and wording between Ibn Adret's *Yishma'el* and Ibn Ḥazm's argumentation is striking. Before discussing Ibn Adret's source, as well as the question of why Ibn Adret targeted an author who was probably unknown to him and, in any case, lived two centuries earlier, it is necessary to have a closer look at the *Ma'amar*.

Ibn Adret opens his tract with a rhymed introduction making its subject and polemical purpose quite clear:

"I saw a fool" (*evil*, Job 5:3), who "thought himself wise" (Proverbs 26:5), an idiot, who was a Muslim, whose eyes misled him and whose blindness confused him (*shibbeshuhu*) to talk about our sanctified book, the Torah of Moses our teacher, peace be with him.²⁵

In calling the anonymous *Yishmaelite evil*, i.e. "foolish", Ibn Adret alludes to Hosea 9:7 again. By claiming that the Muslim was "confused" he hints at his intention to attack the doctrine of *tahriif* (i.e. corruption, confusion), termed by him *shibbush* in Hebrew. In refutation of it, he claims that already the perfect grammatical structures of the Hebrew Bible are a proof of its undistorted preservation, a statement that clearly adapts the Islamic concept of the inimitable linguistic perfection of the Qur'ān, since this so-called *i'jāz al-qur'ān* (or *al-fasāḥ al-mu'jiza*)²⁶ is believed to be a proof for its revealed character:

How can this brainless Madman (*mashugga'*) claim that the sanctified book (of the Torah) is distorted, whereas it is meticulous in all of its numerous grammatical structures whose preciseness was not achieved by any other book in any nation or language.²⁷

Ibn Adret begins a more detailed discussion of Ibn Ḥazm's arguments in relation to the latter's claim that since the Hebrew Bible is attributing immoral behavior to some of its main characters it must have been rewritten by a mocking redactor.²⁸ In particular Ibn Adret refers to Ibn Ḥazm's critique of

see Raphael Jospe, "Ramban (Nahmanides) and Arabic" (Heb.), *Tarbiz*, 57 (1987-88), pp. 67-93.

25 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 1 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, 115).

26 For the concept of *i'jāz al-qur'ān*, cf. *EP*, vol. 3, pp. 1018-1020, s.v. *i'jāz* (G. E. v. Grunebaum); Angelika Neuwirth, "Das islamische Dogma der 'Unnachahmlichkeit des Korans' in literaturwissenschaftlicher Sicht", *Der Islam*, 60 (1983), pp. 166-183.

27 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 3 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, 118).

28 On Ibn Ḥazm's claim that the Hebrew Bible contradicts the Islamic belief that the prophets are immune from error and sin, see Pulcini, *Exegesis*, pp. 59-64.

the Genesis narratives about Judah having sex with Tamar, his daughter-in-law (Genesis 38), and about Reuben having intercourse with Bilhah, the mother of his brothers Dan and Naphtali (Genesis 35:22, 25).

I quote here from the *Kitāb al-faṣl* itself to illustrate Ibn Ḥazm's argumentation:

By God, I have never seen a people which, while acknowledging the (idea of) prophethood, ascribes to the prophets what those infidels ascribe to them!

Once they attribute to Abraham, peace be with him, that he was married to his sister (i.e. Sarah, cf. Genesis 12:13, 19; 20:2, 12), who bore him Isaac, peace be with him. Then they attribute to Jacob that he married one woman (i.e., Rachel, cf. Genesis 29:20-21), but that another woman who was not his wife (i.e., Leah, cf. Genesis 29:23) was brought to him secretly and that she (i.e., Leah) bore him children from whom Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, and other prophets, peace be with them, are descended.

Then they attribute to Reuben, the son of Jacob, that he fornicated with his foster mother (i.e. Bilhah), who was the wife of his father, the prophet, and the mother of two of his brothers (i.e., Dan and Naphtali, cf. Genesis 35:22, 25).²⁹

As Ibn Ḥazm stresses in this context, these and other stories about incest and adultery would mean that many biblical prophets, priests and kings – most of them considered "prophets" by Islam – had, in fact, an illegitimate genealogy:

God forbid that Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon (...) would come from such birth. This necessarily proves that the Torah of the Jews is an apocryphal work, invented by a heretic.³⁰

In Shlomo Ibn Adret's tract we find only an abridged version of Ibn Ḥazm's reasoning:

At the beginning of his stupidity he (i.e. the "Muslim") says that he found it insulting that the book (i.e., the Torah) ascribes to Judah having fornicated with his daughter-in-law (and that the Torah ascribes) to

29 *Kitāb al-faṣl*, vol. 1, p. 147; cf. the Spanish translation by Asín Palacios, *Abentházm*, vol. 2, pp. 283-284.

30 *Kitāb al-faṣl*, vol. 1, p. 140; cf. the Spanish translation by Asín Palacios, *Abentházm*, vol. 2, p. 274.

Reuben having fornicated with the mother of his brothers Dan and Naphtali. These are his words.³¹

It seems that Ibn Adret had no complete text of Ibn Ḥazm's *Izḥār* in front of him, since he claims the "Muslim's" Bible critique would have started with the story about Judah and Tamar. Anyway, Ibn Adret's refutation is not aimed at the Muslim scholar writing two centuries earlier, but at Jewish contemporaries who might be tempted by a similar rationalizing, as Ibn Adret makes clear:

Although it is improper "to answer an idiot in accord with his folly" (Proverbs 26:4), all the more it is easy for everybody, including babies, to respond to him, I, nevertheless, respond to him, so that somebody following him "will not consider himself wise" (Proverbs 26:5), and the truth may enlighten his way.³²

Later Ibn Adret comes back to the stories about Judah and Tamar, and Reuben and Bilhah, and tries to defend their being a part of the revealed text of the Torah in the following, apologetic way:

This question does not oblige us at all to give an answer. And it should be sufficient that we know that all this was (revealed) by God, blessed be He, to Moses, peace be with him. And we do not necessarily have to know why, as we are not obliged to know why (God) forbade the (eating of) pork (...). It should suffice us that we truly know that they (i.e., the commandments) have not been given in vain, and that there is nothing idle in the words of God.³³

Besides asserting the authority of the revealed text, Ibn Adret claims, that most of the narratives in the Torah have an educational purpose, which he derives from the simple meaning of the text, consciously avoiding the use of allegorization which he is opposing, as will be shown later. For Ibn Adret, the story about Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19:30-38) teaches moderation in drinking wine. "Since it was his drinking that caused Lot to do this disgrace, notwithstanding the fact, that the fornication happened for a great purpose, namely the (ongoing) existence of the world".³⁴ For Ibn Adret, even this story of doubtful morality has an educational aim.

31 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 1 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 115).

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 7-8 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 127).

34 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 8 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 128).

The teaching of the story about Judah and Tamar would be even more obvious. It came to oblige the reader to fulfill the law of *yibbum*, the levirate marriage, a regulation according to which somebody should marry the wife of his brother if he had died childless. As it is known, Onan, the brother of 'Er, Tamar's deceased husband, refused to produce offspring with her, and therefore she had to find another way to have a child with one of the close relatives of her late husband, namely, her father-in-law.

Concerning the narrative about Reuben having intercourse with Bilhah, Ibn Adret goes much further, with the effect that he denies its having taken place: using an interpretation already found in Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 55b, Ibn Adret claims that Reuben only brought Bilha's bed into disorder, but did not really have sex with her. Thereby he vented his anger towards his father Jacob, who had left his mother Leah in favor of the midwife Bilhah.³⁵

According to Ibn Adret, these seemingly immoral narratives are no proof that the Jewish Bible has been reworked by some mocking redactor. On the contrary, they show its unaltered character, since no king would have tolerated stories casting doubts on his genealogy, if they were not considered part of a sacrosanct text.

All the men of religion taught that the Torah in its entirety was received by our master Moses, peace be with him, from the Almighty on Sinai and was transmitted to the People of Israel. We have not heard any-one of the adherents of the other religions question this or deny these principles. The Christians and Muslims all agree on this without anyone disputing it.

You, human being, open your eyes and look: If this was put into the book (of the Torah) from the mouth of our master, Moses, peace be with him, then it is true. But, if it was added to it later, how may our king David, and all the kings descending from the (same) dynasty, have tolerated that it is written in the book, saying explicitly, that he was born from fornication, and they did not erase it?³⁶

For Ibn Adret, David would have had a strong interest in erasing the stories about Lot and his daughters and Judah and Tamar, since both dubious relations were a part of his genealogy.³⁷

35 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 9 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 130).

36 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 2 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, pp 116-117).

37 According to Genesis 19:37, Mo'ab was the son of Lot's elder daughter; and the Moabite

Another argument against the alleged distortion of the Hebrew Bible is the consistency of its transmission, as Ibn Adret stresses:

If someone should claim, that all this has been added to the book (of the Torah) (...) after the destruction of the (First) Temple, every reasonable person, and anyone having a brain in his head, should reason, whether it was possible to gather all the books (of the Torah) in the possession of the Israelites, "from the East to the West and from the North to the South" (Psalm 107:3), and to distort them in the same way, without a single one escaping, that would be different from the other in a matter, or in just one word?³⁸

Moreover, also the Christians (a few exceptions notwithstanding) accept the text of the Bible as transmitted by the Jews:

Even the Christians, who precede the Muslim nation (...) and question us until there is nothing left that we can respond to them, responded to this (claim of distortion). Without any doubt, the Christian nation is much more learned in the Holy Scriptures, i.e., the book of the Torah, including all the Prophets, and the Scriptures, than the Muslim nation is. Inquire, whether they, who preceded (the Muslims), found this (alleged) distortion and whether they, who are a great number, were aware, that any kind (of distortion) is to be found in all the Holy Scriptures. If this really were the case, they doubtlessly would have discovered it.³⁹

Ibn Adret's allusion to the Christian-Jewish disputations sheds light on the background of the *Ma'amar 'al Yishma'el*. In my opinion, Ibn Adret does not refute the Muslim scholar who wrote two centuries before in order to rebuke him alone, but aims at contemporary Christian-Jewish debates. As the acknowledgement that Jews and Christians agree (in general) concerning the text of the Bible shows, the alleged distortion is not the main concern of Ibn Adret. But, most contentious is the doctrine of abrogation, to be found in Christian and Muslim polemics against Judaism similarly.⁴⁰

Ruth is supposed to be one of David's ancestors, see Ruth 1:4-5; 4:13-22. For David as a descendant of Judah and Tamar, see II Chronicles 2:4-5, 9-15.

38 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 2 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 117).

39 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 2 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 117-118).

40 Interestingly, already Sa'adyah Ga'on was aware, that Islam and Christianity know the concept of abrogation; see above note 11, and Daniel Lasker, "The Jewish Critique of Christianity under Islam in the Middle Ages", *PAAJR*, 57 (1991), pp. 121-153, esp. p. 124.

Another polemical treatise authored by Ibn Adret and directed against a Christian scholar,⁴¹ whose arguments have certain similarities with those of the most famous contemporary Christian polemicists against Judaism, i.e., the Dominican friar Ramón Martí and the Franciscan Ramón Llull,⁴² shows that Ibn Adret was very well aware of the Christian version of the idea of abrogation. There, Ibn Adret argues that all of the three religions (called by him *ummatot*), Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, agree that the revelation received by Moses was genuine and true. But two of these *ummatot*, i.e., Christianity and Islam, claim that certain biblical commandments have only a time-bound validity. As Ibn Adret puts it, Christianity knows three categories of commandments: Commandments of the first category are interpreted as "allegories (*meshalim*) and metaphors (*dimyonot*)" as the prohibition of plowing with an ox and an ass and the prohibition to consume non-ruminants. Commandments of the second category, as the sacrifices, are preserved in their literal meaning, but the Christians "have placed a time limit with them (...) and decreed that they are types (*surot*) to allude the future", as in the case of the sacrifices. And with the advent of Jesus "the allusion and the analogy are revealed and the allegory and the type are *abrogated*". According to Ibn Adret, a third category of commandments is preserved by Christianity without any time limit, "and yet they replaced in them elements".⁴³ As Ibn Adret explains, in Christianity Shabbat has become Sunday, circumcision has been replaced by baptism and the priestly garments of the Temple service

41 This treatise was included in the same Breslau manuscript as the *Ma'amar 'al Yishma'el* and is also published by Perles, *R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adereth*, Hebrew pp. 24-56 (*Perushe aggadot la-Rashba* [repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, pp. 159-221]). The treatise has many commonalities with Ibn Adret's commentary on the *Aggadah* of the Talmud, see below note 50.

42 That Ibn Adret is polemicalizing here against arguments very similar to those of Ramón Martí's *Pugio fidei* has been already noticed by Perles; see *ibid.*, pp. 54-56; Hebrew pp. 34-35, note 2; p. 36, note 1; p. 49, note 1; p. 52, note 1; this identification of Ibn Adret's Christian opponent has been strengthened by Jeremy Cohen, *Friars and the Jews*, pp. 156-163 (see also below note 52); furthermore, see Roth, "Forgery", pp. 225-228; Hanne Trautner-Kromann, *Shield and Sword: Jewish Polemics against Christianity and the Christians in France and Spain from 1100-1500* (Tübingen, 1993), pp. 132-138. Differing from Cohen's interpretation, Harvey J. Hames, *The Art of Conversion: Christianity and Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 2000), pp. 251-253 and 289-292, now argues that the opinions being addressed by Ibn Adret are partly those of Ramón Llull; cf. Charles Touati, "Rabbi Salomon ben Adret et le philosophe-missionnaire Catalan Raymond Lulle", *Revue des études juives (REJ)*, 155 (1996), pp. 185-189.

43 *Perushe aggadot la-Rashba*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 26 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, pp. 163-164).

were substituted by the vestments Christian priests wear during the celebration of the mass.

While Christianity teaches only a partial abrogation of biblical commandments, the *Islamic* doctrine is described by Ibn Adret in the following way:

They (i.e., the Muslims) took all (the commandments) literally, besides that they assigned them a restricted time; (and they believe it to be) the will of the Creator, blessed be He, that he may replace the whole religion or a part of it by one prophet, whenever He wishes.⁴⁴

In Islam the concept of abrogation (*naskh*), as the doctrine of *taḥrīf*, has its roots in the Qur'ān, especially in *Sūra* 2:106:

Such of Our (previous) revelations as We abrogate (*nansakhu*) or cause to be forgotten, We bring (in their place) one better or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that God is able to do all things?

Originally this verse was taken as a way to solve contradictions between different Qur'ānic verses, or between the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet. Thereby Muslim scholars developed a sophisticated system, based on linguistic, historical, legal and theological considerations, to establish which verse was revealed *later* and thereby gave the legally valid ruling. In polemical context this ruling served as a tool to explain why God had given a genuine revelation in Judaism and Christianity, finally to be superseded, i.e. abrogated, by Islam.⁴⁵ Being aware that most Jewish thinkers denied the concept of *naskh* a priori, Ibn Ḥazm argued that this concept was known already in the Bible as in later Judaism as well.⁴⁶

For our purpose it will be sufficient to read Ibn Adret's summary of Ibn Ḥazm's arguments, thereby returning to the *Ma'amar*:

This madman said furthermore: All the Jews admit that they do not (live) according to the Torah (today), for the prayers which they are obliged to perform nowadays did not oblige them in the time of their sovereignty, from the mission of Moses until the destruction of their (self-)government. Then their religion obliged them (to perform) sacrifices and (to give) tithes to the Levites. And all of these (precepts) are substituted today.⁴⁷ (...)

44 *Perushe aggadot la-Rasfiba*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 26 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 162).

45 For further details, see Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 35-41.

46 Cf. *Kitāb al-faṣl*, vol. 1, pp. 101-102; cf. the Spanish translation by Asín Palacios, *Abenházam*, vol. 2, pp. 214-217.

The madman said furthermore: The Jews admit that (their) religion was composed by their authors (i.e. the Rabbis) and their leaders. These are his words. By saying so, his intention is that (the religion) which obliges us is not from the mouth of our holy prophet, our master Moses, peace be with him, but our sages wrote this down for us according to their own opinion, i.e., the Mishnah and the Talmud. This is his madness, and he speaks like someone who has never studied a book, neither any religious book nor a book by an author with any wisdom.

Yet, it is well known, that if things are written down by a wise man the book will be of deeper meaning. And the wiser the author the deeper and more comprehensive will be his words and intentions(...). Moreover, from the profundness of his wisdom the wise man will include many meanings in a few words. Therefore the books of the Prophets are deeper and need many commentaries. The same is the case with the books of the philosophers: The books written by the earlier (philosophers) demand a lot of effort from the later scholars to understand the intention of the author and to interpret them.⁴⁸

Here, Ibn Adret is trying to explain the relation between the Written and the Oral Torah (*Torah she-be'al-pet*): Ibn Adret sees Rabbinic Judaism as a kind of commentary to the Torah. As the relatively short, but complex works written by great philosophers are followed by a vast literature of commentaries, so the Torah, composed by the greatest conceivable author, God himself, needs commentaries, making the many allusions contained in the sacred wording explicit. What Ibn Adret does not mention is that these commentaries may not always expound the original intention of the text on which it comments, but could infer into it new meanings and thereby "abrogate" a previous ruling. Emphasizing the unity of Written and Oral Torah in a traditional way, Ibn Adret denies the critical arguments of Ibn Ḥazm who points to different strata in the development of Judaism since the time of Moses.

Although Ibn Adret here criticizes the Muslim doctrine of *naskh*, the contemporary background of his argumentations seems to be the Christian-Jewish dispute: Since the mid thirteenth century Christian polemicists, as Nicholas Donin, accused Judaism of having abandoned the Biblical law in favor of the Talmud, thereby pointing to the great size of the latter in comparison to the brevity of the "Old Testament".⁴⁹ Against the same background,

47 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 18 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, p. 147).

48 *Ma'amar*, ed. Perles, Hebrew p. 20 (repr. Dimitrowsky, vol. 1, pp. 151-152).

49 See Jeremy Cohen, *Friars and the Jews*, pp. 67-68.

Ibn Adret authored a commentary on the *aggadot* (i.e. the non-legal material) of the Talmud⁵⁰ – the earliest example of this kind of commentary that has survived. Ibn Adret's work on the Rabbinic *aggadot* reacts specifically to contemporary attempts of Jewish apostates and Christian Hebraists to show that certain Talmudic legends would confirm the belief in Jesus as the Messiah.⁵¹ Ibn Adret was familiar with many of the arguments in the *Pugio fidei* ("Dagger of Faith", c. 1280), in which Ramón Martí tried to extract from Jewish sources traditions which would prove the main tenets of Christianity. Moreover, Ibn Adret may himself have debated with the Dominican friar, as Jeremy Cohen has argued.⁵²

Certainly the *Ma'amar 'al Yishma'el* documents the importance which Muslim heritage still played in Christian Spain. Ibn Adret might have seen a special challenge in Ibn Hāzim's reasoning, since the latter's *Zalirih*-convictions were quite close to his own literalist inclinations. However, Ibn Adret's true target in writing the *Ma'amar* seems to have been a rationalizing interpretation of the Bible that could pave the way for a *Christian* exegesis. Refuting the Muslim doctrines of *tahrif* (i.e., corruption) and *naskh* (i.e., abrogation) and claiming that the Jews preserved the original Mosaic Law not only in its text, but also in their correct observance, Ibn Adret argued against the Christian charge that Judaism constituted a perversion of the religion of the "Old Testament". He thereby reflected that the earlier encounter of Iberian Jewish culture with Islam had a lasting impact on its later confrontation with Christianity.⁵³ Moreover, the *Ma'amar 'al Yishma'el* has

50 It has been transmitted in excerpts in different collective works; the new edition by Leon A. Feldman, *Commentary on the Legends in the Talmud by R. Solomon ben Abraham ben Aderet* (Heb.), Jerusalem, 1991) does not include all of the traditions. Selected examples of Ibn Adret's interpretation of the Talmudic *aggadot*, together with an introduction, can be found in: Jacob Elbaum, *Medieval Perspectives on Aggadah and Midrash* (Heb.), Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 182–192.

51 For the role Nicholas Donin played in this context, see Jeremy Cohen, *Friars and the Jews*, pp. 62–74 (with further bibliography).

52 See Jeremy Cohen, "The Christian Adversary of Solomon Ibn Adret", *JQR*, 71 (1980), pp. 48–55; idem, *Friars and the Jews*, pp. 156–163; cf. Moïses Orfali Levi, "R. Solomon ibn Adret y la controversia judeo cristiana", *Sefarad*, 39 (1979 [1981]), pp. 111–120; Robert Chazan, *Diggers of Faith, Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1989), pp. 139–158. For a different opinion according to which Ibn Adret was arguing against Lull, see above note 42.

53 Cf. Joseph Dan, "The Epic of a Millennium: Judeo-Spanish Culture's Confrontations", *Judaismi*, 41 (1992), pp. 113–129, esp. p. 113, where Dan points out that the encounter "between traditional Jewish civilization and the emerging Arab-Islamic one (...) had a profound impact on the nature and the results of the subsequent clashes with Christian (...) civilizations".

to be read in the context of the inner-Jewish dispute about rationalism that started in the Provence and then spread to Spain. One of the topics of the Maimonidean controversy⁵⁴ was the inclination of philosophically-minded Jewish thinkers to interpret the Bible allegorically, an exegetical technique which – as Ibn Adret was afraid – might question the actual fulfillment of many Jewish religious precepts and thereby legitimize a Christian understanding of the Hebrew Bible.

Scholarship is still at a loss as to the source of Ibn Adret's knowledge of Ibn Hāzim's Bible criticism. As already mentioned, he seems to have had no access to the original, Arabic version of the *Izhār*. Neither can it be proven, that the rabbi living under Christian rule authored his polemic on request of coreligionists living in Muslim al-Andalus (who could have provided him with a certain knowledge about the writings of the classical Muslim scholar, as Adang suggests).⁵⁵ However, some of Ibn Hāzim's arguments were repeated by the Muslim minority in fourteenth-century Aragon, which still produced polemics against Judaism, some of them written in the vernacular *aljamiado*.⁵⁶ Ibn Adret would have been aware of these as he was of contemporary Christian arguments. By the same token, he could have familiarized himself with the rationalist arguments of Ibn Hāzim in the context of Christian-Jewish dispu-

54 On the Maimonidean controversy, see Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, pp. 288–290; Joseph Shatzmiller, "Towards a Picture of the First Controversy over Maimonides' Writings" (Heb.), *Zion*, 34 (1969), pp. 126–144; Joseph Dan, "Jewish Thought in the 13th Century: An Introduction" (Heb.), in: *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Heb.), ed. Sara O. Heller-Willensky, Moshe Idel (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 231–240; Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, "The Maimonidean Controversy", in: Daniel H. Frank, Oliver Leaman (eds.), *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 331–349 (with more bibliography); Nina Caputo, "To Kill the Thorns in the Vineyard" – a Medieval Rabbi's Argument for Diversity within Unity", *Collection de l'École Française de Rome* (2000), pp. 35–55. For more recent literature on the ban on the study of philosophy which was issued in that context, see Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Raahba's Herem on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective", *Jewish History*, 1 (1986), pp. 27–38; Ram Ben-Shalom, "The Ban Placed by the Community of Barcelona on the Study of Philosophy and Allegorical Preaching – A New Study", *REJ*, 159 (2000), pp. 387–404 (in this context, Saperstein and Ben-Shalom give different explanations for a change in Ibn Adret's position).

55 My thanks to Camilla Adang who provided me with an offprint of her article, "A Jewish Reply to Ibn Hāzim: Solomon b. Adret's Polemic against Islam", in: *Judíos y musulmanes en al-Andalus y el Magreb – Contactos intelectuales: Actas reunidas y presentadas por Maribel Fierro* (Madrid, 2002 [Collection de la casa de Velázquez, 74]), pp. 179–209. For her assumption that Ibn Adret may have written his tract for Jews living in al-Andalus, see *ibid.*, pp. 181–182.

56 See David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1996), pp. 196–198 (with more bibliography in the footnotes).

tations.⁵⁷ The interreligious polemics of medieval Spain were characterized by the phenomenon that one side picked up the arguments of the other and adapted them to its own polemical strategies.

Similarly, this specific Spanish background can be assumed for the anti-Islamic polemics of the second Jewish writer to be mentioned here: Shim'on b. Šemah Duran (the "Rashbaq", 1361–1444), who had fled after the 1391 anti-Jewish riots his native Majorca to Muslim Algiers. That Duran's refutation of Islam is rooted in the Christian-Jewish disputations can already be derived from the fact that he composed a dual polemic against Christianity and Islam. His polemical treatise was first published as a part of his *Magen avot*, which is more than a commentary on the Mishnaic tractate *Avot*, but should be rather called a philosophical work of encyclopedic character. In its separately printed form the polemical tract bears the title *Qeshet u-magen* ("Bow and Shield").⁵⁸ The first part of the *Qeshet* is a defense of Jewish law against the Christian claim that Jesus abolished the Torah.⁵⁹ In the second, anti-Islamic section,⁶⁰ Duran deals – similarly to Ibn Adret – with the alleged distortion and abrogation of the Hebrew Bible, as expressed in the opening of this part:

Now let us turn to what is possible to speak against the Muslims (*ha-Yishma'elim*), who also claim the distortion (*stirah*) of our Torah, only, that it has been abrogated (*humerah*) by the Qur'an. Although the founder of (that) religion (*maniah ha-nimus*) also told them explicitly that he was a prophet sent to them with a new Torah that cancels

57 In a similar way, it was suggested already by Baer, *History of the Jews in Spain*, vol. 1, p. 281, that Ramón Martí and the Dominican friars made use of Ibn Hāzīm's arguments. Cf. Roth, "Forgery", p. 223, who assumes that Ibn Adret "may have seen a short synopsis of Ibn Hāzīm's translated in Hebrew".

58 Ed. Livorno, 1785 (photographic reproduction, Jerusalem, 1970); a critical edition, based on the Bodleian Ms. 151, can be found in the New York University dissertation of Prosper Murciano, *Simon ben Zemah Duran, Keshet u-Magen*, microfilm publication (Ann Arbor, 1975). The anti-Islamic section was already translated into German by Moritz Steinschneider, "Islam und Judentum: Kritik des Islam von Simon Duran (1423)". *MWZ*, 7 (1880), pp. 1–48; while Steinschneider seems to have passed over the anti-Christian part in silence, since he still may have felt it to be too provocative.

59 That Shim'on b. Šemah Duran depends in the anti-Christian part of *Qeshet* on Proftat Duran's apologetic work *Keflinat ha-goyim* has been pointed out by Eleazar Gutwirth, "History and Apologetics in XVth Century Hispano-Jewish Thought", *Helmanica*, 107 (1984), pp. 231–242, there: p. 239.

60 Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, p. 2, judged this part as the only Jewish treatise criticizing Islam in detail and length, a claim which cannot be maintained anymore since the publication of Ibn Adret's *Ma'amar*.

the rest of the Torah (i.e., the preceding Torah), he believed with full belief in the prophethood of our teacher Moses, peace be with him.⁶¹

Here, only a few examples of Duran's argumentation against Islam shall be given, as they complement the points already made by Ibn Adret. As mentioned, one of Ibn Hāzīm's pseudo-historical claims against Judaism is that the Rabbis changed the divine commandments in an arbitrary manner and invented new precepts instead of the original ones given at Sinai. Duran picks up this way of argumentation and turns it against Islam:

This founder (of Islam) saw that the Torah of Moses is perfect and thought to imitate it in an even more perfect way in its details. Since he knew that the most distinguished day for prayer and repentance in Judaism is Yom Kippur and there are five prayers (recited) on it, he (i.e. Muḥammad) introduced for them five prayers daily. And because it (i.e., Yom Kippur) is a day of fasting and repentance, he introduced for them thirty days of fasting. And because the drunkard is not allowed to pray, he forbade for them the wine altogether. (...)

All this is an imitation of the Torah with some alteration (*shimut*).⁶² Relying here extensively on Maimonides,⁶³ Duran declares Islam to be an inconsistent imitation of Judaism. He attempts to show that a number of Islamic rituals have their roots in Judaism, but misunderstand the corresponding precepts. In the cases quoted, Duran seems to imply that Muḥammad undertook some kind of extremist interpretation of certain Jewish rituals by making the five prayers at Yom Kippur a daily practice or extending the single day of fasting and atonement to a whole month, the *Ramaḍān*. In the same vein, he claims that Muḥammad transformed the Jewish ruling against prayer while drunken into a general prohibition of alcoholic drinks. Furthermore, Duran points to a Jewish origin of certain Islamic dietary laws, and

61 *Qeshet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, p. 67 (I don't follow Murciano's translations). As is well known, Duran reduced Maimonides' 13 fundamental principles of Judaism to three: the belief in God, the belief in the Torah and the belief in divine retribution. In chapter VIII of his *Ohev mishpaḥ* Duran explicitly says that the second principle includes the conviction that "the Torah will never be changed or altered, for divine activity is perfect, enduring, and eternal". See the text of *Ohev mishpaḥ*, as established by Menachem Kellner, "Rabbi Shim'on ben Šemah Duran on the Principles of Judaism: *Ohev Mishpaḥ*, Chapters VIII and IX", *PAAJJR*, 48 (1981), pp. 231–265, there: p. 258.

62 *Qeshet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, p. 82.

63 Cf. his *Iggeret Temur*, ed. Halkin, Hebrew pp. 14–16 (English translation by Boaz Cohen, *ibid.*, p. iv); for Maimonides' attitudes towards Islam, see above, note 15.

argues that Islam borrowed purity laws, circumcision and pilgrimage rites from Judaism.⁶⁴ In depicting Islam as an imitation of Judaism with certain changes, Duran turns the doctrine of *tabdīl*, according to which the Jews replaced certain parts of the original Sinaitic revelation by their own inventions, against Islam itself.

Another point of Muslim Bible criticism mentioned before is the accusation of anthropomorphism – which cannot be discussed here conclusively.⁶⁵ Duran dismisses it with the well known explanation that the “Torah speaks in the language of men”.⁶⁶

Granted that our perfect Torah speaks about God, praised be He, figuratively and metaphorically (*derekh ha'avarah ve-hash' alah*) and in material ways (*be-inyanīm gashmiyim*) it is due to the necessity of language because material beings only grasp corporeal matters.⁶⁷

As in the case of the Islamic doctrine of *tahriif* and *tabdīl*, Duran turns the accusation of anthropomorphism against Islam. According to the Jewish polemicist, the Qur'ān itself does not remove the corporeality in speaking about God.⁶⁸ By criticizing Qur'ānic descriptions of the afterlife, Duran picks up a well-known topos of Christian and Jewish anti-Islamic polemics:

Concerning the reward of the souls the book (i.e., the Qur'ān) used material terms (*inyanīm gashmiyim*), as there are:
The righteous among them will enter paradise and will delight there on food and drink and on intercourse with beautiful figures, and (other) material imaginations. But the evil ones among them will forever enter Hell, a place of burning fire.

64 *Qeshet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, pp. 82–83. A similar kind of argumentation is still to be found in Abraham I. Katsh, *Judaism in Islam: Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and Its Commentaries* (Philadelphia, 1954), pp. xx–xxii.

65 Cf. Lazarus-Yafah, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 29–31. For a recent review of the research on Rabbinic attitudes towards anthropomorphism, see Yair Lorberbaum, “The Doctrine of Corporeality of God Did not Occur Even for a Single Day to the Sages, May Their Memory Be Blessed” (*The Guide of the Perplexed* 1, 46): Anthropomorphism in Early Rabbinic Literature – a Critical Review of Scholarly Research” (Heb.), *Jewish Studies*, 40 (2000), pp. 3–54 (including a rich bibliography).

66 This saying is traditionally attributed to R. Ishmael, cf. *Sifre 'al-sefer be-midbar*, 112, ed. H. S. Horowitz (Leipzig, 1917 [repr. Jerusalem, 1966]), p. 121.

67 *Qeshet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, p. 85. For Duran, incorporeality is part of the fundamental principle of Judaism, the belief in God; see chapter VIII of *Ohev mishpat*, Kellner, “Rabbi Shimon ben Šemaḥ Duran”, p. 258.

68 *Qeshet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, p. 87.

Most of their religious leaders accepted all that literally. They say that Paradise is in Heaven, a place (full of) trees and plants of taste and fragrance and (nice) appearance and rivers flowing with honey and milk and all kinds of delight. And they do not doubt it at all. But in their Torah (i.e., the Qur'ān) there is no allusion to spiritual delight at all.

All this is stolen from what he (i.e., Muhammad) heard from the interpretations of the sages (*midreshet ha-hakhamim*) on Paradise and Hell. While they do not know what Hell might be, our sages of blessed memory called it *Gehinnom* referring to (the valley of) *Ge ben Hinnom* that was near Jerusalem, where they burned the carcasses and the like (cf. Jeremiah 7:31–32).⁶⁹

Whereas a rational criticism of Islamic belief about the afterlife is very common even today, it is striking that Duran – not unconvincingly – traces it back to Jewish *Midrashim* – thereby questioning the seriousness of those traditions.⁷⁰ Yet, Abraham Geiger's famous dissertation focusing on *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (“What Muhammad took from Judaism”)⁷¹ is not the subject of this paper. To return to Duran, it is characteristic of his approach that he accuses Islam of irrational, materialistic beliefs, while he restricts the Jewish understanding of Hell to a mere reference to the “Valley of Hinnom” near Jerusalem.⁷² That Duran's criticism of Islam might be partly influenced by Christian anti-Islamic polemics is shown not only by the way he mocks Muslim beliefs concerning the afterlife. An even stronger hint of Duran's borrowing from Christian polemics is the way he depicts the Qur'ān as a composition full of confusion whose contents contradict logic – a well-known topos of Western literature about Islam.⁷³

69 *Qeshet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, p. 96. Duran echoes here Maimonides' commentary to Mishna, Sanhedrin, chapter 10, cf. *Mishna 'im perusht rabbenu Moshe ben Maimon* (ed. Yosef Qapat), Jerusalem 1965, vol. 2, p. 134.

70 This point reoccurs *ibid.*, p. 98.

71 First published in Bonn, 1833 (repr. Leipzig, 1962); English translation: *Judaism and Islam*, with a prolegomenon by Moshe Pearlman (New York, 1970).

72 While divine retribution is the third fundamental principle of Judaism according to Duran, he defines this belief with much caution: It includes the necessary corollary beliefs, “that God knows the deeds of men and rewards and punishes them according to their deeds, either in this world or in the next world, and either in the days of the Messiah or after the resurrection of the dead”; see chapter VIII of *Ohev mishpat*, Kellner, “Rabbi Shimon ben Šemaḥ Duran”, p. 258.

73 Cf. Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford, 2nd edition, 1993), pp. 77–88.

We have some other specific arguments against them (i.e. the Muslims), as I will mention:

First, they say things contradicting the Torah and logic.

Secondly, they have no proof that his (i.e., Muhammad's) prophecy or his book (i.e., the Qur'ân) are revealed (lit.: "from Heaven").

Thirdly, (the Qur'ân) itself does not seem to be revealed, since (whoever tries) to understand it gets confused – and therefore it does not qualify to be a divinely (inspired) book.

Fourthly, that it contains ideas contradicting logical reasoning.

Fifthly, it is a confused composition (*hibbur mevulbat*) without hands or feet (i.e. incoherent).⁷⁴

There is no need here to present Duran's ridiculing of the Qur'ân in detail. As already said, it seems that Duran's knowledge of Islam is rooted in Christian polemics.⁷⁵ However, it has to be doubted that Duran was able to acquire in the years he spent in Algiers a deeper understanding of Islam.

Nevertheless, Duran was conscious of a certain closeness between Islam and Judaism. He expressed this notion in the following passage:

However, as far as the perfection of the belief in God, praised be He, is concerned (there is no difference between their and our belief), because he (i.e., Muhammad) saw, that the basis of our Torah is to believe in the existence of God and that He is one. This he (i.e., Muhammad) received from us, while the Christians differ with us in regard of the oneness of God and believe in the Trinity.⁷⁶

Conclusion

The discussed Muslim anti-Jewish and Jewish anti-Muslim polemics as polemics are equally unfair and judgmental. But, aside from their polemical purpose, some of Ibn Hāzīm's critical arguments allude to problems of the biblical text pointed out also by modern Biblical criticism. Apart from his stress on the continuous transmission of the Hebrew Bible, some of Ibn

⁷⁴ *Qešet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, p. 69.

⁷⁵ In addition, he may have had access to Latin translations of al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd.

Whether Duran was influenced in his philosophical views by Ibn Rushd, is discussed by Kellner, "Rabbi Shimon ben Šemaš Duran", pp. 232, 250–251.

⁷⁶ *Qešet u-magen*, ed. Murciano, p. 84. Duran relies here on Maimonides who already expressed his view of Islam as genuinely monotheistic; for Maimonides' attitude towards Islam see above note 15.

Adret's arguments in refuting Ibn Hāzīm may strike the modern reader as mere apologetics. I argue that they are only understandable against the background of the Christian-Jewish disputations. To Ibn Adret and Duran, the Christian-Jewish dispute over the Bible was far more threatening than the Muslim claim that the Jews had altered their Scriptures. At the same time, they demonstrated that the earlier encounter of Spanish Jews with Islam had a lasting impact on their later confrontation with Christianity.

In attacking two other religions simultaneously – Judaism and Christianity in the case of Ibn Hāzīm, Islam and Christianity in the case of Ibn Adret and Duran – all three men wrote in a polemical genre rooted in the specific cultural milieu of Medieval Spain, a genre that always involved three traditions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Despite the obviously polemical foundation of their thoughts, however, all three authors adopted certain arguments of the other side thereby demonstrating some shared mode of reasoning.