

FOUNDING EDITORS

W. D. Davies[†]

L. Finkelstein[†]

ALREADY PUBLISHED

Volume 1 *Introduction: The Persian Period*

Edited by W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein

1984, 978 0 521 21880 1

Volume 2 *The Hellenistic Age*

Edited by W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein

1989, 978 0 521 21929 7

Volume 3 *The Early Roman Period*

Edited by William Horbury, W. D. Davies and John Sturdy

1999, 978 0 521 24377 3

Volume 4 *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*

Edited by Steven T. Katz

2006, 978 0 521 77248 8

Volume 6 *The Middle Ages: The Christian World*

Edited by Robert Chazan

2018, 978 0 521 51724 9

Volume 7 *The Early Modern World, 1500–1815*

Edited by Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe

2018, 978 0 521 88904 9

Volume 8 *The Modern World, 1815–2000*

Edited by Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels

2017, 978 0 521 76953 2

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JUDAISM

VOLUME V

JEWS IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WORLD

EDITED BY

PHILLIP I. LIEBERMAN

JEWISH-MUSLIM POLEMICS

HAGGAI MAZUZ

INTRODUCTION

Jewish-Muslim polemics are as old as Islam. Many Qur'anic verses challenge the Jews and Jewish ideas.¹ The earliest debates between Jews and Muslims took place between the Jews of Medina and Khaybar, on the one hand, and Muhammad and his disciples, on the other. The only sources that describe the disputations between Jews and Muhammad are Islamic. For example, in several places, the Qur'an criticizes Jewish ideas about the afterlife. Qur'an 2:94 states: "Say: 'If the Last Abode with Allah is yours exclusively, and not for other people, then long for death – if you speak truly.'"² This verse indicates that some Jews – like the talmudic sages – believed that the afterlife exists and is meant for the Jews alone. Elsewhere it is stated (3:77): "There shall be no share for them in the world to come (*lā khilāfa lahum fī al-ākhirā*) – a statement that appears to reject the talmudic perception expressed, inter alia, in Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 90a: "All Israel has a portion in the Hereafter" (*kol Yisra'el yesh lahenn yeshet la' olam ha-ba*). Other verses (2:80 and 3:24) criticize the Jewish belief that Jews who are sent to hell will spend only a few days there. While these verses do not specify the length of time that Jews must spend in hell, they do seem to clash with the talmudic belief in Talmud Bavli Shabbat 98a that the maximum sojourn is twelve months.

Another issue of Jewish-Muslim polemics that appears in the Qur'an is the cessation of prophecy. Verse 5:19 reads: "People of the Book, now there has come to you Our messenger, making things clear to you, upon an interval between the messengers lest you should say, 'There has not come to us any bearer of good tidings, neither any warner.'"³ This verse seems to attack the talmudic view expressed in several places that the prophetic era ended after the destruction of the First Temple and that upon the death of

the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit deserted Israel (Talmud Yerushalmi, Sotah 45b; Tosetfa Sotah 13:4; Talmud Bavli, Yoma 9b; Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 11a).

Furthermore, several verses in the Qur'an (2:75; 4:46; 5:13, 41) accuse the Jews of altering the words of the Torah, falsifying it, and taking its statements out of context.⁴ This accusation brings to mind the pattern that characterized the talmudic sages. They used the Oral Law (*Torah she-be-al peh*) to interpret the Written Law, often revising a literal reading of the biblical text to derive laws that allegedly deviated from the literal meaning.

In addition, the *sīra* and *hadith* literatures describe many disputes concerning religious matters between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina and Khaybar, mainly because the latter refused to acknowledge the former as a prophet.⁵ The strong rejection of Islam by the Medinan and Khaybari Jews was also manifested in the following statement attributed to Muhammad: "If ten of the Jews would believe in me, the rest of the Jews would believe in me [too]" (*lau āmana bi' ashara min al-yahūd la āmana bi' al-yahūd*).⁶ Eventually, they were exiled and many of them were executed.

EARLY WORKS

The earliest anti-Islamic polemical aspects in Jewish sources appear in three eighth-century works from the Land of Israel. The attitude of *Pinqet de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* (*PRE*) toward Ishmael – ancestor of Muhammad and the Arabs in Islamic and Jewish eyes⁷ – is ambivalent, alternately

¹ See further, *Et*, s.v. "Taḥrīf" (Hava Lazarus-Yafeh).

² See Hartwig Hirschfeld, "Historical and Legendary Controversies between Mohammed and the Rabbits," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 10, 1 (1897), 100–116; Haggai Mazuz, *The Religious and Spiritual Life of the Jews of Medina* (Leiden, 2014), especially chapters 2 and 3.

³ Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 9 vols. (Cairo, 1950), 5:38. Cf. Muslim b. Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1955), 4:2151 (section 503:33).

⁴ On the exile of the Banū Qaynuqa', see Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī, *Kināh al-Maghāzī*, 3 vols. (London, 1966), 1:176–80; 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1987), 3:9–10. On the exile of the Banū al-Nadīr, see al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1:374–75. On the Banū Qurayza, see Meir Jacob Kister, "The Massacre of the Banū Qurayza: A Re-examination of a Tradition," *Jewish Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986), 61–96.

⁵ On Ishmael as the progenitor of the Arabs and on the Arab genealogy and its *problématique* in tracing the historical origins of Ishmael and the Arabs in the biblical period, see Israel Eph'al, "Ishmael' and 'Arab(s)': A Transformation of Ethnological Terms," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 35, 4 (1976), 225–35.

¹ See Haggai Mazuz, "Thoughts on Qur'anic Evidence for the Religious Nature of the Qur'anic Jews," *Revue des études juives* 181, 2 (forthcoming, 2022).

² Translation taken from *The Koran Interpreted*, ed. Arthur J. Arberry (London, 1964).

depicting him as a beloved son and as marginalized and rejected, *Pereq Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai* apparently takes the latter approach for anti-Islamic polemical reasons, to emphasize Isaac's supremacy and in turn that of the Jewish religion over Islam. Thus it describes the Ishmaelites pejoratively.⁸

In *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Genesis 22:1, there is a debate between Ishmael and Isaac regarding the succession of Abraham. While Ishmael claims the right of the firstborn, Isaac replies: "I am son of Sarah, his wife, and you are son of Hagar, the slave-girl of my mother."⁹ This may be a counterattack against Qur'an 3:67: "No Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim and one pure of faith."

Polemical references toward Islam also appear in *Pereq Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai*, a Jewish text that presents the Arab conquest. Hosea 9:7 reads: "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come! Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool (Hebrew, *evul*), the man of the spirit (*ish ba-ruah*) is mad (*meshuga*), for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred." *Pereq Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai* associates the word "fool" (but uses the word *shoreh*) and "man of the spirit," with Muhammad.¹⁰ This association inspired many later Jewish authorities who debated with Islam, although they used the word *meshuga* to describe Muhammad.¹¹

COMMON ISLAMIC ARGUMENTS

Early Islamic writers made three common arguments against Judaism. Jewish authors did not respond to all Islamic polemical arguments in the same measure and frequency.

1. The Jews falsified and changed parts of their own scriptures (*tahriif tawhidi*).¹² Notably, *tahriif* has several forms and expressions. One of them is ascribing physical characteristics to God – that is, anthropomorphism (*tajsim al-tashbih*),¹³ although such imagery appears in the Qur'an itself. Another is attributing sins to the Jewish patriarchs, who are considered prophets in the Islamic tradition.¹⁴ Jewish thought allows no possibility of a perfect individual; it regards all human beings, including the patriarchs, as prone to sin: "Surely there is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and sins not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). By contrast, most Muslim theologians attribute to the prophets – at least once they have begun their mission – a characteristic that they call "infallibility" (*ismā*).¹⁵ Another argument related to *tahriif* is that the chain of transmission of Jewish scriptures is unreliable and had no sequence (*ta'witi*).¹⁶ Along the way, changes (*tughyir*) were made to the original text.

2. The Torah and the laws of Judaism have been abrogated (*naskh*) and replaced by the Qur'an and the laws of Islam.¹⁷

3. The Bible alludes to Muhammad's advent and Muslim polemicists referred to them as "evidence/signs of prophethood" (*dalā'il alā l-īm al-nubuwa*).¹⁸ These polemicists were specifically drawn to four biblical verses (Genesis 17:20, Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, and 33:2); one may find them or their paraphrases in almost every anti-Jewish polemical Islamic tract:

i. Muslim polemicists argue that the words *bi-me'od me'od* ("very-very," i.e., exceedingly) in Genesis 17:20 that refer to Ishmael allude to Muhammad's

⁸ See Joseph Heinemann, *Legends and Their Development* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1961), 196–99; Carol Bakhts, *Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab* (Albany, 2006), 96–128. On the polemical aspects of this composition, see Avigdor Schussman, "Abraham's Visits to Ishmael: The Jewish Origin and Orientalization [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 49, 3–4 (1980), 325–45.

⁹ David Rieder, ed., *Pseudo-Jonathan: Targum Jonathan ben Uziel on the Pentateuch Copied from the London Ms. (British Museum Add. 27031)* (Jerusalem, 1974), 39. See further, Moïse Ohana, "La polémique judéo islamique et l'image d'Ismâ'el dans Targum Pseudo-Jonathan et dans Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer," *Augustinianum* 15 (1975), 367–83; Amnon Shapira, "Traces of an Anti-Islamic Polemic in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Story of the Akedah" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 54 (1983), 293–96. For a different view, see Robert Hayward, "Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Anti-Islamic Polemic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34 (1989), 77–93.

¹⁰ *Pereq Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai* in Solomon Aaron Wertheimer, ed., *Bnei Midrash*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1894), 2:25. Cf. *Tefillat Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai* in Adolf Jellinek, ed., *Beit ha-Midrash*, 6 vols. (Jerusalem, 1967), 4:119.

¹¹ The first was Sherita Ga'on (906–1006) in his *Epistle*. See Benjamin Lewin, ed., *Aggadat Rav Sherita Gaon* (Haifa, 1921), 100. On derogatory words for Islam and Muslim used by Jews, see Yitzhak Avishur, "Hebrew Derogatory Terms for Gentiles and Jews in Jewish Arabic in the Medieval Era and Their Metamorphoses," in Yaakov Bertollla, ed., *Hadash ha-Jubilee Volume: Research Papers on Hebrew Linguistics and Jewish Languages* (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, 1997), 97–116.

¹² See Lazarus-Yafeh, "Tahriif," III–12.

¹³ E.g., Abū Muḥammad 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *al-Radd 'alā Ibn al-Naghrila al-Yahūdī wa-Rasā'il Ukhra*, ed. Ihsan 'Abbās (Cairo, 1960), 70.

¹⁴ E.g., *ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵ Moshe Zucker, "The Problem of 'ismat al-Anbiyā' – Prophetic Immunity to Sin and Error – in Islamic and Jewish Literatures" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 35 (1966), 149–73; Eḏ, s.v. "ismā" (Wilfred Madelung and Émile Tyan); Meir M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Ismā'īlī Shi'ism* (Leiden, 1999), 159–80.

¹⁶ Eḏ, s.v. "Tawatur" (G. H. A. Juybolli). Note that this same word has a different meaning in the context of *hadith* criticism.

¹⁷ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, 1992), 35–41; Eḏ, s.v. "Naskh" (John Burton).

¹⁸ See Sarah Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy: The Emergence of an Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 78 (1985), 101–14. See further, Sabine Schmidtke, "The Muslim Reception of Biblical Materials: Ibn Qutayba and His *Al'im al-nubuwa*," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, 3 (2011), 249–74; Haggai Mazuz, "Jerusalem vs. Mecca in Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb Al'im al-nubuwa*," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 29, 2 (2018), 195–99.

future advent because their *gematria* (the sum obtained by adding the numerical values of the Hebrew letters) is equal to that of Muḥammad's name (92).¹⁹

ii. Deuteronomy 18:15 reads: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet in your midst, from among your brethren like myself; him you shall heed." Later on in the chapter, a similar verse appears: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee; [I] will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). Muslim polemicists argue that the phrases "from among your brethren" and "from among their brethren" refer to Muḥammad.²⁰

iii. Deuteronomy 33:2 reads: "And he [Moses] said, the Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten tens of thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." This verse, the Muslim polemicists claim, alludes to Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad: Sinai to Moses, Seir to Jesus, and Paran to Muḥammad.²¹ Their explanation is that Paran is Mecca.²²

In addition to these three arguments in the Islamic literature against Judaism, the doctrine of the inimitability of the Qur'ān (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*) should be noted, suggesting its primacy as the true divine revelation which all should follow.²³

RABBANTES IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

From the ninth century onward, adherents of both faiths in the Near East (but not only) produced polemical and apologetic literature – though much more was produced from the Islamic perspective than from the Jewish. Interreligious debates continued throughout the medieval period and up to modern times – though my discussion here extends only from the rise of Islam to the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492.

¹⁹ E.g., Samaw'al al-Maghribī, *Iḥṣān al-Yahūd – Silencing the Jews*, ed. and trans. Moshe Perlmann, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 32 (1964), 8–9 [Arabic], 33–74 [English], at 3–32 [Arabic] and 46–47 [English]; Samaw'al al-Maghribī's (d. 570/1175), *Iḥṣān al-Yahūd: The Early Reversion*, ed. Ibrahim Marashli, Reza Pourjavady, and Sabine Schmidtke (Wiesbaden, 2006), 26.

²⁰ E.g., Abū Ḥatīm Ajmad b. Ḥamdān al-Rāzī, *Al'ilm al-Nubuwwa* (Tehran, 1977), 199. E.g., *ibid.*

²¹ On the development of this idea and its Jewish origins, see Haggai Mazuz, "Possible Jewish Influence on a Common Islamic Commentary on Deuteronomy 18," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 67, 2 (2016), 291–304.

²² See *Et*, s.v. "I'jāz" (Gustave E. von Grunbaum).

Jews often focused on apologetic rather than polemical writing – focusing inward rather than outward.²⁴ Further, writing is rarely devoted to polemical topics alone; references to polemic, explicit or implicit, are spread in literary texts in disciplines as varied as philosophy, theology, responsa, and poetry.

It seems likely that anti-Islamic polemics were thin because Islamic law prescribes capital punishment for those who offend Islam and especially Muḥammad.²⁵ Thus, Jews refrained from public debates with Muslims in matters of faith.²⁶ Two examples of this reticence may be found in the epistles of Moses Maimonides (1138–1204). In one, Maimonides wrote to Obadiah the Proselyte: "[The Ishmaelites'] error and foolishness is in other things that cannot be put in writing because of the renegades and wicked among Israel [i.e., apostates]."²⁷ These "other things," in all probability, were polemical issues and his reference to Jewish "renegades and wicked" suggests a fear of Jewish denouncers who might translate Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic texts that criticize Islam into Arabic and reveal them to the Islamic authorities. In his *Iggeret Teiman* (*Epistle to Yemen*), Maimonides warns Jacob b. Nathaniel al-Fayūmī (twelfth century), the leader of the Yemenite Jewish community, against allowing the epistle to fall into the hands of apostates who might disclose its anti-Islamic contents to the authorities.²⁸ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh notes: "This was probably the result not only of fear, but also of the simple fact that since the Qur'ān was a later Scripture than the Bible, it posed no real theological problem for Jews, in contrast to the problem the Bible posed for Muslims."²⁹

Se'adyah Ga'on (882–942) was the first Jewish thinker to engage in a systematic polemic with Islam, although he never wrote an exclusive treatise on the subject.³⁰ In the third chapter of his *Kitāb al-Amānāt*

²⁴ For exceptions, see David E. Sklare, "Responses to Islamic Polemics by Jewish Munkalimūn in the Tenth Century," in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Mark R. Cohen, Sasson Somekh, and Sidney H. Griffith, eds., *The Muslim Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam* (Wiesbaden, 1999), 137–61.

²⁵ On the punishment for denigrating Muḥammad, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge, 2003), 149–52.

²⁶ See Simon b. Šemaḥ Duran, *Qešet u-Magen* (Jerusalem, 1970), 25b. See further, Shaul Regav, "The Attitude towards Islam in the Yemenite Philosophical Literature" [Hebrew], *Teiman* 7 (2001), 17–28, at 17.

²⁷ Moses Maimonides, *Responsa*, ed. Joshua Blau, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1960), 2:726 (#448).
²⁸ Moses Maimonides, *Epistle to Yemen: The Arabic Original and the Three Hebrew Versions*, ed. Abraham S. Halkin, trans. Boaz Cohen (New York, 1952), 106.

²⁹ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Interrupted Worlds*, 149–50.

³⁰ On his life and work, see *Et*, s.v. "Sa'adya Gaon" (Haggai Ben-Shammai).

wa-l-ṭiqādāt (*Book of Beliefs and Opinions*), Se'adyah debated at length the doctrine of *naskh* and alleged contradictions in the biblical text.³² Within this debate he also refers to the *a'lam al-mubawwā* issue, asking how those who claim in favor of the *naskh* of the Torah can use its verses as a proof for the authenticity of their religion, referring to the Muslims without mentioning them by name. Then he immediately explains that Seir and Paran were additional names for Mount Sinai, refuting the claim that Deuteronomy 33:2 referred to the future advent of Muhammad and that Paran was Mecca.³² In addition, to sidestep Muslim criticism of anthropomorphic expressions ascribed to God in the Bible, he translates difficult phrases using expressions like *nūr Allah* (the light of God).³³

Samuel b. Hophni Ga'on (d. 1013) dedicated a work against the claim of abrogation of Mosaic Law, titled *Kitāb Naskh al-Shar'* (*Book of Abrogation of the Law*).³⁴ This ten-chapter work was a response to the query of a Muslim sage and Samuel confronts the argument of prominent contemporary Muslim theologians at length. One of the arguments that Samuel dismisses is that the Jewish tradition is not reliable since Nebuchadnezzar killed most of the Jewish people and burned all the copies of the Torah and that the Torah as it exists now was written by Ezra the Scribe.³⁵ Interestingly, a similar argument appears in 'Alī b. Ahmad b. Ḥazm's (994–1064)³⁶ *al-Radd 'alā Ibn al-Naghrīla al-Yahūdī*.³⁷ He also goes to the trouble of handling the issue of *isnād*.³⁸

Judah Ha-Levi (1075–1141),³⁹ in his *Kitāb al-Radd wa-l-Dalīl fī al-Dīn al-Dhālīl* (*Book of Refutation and Proof in Defense of the Despised Faith*), known also as the *Kūzari*, briefly debated with the concept of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān*.⁴⁰ In his poetry, Ha-Levi uses Sarah and Hagar to polemical intent.⁴¹ Sarah, the lady, represents the Jewish nation, while Hagar, the slave-girl, represents Islamdom. The purpose of this use was to humiliate and denigrate the Arabs' origin.

Abraham Ibn Da'ūd's (1110–80)⁴² philosophical work, *al-Aqīda al-Kafī'a* (*The Exalted Faith*), was lost. However, two of its translations into Hebrew remained and they carry the titles *Ha-Emunah ha-Ramab* (*Ha-Emunah ha-Nis'a'ah*). This work includes a long and detailed refutation of two of the *a'lam al-mubawwā* (Deuteronomy 18:18, 33:2), the *isnād*, and the claim that the chain of transmission of the Torah is weak.⁴³ Ibn Da'ūd may also have responded to Ibn Ḥazm's accusation of Ezra the Scribe in falsifying the Bible after the Babylonian exile: he claims that the Jews had access to the Torah throughout the Babylonian exile in every place where they settled and even if Ezra had altered the Torah, he asks how the people could have agreed to these alterations – especially since Ezra was in Babylonia and the majority of the Jews lived far away. In addition, the universal Jewish agreement as to the exclusive version of the biblical text points to its accuracy.⁴⁴ Ibn Da'ūd also speaks highly of Moses and his virtues;⁴⁵ Moses, in Islamic tradition, represents the Jewish religion – often referred to as “the religion of

³² Se'adyah Ga'on al-Fayyūmī, *Kitāb al-Mubtahir fī al-Amūnāt wa-l-ṭiqādāt*, trans. and annot. Yosef Qāṭhī (Jerusalem, 1970), 131–49.

³³ Ibid., 137.

³⁴ See further, Miriam Goldstein, “Sa'adya's *Tafsīr* in light of Muslim Polemic against Ninth-Century Arabic Bible Traditions,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2009), 173–99, at 183–93. For examination of some apologetic and polemical aspects in Se'adyah's commentary on the Bible, see Andrew Rippin, “Sa'adya Gaon and Jewish Aspects of Jewish-Muslim Interaction and Polemic,” in William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *Studies in Islamic and Jewish Traditions II: Papers Presented at the Institute for Islamic-Jewish Studies* (Atlanta, 1986), 33–46; Joshua Blau, “Did the Gaon Intend His Translation of the Pentateuch for Muslims Too?” [Hebrew], *Mesorah le-Yiḥyā* 7 (2012), 475–87.

³⁵ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. “Samuel ben Hophni Gaon” (Roni Shwela); David E. Sklare, *Samuel ben Hophni Gaon and His Cultural World: Texts and Studies* (Leiden, 1996), 28–29; Sklare, “Responses to Islamic Polemics,” 146–50.

³⁶ On Ibn Ḥazm's work, see *EF*, s.v. “Ibn Ḥazm” (Roger Arnaldez).

³⁷ Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Radd 'alā Ibn al-Naghrīla*, 77. On his accusation of Ezra in *isnād*, see Martin Whittingham, “Ezra as the Corrupter of the Torah: Re-assessing Ibn Ḥazm's Role in the Long History of an Idea,” *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1 (2010), 253–71.

³⁸ Zuckerman, “The Problem of *Isnād al-Aḥbāb*,” 153–56.

³⁹ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. “Judah (Abū 'l-Ḥasan) ben Samuel ha-Levi” (Raymond Scheindlin).

⁴⁰ Judah Ha-Levi, *Kitāb al-Radd wa-l-Dalīl fī al-Dīn al-Dhālīl (al-Kitāb al-Kūzari)*, trans. and annot. Yosef Qāṭhī (Qiryat Ono, 1997), 7–9 (part 1, sections 5–10).

⁴¹ Nehemya Allony, *Studies in Medieval Philology and Literature: Collected Papers IV: Hebrew Medieval Poetry* [Hebrew], prepared for publication by Yosef Tobi, consulting ed. Shelomo Morag (Jerusalem, 1991), 20–28.

⁴² On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. “Ibn Da'ūd, Abraham ben David ha-Levi” (Lola Ferre).

⁴³ Yehuda Eisenberg, ed., *Emunah Ramab: Hebrew Translation from the Arabic by Shelomo Lani and Shemuel Mount* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1987), 39–51; Abraham Ibn Da'ūd, *Sefer ha-Emunah ha-Ramab*, trans. Solomon Ibn Lavi/Sefer ha-Emunah ha-Nis'a'ah, trans. Samuel Ibn Maṭīṭ [The Anonymous Commentary to Ha-Emunah ha-Ramab], ed. and annot. Amira Eran (Jerusalem, 2019), 562–77. See further, Theresia Anna Maria Fontaine, *In Defence of Judaism: Abraham ibn David. Sources and Structure of ha-Emunah ha-Ramab* (Assen, 1990); Resianne Fontaine, “Abraham Ibn David's Polemics against Muslims and Christians,” in Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis, and Pim Valkenberg, eds., *The Three Rings: Textual Studies in the Historical Triologue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Leuven, 2005), 19–34, 22–29, 32–33.

⁴⁴ *Emunah Ramab*, 43–47.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27, 135.

Moses" (*dinshari at Mūsā*).⁴⁶ By venerating Moses, Ibn Da'ūd indirectly rules out any other non-Jewish prophet.

Maimon b. Joseph the Dayyan (c. 1100–66)⁴⁷ wrote his *Iggeret ha-Nehmad* (*Epistle of Consolation*) in 1160 when he escaped the Almohads in order to comfort the Jews forcibly converted to Islam. This work has a hidden polemical message. Maimon venerates Moses frequently in order to reject the claim of *nash*. His logic is as follows: since Moses is "the best among creatures" (*khayr makhluq*) and "the most respected among the messengers" (*ajall mursul*), and received the Torah, it would not make sense for God to replace it⁴⁸ – that is, to send another prophet or scripture (referring to Muhammad and the Qur'ān). Moses is also called, inter alia, "the chosen (*al-muṣṭafā*) among mankind" and "master of mankind" (*sayyid al-bashar*).⁴⁹ titles exclusively reserved for Muhammad in Islamic sources.⁵⁰ He gives Daniel the title "the seal [of the prophets]" (*al-khātam*),⁵¹ an additional title Islamic tradition reserved for Muhammad alone.⁵² These ideas were meant to disqualify the Islamic arguments regarding the superiority of Islam and its founder. Maimon devoted one sentence alone to *tabi'if*, explaining that there is no lie, doubt, or mixture in what God sent (i.e., the Torah).⁵³

Having himself been a victim of forced conversion, Moses Maimonides gave significant attention to polemics against Islam.⁵⁴ In the second half of

the twelfth century, Jacob al-Fayyūmī, the leader of the Jewish community in Yemen, sent a letter to Maimonides to seek his guidance in the face of forced conversions imposed on his community. In response, Maimonides sent him an epistle known as *Iggeret Teiman* that addressed the vicissitudes that beset the Yemenite Jews, and refuted arguments by an anonymous Jewish apostate referred to by Maimonides as *poshe'a* (lit. criminal),⁵⁵ in favor of recognizing Muhammad as a true prophet. This apostate challenged Yemenite Jews by presenting quotes from the Torah (Genesis 17:20, Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, and 33:2) that Muslims considered evidence of the future emergence of Islam and Muhammad.⁵⁶ In *Iggeret Teiman* (as elsewhere), Maimonides also attacks the claim of *tabi'if*, saying that the Bible was translated into many languages centuries before the advent of Muhammad, whom here he calls "invalid" (*pasul*), and despite its wide distribution there are no differences in the text at all.⁵⁷ The choice of the word *pasul* for describing Muhammad stems from a play on the Arabic word messenger (*rasul*), one of Muhammad's appellations in Islamic sources. Notably, Maimonides uses the derogatory madman (Hebrew, *meshuga*) in *Iggeret Teiman* several times to describe Muhammad.⁵⁸

Maimonides also parries the claims of many polemical Islamic arguments in part of his *Commentary on the Mishnah* where he discusses the thirteen principles of faith. His third principle undermines the accusation of *tajsim*, stating that God is non-corporeal and that God is not affected by any physical events.⁵⁹ The seventh principle is the superiority of Moses' prophethood and its veracity,⁶⁰ indirectly ruling out any other religion, thus rejecting the doctrines of *nash* and *tabi'if*. In the eighth principle, Maimonides states: "All the Torah that we have in our hands today is the Torah given to Moses, and all of it emanated from God – namely, all of it reached [Moses] through God" – in which he includes

⁴⁶ E.g., Moshe Perlmann, "Proving Muhammad's Prophethood: A Muslim Critique of Ibn Kammūna," in Menahem Zohori, Arie Tarkower, and Haim Ormian, eds., *Hebrew Thought in America: Studies on Jewish Themes by Contemporary American Scholars*, 3 vols. (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1974), 3:75–97, at 89.

⁴⁷ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Maimon ben Joseph ha-Dayyan" (Iudith Targatona).

⁴⁸ L. M. Simmons, "Maimun's Letter of Consolation. Arabic Text," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, o.s. 2/3 (1890), 335–68, at 25 (Hebrew pagination).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁰ E.g., *Kitāb al-Khabar 'an al-Bashar fī Ansab al-'Arab wa-Nasab Sayyid al-Bashar* by Ahmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442).

⁵¹ Simmons, "Maimun's Letter of Consolation," 3.

⁵² On *khātam al-nabiyīn/akhāt al-nabiyyā*, see Harmut Bobzin, "The 'Seal of the Prophets': Towards an Understanding of Muhammad's Prophethood," in Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, eds., *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu* (Leiden, 2010), 565–84; Uri Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy: On the Interpretation of the Qur'ānic *Sūrat al-Ahzāb* (33)," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 104 (2014), 65–96; David S. Powers, "Finality of Prophecy," in Adam Silverstein and Guy G. Stroumsa, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Abrahamic Religions* (Oxford, 2015), 262–65.

⁵³ Simmons, "Maimun's Letter of Consolation," 2.

⁵⁴ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Moses Maimonides" (Joel L. Kraemer).

⁵⁵ The epithet *poshe'a* was the name given by other Jews to Jews who converted to Islam. See further, Mordechai Akiva Friedman, *Maimonides, the Yemenite Messiah and Apostasy* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 2002), 25–26.

⁵⁶ Maimonides, *Epistle to Yemen*, 40–54. From Maimonides' polemical arguments, it seems that he believed the anonymous apostate to be none other than the Jewish convert to Islam Samaw'al al-Maghribī. See Haggai Mazuz, "The Identity of the Apostate in the Epistle to Yemen," *AJS Review* 38, 2 (2014), 363–74. Cf. Martin Schreiner, "Samau'al b. Ishja al-Maghribi und seine Schrift Ihnam al-Yahud," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 42, 9 (1898), 407–18, at 412; Salo W. Baron, "The Historical Outlook of Maimonides," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 6 (1934–35), 5–113, at 11.

⁵⁷ Maimonides, *Epistle to Yemen*, 38–40.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14, 18, 36, 38, 80.

⁵⁹ Moses Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah: Seder Neziqin*, trans. Yosef Qāhī (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1965), 211.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 212–14.

the Oral Law as well.⁶¹ This, of course, fends off the claim of *tabiyy*. The ninth principle, called *al-nashb*, confronts this Islamic doctrine.⁶²

Maimonides also goes against *tabiyy* in his legal code *Mishneh Torah* in his *Hilkhot Melakhim u-Milhamot* (*Laus of Kings and Their Wars*) in which he explains that the laws and rules of the Torah are immutable and that one may never add or take away from them; one who does such a thing or misinterprets the commandments is labeled evil (*rasha*) and a heretic (*apikoros*).⁶³

Maimonides introduces the *Mishneh Torah* by saying that on the last day of Moses' life, he wrote thirteen scrolls – one for each of the twelve tribes, and one which was deposited in the Ark of the Covenant.⁶⁴ However, Moses did not write down the commandments that he received at Sinai that offer commentary on the Torah, rather he taught them orally to Joshua, the Elders, and the rest of Israel. Thus these commandments are called *Torah she-be-'al peh*. Then he lists the chain of transmission until the end of the geonic era (seventh to eleventh centuries)⁶⁵ – that is, nearly up to his own lifetime. This responds to the claim that the Jewish scriptures have no ordered chronology.

Like his father, Maimonides speaks highly of Moses and for the same very reason: undermining Muhammad's status and thus refuting Islamic arguments against Judaism, especially the *nashb*. One of the expressions of this tendency appears in the second part of the *Dalālat al-Hā'irin* (*Guide for the Perplexed*) where he places Moses' miracles above those of the other prophets.⁶⁶ When Maimonides discusses false prophets, he mentions two biblical figures as an example (see Jeremiah 29:21–23). However, he does the chapter with the words "Understand the intention!" for which the context here suggests a *sotto voce* allusion to Muhammad.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Ibid., 214. See further, Haggai Mazuz, "From 'Moses' Mishnah' to Moses Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*: The Development of the Jewish Oral Law according to al-Maḥḥabib," *Journal Asiatique* 306, 2 (2018), 201–7.

⁶² Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, 215.

⁶³ Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, ed. Yoḥai Makbil, Yehiel Kara, and Yehiel Gershoni (Haifa, 2002), 1000.

⁶⁴ See further, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Tabiyy and Thirteen Torah Scrolls," *Jewish Studies in Arabic and Islam* 19 (1995), 81–88.

⁶⁵ Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, ed. Yosef Qaḥi (Ohray Ono, 1997), 91–98.

⁶⁶ Moses Maimonides, *Dalālat al-Hā'irin*, trans. and annot. Yosef Qaḥi (Jerusalem, 1977), 245–46 (II:35). See further, Yehuda Shami, "Allusions to Muhammad in Maimonides' Theory of Prophecy in his *Guide of the Perplexed*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 64 (1973–74), 212–24.

⁶⁷ Maimonides, *Dalālat al-Hā'irin*, 256 (II:40). See further, David Novak, "The Treatment of Islam in the Legal Writings of Maimonides," in William M. Briggs and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *Studies in Islamic and Jewish Traditions II: Papers from*

Nathaniel al-Fayyūmī (d. c. 1165), the leader of the Jewish community in Yemen,⁶⁸ stresses repeatedly in his *Bustān al-'Uḡl* (*Garden of the Intellect*) that the Torah cannot be replaced, citing many biblical verses with promises for the salvation and perpetuity of the Jewish people, as well as several Qur'ānic verses to the effect that the Torah has not been abrogated.⁶⁹

Sa'd b. Mansūr Ibn Kammūna (d. 1284) was a philosopher and physician who lived in Iraq.⁷⁰ In the second part of his *Tanqīḥ al-Abhāth li-l-Milal al-Thalāth* (*Examination of Inquiries into the Three Faiths*), he invests much effort to reject Islamic arguments against Judaism; many of them are those of Samaw'al b. Yalyā b. Abbās al-Maghribī (1125–75) in his *Iḥyān al-Yahūd* (*Silencing the Jews*).⁷¹

MUHAMMAD'S JEWISH COMPANIONS

Some manuscripts found in the Cairo Geniza dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries reveal Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic stories describing Jewish sages reaching Muhammad, pretending to convert to Islam in order to save the Jewish people from Muhammad, and composing the Qur'ān. Some of

⁶⁸ *at the Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies* (Atlanta, 1986), 23–50; Albert Van der Heide, "Their Prophets and Fathers Misled Them: Moses Maimonides on Christianity and Islam," in Barbara Roggen, Marcel Poorhuis, and Pim Valkenberg, eds., *The Three Rings: Textual Studies in the Historical Trilogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Leuven, 2005), 35–46.

⁶⁹ On his life and work, see EIJW, s.v. "Nehanel Fayyūmī" (Marzena Zawadowska).

⁷⁰ Nathaniel al-Fayyūmī, *Bustān al-'Uḡl – Gan ha-Sekhalim*, ed. and trans. Yosef Qaḥi (Jerusalem, 1953), 112–15. See further, Reuben Ahroni, "From *Bustān al-'Uḡl* to *Qiyat al-Battal*: Some Aspects of Jewish-Muslim Religious Polemics in Yemen," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 52 (1981), 311–60; Reuben Ahroni, "On the Religious Polemics between Jews and Muslims in Yemen," in Yosef Tobi, ed., *Le-Rosh Yosef: Texts and Studies in Judaism. Dedicated to Rabbi Yosef Qaḥi* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1993), 395–408, at 402–6; Reuben Ahroni, "Some Yemantic Jewish Attitudes towards Muhammad's Prophethood," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 69 (1998), 49–99, at 55–56.

⁷¹ On his life and work, see EIJW, s.v. "Ibn Kammūna, Sa'd" (Sabine Schmidtke).

⁷² See Ibn Kammūna's *Examination of the Inquiries into the Three Faiths: A Thirteenth-Century Essay in Comparative Religion*, ed. Moshe Perlmann (Berkeley, 1967), 67–108; Ibn Kammūna's *Examination of the Three Faiths: A Thirteenth-Century Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion*, ed. and trans. Moshe Perlmann (Berkeley, 1971), 2–9, 100–157. See further, Barbara Roggen, "Epistemology as Polemics: Ibn Kammūna's Examination of the Apologetics of the Three Faiths," in Barbara Roggen, Marcel Poorhuis, and Pim Valkenberg, eds., *The Three Rings: Textual Studies in the Historical Trilogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Leuven, 2005), 47–68; Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: 'Izz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna* (d. 683/1284) and His Writings

these texts use the word "disgrace" (Hebrew, *qalon*) for the Qur'ān. Some stories appear as part of larger polemic against Samaritans, Christians, Karaites, and of course Islam. This story is sometimes called "The Story of Muḥammad's [Jewish] Companions" (*Qissa'at Aṣḥāb Muḥammad*). The idea in this story – that the Qur'ān is of human origin – is clearly polemical, since according to Islamic doctrine it is the divine revelation to Muḥammad (through Gabriel); this story appears to be a counterattack to the accusation of *tabrif*.⁷²

RABBANITE JEWS OF CHRISTIAN IBERIA

Up to the Expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, only two Jews dedicated a standalone polemic work attacking Islam. Both are of Iberian origin. The first was Solomon b. Abraham Ibn Adret (c. 1235–1310) of Barcelona, whose *Mā'amar 'al Yishma'el* (*Statement on Ishmael*)⁷³ seems to respond to some of Ibn Hazm's anti-Jewish polemical arguments.⁷⁴

⁷² Arthur Marmorstein, "Die Einleitung zu David ben Mervans Religions-philosophie wiedergefunden," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 66 (1932) 48–64, at 60; Jacob Leveen, "Mohammed and His Jewish Companions," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 16, 4 (1926), 399–406, at 402; Jacob Mann, "A Polemical Work against Karaites and Other Sectaries," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 12, 2 (1922), 133–46, at 139–40; Jacob Mann, "An Early Theologico-Polemical Work," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12/13 (1937–38), 411–59, at 441–42. See further, Shimon Shober, "Present at the Dawn of Islam: Polemic and Reality in the Medieval Story of Muhammad's Jewish Companions," in Michael M. Laskier and Yacov Lev, eds., *The Convergence of Judaism and Islam: Religious, Scientific, and Cultural Dimensions* (Gainesville, 2011), 64–88.

⁷³ Ibn Adret's *Mā'amar 'al Yishma'el* has been published in several editions. See R. Salomon b. Abraham b. Adret: *Sein Leben und seine Schriften nebst handschriftlichen Belegen zum ersten Male herausgegeben*, ed. Joseph Perles (Breslau, 1863); *Teshuvot ha-Rabbi b. Rabbenu Shelomo ben Rabbi Avraham ben Adret*, ed. Haim Zalman Dintovsky (Jerusalem, 1990), 116–58; *Mā'amar 'al Yishma'el by Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham ben Adret, with Introduction and Notes* [Hebrew], ed. Bezalel Naoi (New York, 2003), 59–132. Recently, the work has been translated into Czech; see Daniel Boušek, *Polemika judaismus islámem ve středověku: Šelomo ibn Adret a Šimon ben Gaon* (Prague, 2015), 127–74.

⁷⁴ See further, Martin Schreiner, "Die apologetische Schrift des Salomo b. Adret gegen einen Muhammedaner," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 46, 1 (1894), 39–42; Camilla Adang, "A Jewish Reply to Ibn Hazm: Solomon b. Adret's Polemic against Islam," in Maribel Fierro, ed., *Judios y musulmanes en al-Andalus y el Magreb: Contactos intelectuales* (Madrid, 2002), 179–209; Martin Jacobs, "Intellectual Polemics in Medieval Spain: Biblical Interpretation between Ibn Hazm, Solomon ben Adret, and Shm on ben Semah Duran," in Joseph Dan, ed., *Geshen shalem* (1897–1982) – in *Memorian II* (Jerusalem, 2007), 37–57, at 40–52; Harvey J. Hames, "A Jew amongst Christians and Muslims: Introspection in Solomon Ibn Adret's Response to Ibn Hazm," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 25, 2 (2010), 203–19; Yoram

As mentioned, Muslim polemicists treat biblical accounts that attribute sins to the Jewish patriarchs as proof of the falsification of the Torah, since they have *isma*. Ibn Adret refers to biblical accounts of such sins and argues that they actually strengthen the veracity of the Bible since no ruler would tolerate stories that besmirch his dynasty if he did not hold Scripture to be divine in origin.⁷⁵ In regard to the accusation of unreliable chain of transmission, he answers in the same vein as Ibn Da'ūd and Maimonides.⁷⁶ The text also confronts the doctrines of *tabrif* and *nashb*.⁷⁷

The second segment of Simon b. Šemah Duran's (1361–1444) *Qeset u-Magen* (*Bow and Shield*) is the most sharply worded polemic against Islam produced by any medieval Jewish author. Duran was born in Islam and passed away in Algeria. His family emigrated along with Mallorca and Algeria after losing their fortune in the pogroms of 1391. In many others to Algeria after losing their fortune in the pogroms of 1391. In 1408, Duran became the rabbinic leader of Algerian Jewry. His halakhic authority and judicial rulings were recognized in Spain, North Africa, France, and Italy. In addition to his halakhic knowledge, he was highly proficient in many other fields such as philosophy, mathematics, natural sciences, astronomy, and medicine, and, as *Qeset u-Magen* demonstrates, Duran was knowledgeable about Islam.⁷⁸ *Qeset u-Magen*, written in 1423 as part of the treatise *Magen Avot* (*Shield of the Forefathers*), assails Christianity in its first segment and Islam in its second.⁷⁹ The text contains a multitude of original arguments and demonstrates its author's command

Meral, "Yahudi Din Bilgin Şlomo İbn Adret'in İbn Hazm'a Reddiyesi: *Maamar 'al Yisra'el*," *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 28 (2012), 45–59.

⁷⁵ R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adret, ed. Perles, 1–2.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2–3.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 3–18, 18–24.

⁷⁸ On his life and work, see EIJW, s.v. "Duran, Simon ben Semah" (Samuel Morrell); Isaac Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1959), 255; Israel M. Ta-Shma, *Talmudic Commentary in Europe and North Africa: Literary History, 1200–1400* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2004), 92–93; Simon b. Šemah Duran, *Sefer ha-Tashbe' (Lemberg, 1890)*, 1:414 (#103).

⁷⁹ Duran, *Qeset u-Magen*, 16a–2b. The text was first edited and published by Moritz Steinschneider, who also translated it into German. See Moritz Steinschneider, "Seirat Einnat ha-Ishma'elim mi-Sefer Qeset u-Magen le-Rabbi Shm'on b. Šemah Duran" [Hebrew], *Ozar Torah* (1881–82), 1–36; Moritz Steinschneider, "Islam und Judentum: Kritik des Islam von Simon Duran (1423), aus dem Hebräischen übersetzt und erläutert," *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* 7 (1880), 1–48, and supplement (Beilage). Prosper Marciano prepared a critical edition and English translation of the full *Qeset u-Magen*; see Prosper Marciano, *Duran, Qeset u-Magen: A Critical Edition of Simon ben Zenuh* (PhD diss., New York University, 1975). Recently, Boušek translated the second segment of *Qeset u-Magen* into Czech and described it generally. See Boušek, *Polemika judaismus islámem ve středověku*, 175–96, 197–241.

of Arabic and Islamic sources such as the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and *tafsīr* than he uses for polemical purposes.

His claims include (1) "The founder of their faith [i.e., Muhammad] observed Moses' perfect teachings, pondered them, and imposed an imitation that would make [his own teachings] more perfect" with little change. Thus, Duran continues, he embraced laws such as not allowing a drunkard to pray; he shifted the day of rest; forbade his followers to partake of pork blood, and carrion; observing ritual slaughter; prescribing that the Muslims should give one-fourth of their wealth; as well as purely laws. Additionally, knowing that the most exalted day of the year for Jews for prayer and repentance is the Day of Atonement, when five prayer services are recited, Muhammad prescribed five daily prayers for the Muslims. (2) Duran uses the Qur'ānic periodization of Haman to criticize the Qur'ān: "They [i.e., the Muslims] say that Haman lived in Moses' time; their book says, 'And Haman said to Qārūn, who is Qorah . . .'" (cf. Qur'ān 29:39). He does the same in the case of Jesus: "They [i.e., the Muslims] say that Jesus was the son of Miriam, daughter of Amram, sister of Aaron, and all their multitudes believe, as it is written in their scriptures, that Aaron, brother of Moses our Teacher and brother of Miriam, was the mother of Jesus" (cf. Qur'ān 19:28–29).⁸¹

KARAITES IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Although early on relations between Karaites and Islamic authorities were positive,⁸² we also find negative attitudes toward Islam and Muslims in Karaite literature – sometimes even more vigorous than that of the Rabbis. Clearly, they were more polemical rather than apologetic, that is, proactive in criticizing Islam and Muslims.⁸³ In his *Kitāb al-ʿAnwār*

wa-l-Maraḡib (*Book of Lights and Watchtowers*), Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Qirṣānī (early tenth century)⁸⁴ invalidates the prophethood of Muhammad (whom he calls *paṣul*, as would Maimonides much later) by arguing that the Qur'ān and the Islamic oral tradition contain illogical and contradictory statements. He also countered the doctrines of *nashṭ* and *taḥrīf* using Islamic sources themselves – to include Qur'ānic verses.⁸⁵ Al-Qirṣānī also composed a work entitled *Kitāb fi Ifsād Nubuwwat Muḥammad* (*Book Nullifying the Prophethood of Muhammad*), in which he refutes Muhammad's claim to prophecy and repeats much from his argument in *al-Anwār wa-l-Maraḡib*.⁸⁶

Daniel al-Qūmisī (d. 946),⁸⁷ another early Karaite authority, writes with pejorative nicknames for Muhammad and criticism toward some Islamic rituals; this probably stemmed from difficulties suffered under the yoke of Islamdom. In his commentary on Hosea 9:7, al-Qūmisī explains that because the people of Israel hated and killed God's prophets, they are ruled by the foolish prophet (Hebrew, *evil ha-navi*),⁸⁸ referring to Islamdom. In the commentary on Daniel 8:25 he explains that the words "By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand" (*ve-biḥitah nimnah be-yado*) refer to Muhammad's false claim that he was sent by God. In his commentary on Daniel 11:37, al-Qūmisī says that the words "desire of women" (*beḥat nashim*) refer to the permission in Islamic law for one to have intercourse with slave-girls, arguing that this verse and the one following both refer to idol worship in Mecca in the pre-Islamic period.⁸⁹

Salmon b. Yerahm (middle of the tenth century) sheds a great deal of ink criticizing Islam in his commentaries.⁹⁰ He also complains about

⁸⁰ Duran, *Qeshet u-Magen*, 19b. ⁸¹ Ibid., 16b.

⁸² See e.g., Jacob Mann, "A Tract by an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 12, 3 (1922), 257–98, at 285–86; Leon Nemoy, "The Karaite Qūmisian Sermon to the Karaites," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 43 (1976), 49–105, at 100–101.

⁸³ On the Karaites' polemic against Islam, see Moshe Sokolow, "The Denial of Muslim Sovereignty Over Eretz-Israel in Two Tenth-Century Karaite Bible Commentaries [Hebrew], *Shalem* 3 (1981), 309–18; Haggai Ben-Shammai, "The Attitude of Early Karaites towards Islam," in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature, Volume 2* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), 3–40; Daniel Frank, "The Shoshanim of Tenth-Century Jerusalem: Karaite Exegesis, Prayer, and Communal Identity," in Daniel Frank, ed., *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society and Identity* (Leiden, 1995), 199–245; Daniel Frank, *Search Scripture With Karaite Eyes: and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East* (Leiden, 2000), 165–247.

⁸⁴ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Qirṣānī, Jacob al." (Fred Astren).

⁸⁵ Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Qirṣānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Maraḡib: Code of Karaite Law*, 5 vols., ed. Leon Nemoy (New York, 1939), 1:292–301.

⁸⁶ See Israel Friedländer, "Qirṣānī's Polemic gegen den Islam," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 26 (1912), 77–110.

⁸⁷ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Daniel al-Qūmisī" (Barry Dov Walsh).

⁸⁸ *Commentarius in librum duodecim prophetarum quem composuit Daniel al-Qūmisī*, ed. Isaac D. Markon [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1957), 15.

⁸⁹ Jacob Mann, "Early Karaite Bible Commentaries," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 12, 4 (1922), 435–526, at 520–21. See further, Haggai Ben-Shammai, "A Fragment of Daniel al-Qūmisī's Commentary on Daniel as a Source for the History of Eretz-Israel" [Hebrew], *Shalem* 3 (1981), 295–307; Haggai Ben-Shammai, "A Fragment of Daniel al-Qūmisī's Commentary on Daniel as a Source for the History of Eretz-Israel," *Henoch* 13 (1991), 259–81.

⁹⁰ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Salmon ben Jeroham (Sulaym ibn Ruḡaym)" (Michael Wechsler).

hardships in "the Ishmaelite exile" with derogatory nicknames for the religious institutions of Islam and its founder. In his commentary on Psalms 43:1, Salmon explains the words "deceitful man" (*ish mirmal*) as "the son of Hagar,"⁹¹ that is, Ishmael, who represents the Muslims. He uses in the phrase "he who curses" (*mebaref*; Psalms 44:17) an allusion to the accusation of *tabrif* (very likely because both have the same Semitic root *brf*) because of the Qur'anic claim that "The Jews say, 'Uzayr is the Son of Allāh'" (cf. Qur'ān 9:30) and that they changed the letters of the Torah.⁹² Uzayr is a Qur'anic figure that most Muslim and modern scholars identify as Ezra the Scribe.⁹³ In the commentary on Psalms 69:8, Salmon writes that the fourth kingdom (i.e., Islam) "is the harvest of all [four] kingdoms" (*as'ab al-mumalib*).⁹⁴ A similar interpretation appears in his commentary on Psalms 64:5.⁹⁵ In the commentary on Ecclesiastes 9:6 he complains that the Muslims "announce five times a day for the memory of idolatry (*gilul*) and a false prophet (*nevi sheger*)."⁹⁶ Salmon refers to the Islamic call to prayer (*adhān*), in which the Muslims state that there is no God but Allāh and that Muḥammad is His messenger. Similar complaints appear in his commentary on Lamentations 1:7 and in a prayer that he composed for the Day of Atonement.⁹⁷

The attitude of Japheth b. 'Elī (tenth century) toward Islam is the most vitriolic among the Karaites.⁹⁸ He also dedicated much material in his commentaries to criticizing Islam. In his commentary on Daniel 5:16 he explains the words "He will cause astounding devastation" (*we-shleḥ yushbit*) as follows: "He railed against the Torah of God, exalted be His name, and against the words of His prophets, and took out of it what he pleased, of which he composed for himself a scripture called *qalon*, and

claimed that the rest [of the Scriptures] are abrogated."⁹⁹ In his commentary on Daniel 11:37 he uses the word *pasul* to describe Muḥammad.¹⁰⁰ Japheth also uses the term *qalon* for the Qur'ān in his commentary on Isaiah 47:9–10, where calls the Qur'ān "the book of their disgrace" (*sefer qilonam*).¹⁰¹ In the commentary on Nahum 1:14, Japheth claims that the words "out of the house of your gods will I cut off the graven image (*pesel*) and the molten image (*maskebub*)" refer to "the house of their prayer in which they pilgrimage every year," that is, the Ka'ba and that in it there are idols (*selamin*).¹⁰² Criticism of Islam by Japheth also appears in his commentary on Psalms 14.¹⁰³ But without doubt his harshest words against Islam appear in the commentary on Isaiah 21:2, in which he claims that the words "traitor" (*boged*) and "robber" (*shoded*) refer to Muḥammad (without mentioning him by name), calling him a false prophet and "despicable" (*nizeh*).¹⁰⁴

Yūsuf al-Basīr (second half of the tenth century) wrote a manual for debating the Islamic argument that the Qur'ān is inimitable.¹⁰⁵ He, too, uses the words *pasul* and *qalon*. The work's title is unknown since the manuscript is not currently extant. He was motivated to write it after experiencing difficulties in a theological debate.¹⁰⁶ Alī b. Sulaymān (second half of the eleventh century and early twelfth century)¹⁰⁷ also composed a manual for Jews who might find themselves in interfaith debate, using Qur'anic verses to parry the claim that the Torah had been changed.¹⁰⁸

⁹¹ David Samuel Margoliouth, ed. and trans., *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by Japhet Ibn Ali the Karaite* (Oxford, 1889), 87–88.

⁹² Ibid., 113.

⁹³ Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Edition and Versions in Yepheth b. 'Alī's Bible Commentary," *Allet Sefer* 2 (1976), 17–32, at 23–24.

⁹⁴ Hartwig Hirschfeld, ed., *Yepheth b. Ali's Arabic Commentary on Nahum, with Introduction, Abridged Translation and Notes* (London, 1911), 21.

⁹⁵ See Yoram Eider, "The Attitude of the Karaites, Yefet ben Eli, to Islam in Light of His Interpretation of Psalms 14 and 53," *Micha'el: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* 14 (1997), 29–49.

⁹⁶ *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek: Beiträge und Documente zur Geschichte des Karäerthums und der karäitischen Literatur*, ed. Adolf Neubauer (Leipzig, 1866), 111–12 (nXI).

⁹⁷ On his life and work, see *EJW*, "Yūsuf al-Basīr" (Gregor Schwarb).

⁹⁸ David E. Sklare, ed., in cooperation with Haggai Ben-Shammai, *Judeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovich Collections: The Works of Yūsuf al-Basir. A Sample Catalogue: Texts and Studies* (Jerusalem, 1997), 100–103, 137–38. See further, David E. Sklare, "Yūsuf al-Basir: Theological Aspects of his Halakic Works," in Daniel Frank, ed., *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity* (Leiden, 1995), 249–70, at 258; Sklare, "Responses to Islamic Polemics," 150–61.

⁹⁹ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Alī Ibn Sulaymān" (Michael G. Wechsler).

¹⁰⁰ Hartwig Hirschfeld, "Ein Karäer über den Muḥammad gemachten Vorwurf jüdischer Torahfälschung," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 26 (1912), 111–13.

⁹¹ Lawrence Marwick, ed., *The Arabic Commentary of Salmon ben Yehonon the Karaite on the Book of Psalms, Chapters 42–72* (Philadelphia, 1956), 6.

⁹² Ibid., 9.

⁹³ For a summary of the classical attitude toward 'Uzayr, reviewing all the relevant literature, see Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Ezra–Uzayr: History of a Pre-Islamic Polemical Motif through Islam to the Beginning of Biblical Criticism" [Hebrew], *Tarbiah* 19 (1981), 359–79; Viviane Cometto, "Esdras est-il le fils de Dieu?" *Arabica* 52, 2 (1999), 107–20.

⁹⁴ *The Commentary of Salmon ben Yehonon on Psalms*, 98.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁹⁶ Moshe I. Riese, ed., *The Arabic Commentary of Solomon ben Yehonon the Karaite on Ecclesiastes* (New York, 1973), 449; Georges Vajda, ed., *Deux commentaires karaites de l'Ecclesiaste* (Leiden, 1971), 92.

⁹⁷ Salomon Feuerstein, ed., *Der Commentar des Karäers Salmon ben Jechonon zu den Klageliedern* (Krakow, 1898), xxiii; Simḥah Assaf, "A Prayer of Salmon b. Yehonon to Karaites," *Me'asef Le-Zion* 3 (1929), 88–94.

⁹⁸ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Japheth (Abū 'Alī Hama) ben Eli" (Michael G. Wechsler).

POLEMICS IN POETRY

"Polemical literature is only one aspect of polemics,"¹⁰⁹ notes Moshe Perlmann. Indeed, one can find anti-Islamic references in other genres including poetry. One such example is found in *Yerivanni 'Alii* ('Dear Brother El') (*They Quarreled with Me for Leaving God's Covenant*), a poem written by a twelfth-century Jew of unknown identity who converted to Islam and later reverted to Judaism.¹¹⁰ Scholars are uncertain whether the author was Abū al-Barakāt Hibat Allāh b. 'Alī b. Malkā al-Baghādī al-Balāḥ (c. 1080–1165),¹¹¹ a Jewish physician and philosopher, or Isaac b. Abraham Ibn Ezra (c. 1109–58).¹¹² Whoever the poet was, *Yerivanni* abounds with cryptic apologetic messages directed at Jews – most likely those in the poet's surroundings – as well as polemical messages against Islam. The poet begins and ends this work with apologetics. In between appear polemical messages spiced with apology – responses to arguments against the reliability of the Bible and against the truth of Muhammad's mission – as well as one explicit apology.¹¹³

Another example is the third and fourth stanzas of the poem *Yivduh ba-Qehaleikha ba-'Omeyn ba-Leilot* (*May Your Congregations That Stand at Night Be Granted Salvation*), attributed to the Spanish rabbi, philosopher, Bible commentator, and poet Isaac b. Judah Ibn Ghityāh of Lunenburg (1038–89).¹¹⁴ The poet refers to three themes that surface repeatedly in Islamic polemics against Jews and Judaism recurrent in Jewish-Muslim polemical discourse in his milieu – *taḥrif*, *maskh*, and that Muhammad was *khāṭim al-nabiyīn*. The poet's responses to them, however, avoid counter polemics; instead, they express his pain and his recourse to God for salvation.

¹⁰⁹ Moshe Perlmann, "The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism," in Shalom Dov Goitein, ed., *Religion in a Religious Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), 101–38, at 101. Moshe Perlmann, "The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism," in Moshe Lazarus-Ya'el, ed., *Muslim Authors on Jews and Judaism: The Jews among the Muslim Neighbors* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1996), 119–53, at 119.

¹¹⁰ Isaac b. Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Poems* [Hebrew], ed. Menahem Haim Schneider (New York, 1980), 147.

¹¹¹ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Abū 'l-Barakāt al-Baghādī" (Norman Golman and Shlomo Pines).

¹¹² On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Ibn Ezra, Isaac (Abū Sa'īd) ben Abraham (ben Me'ir)" (Aurora Salvatierra Ossorio).

¹¹³ See Haggai Mazuz, "Apologetic and Polemical Aspects of *Yerivanni 'Alii* ('Dear Brother El') (*They Quarreled with Me for Leaving God's Covenant*)," *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebráicos. Sección Hebréa* 66 (2017), 189–98.

¹¹⁴ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Ibn Ghityāh (Ibn Chayyāh), Isaac ben Judah" (Esperanza Alfonso).

¹¹⁵ See Haggai Mazuz, "References to Polemical Islamic Arguments in *Yivduh ba-Qehaleikha ba-'Omeyn ba-Leilot*," *Ibarta Judaita* 11 (2019), 127–34. For examination of anti-Islamic polemical sentiments in medieval Hebrew poetry from the Iberian

Moses b. Samuel of Damascus (fourteenth century), originally of Safed, was a Karaite appointed as chief secretary (*katib*) to the local Mamlūk emir.¹¹⁶ In 1354, he was the victim of calumny when two Muslims complained falsely that he expressed contempt for Islam. To save himself from the death penalty he outwardly converted to Islam. After the emir's death he returned to Judaism. In one of his poems he writes that the emir required him to join him for a pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) in Mecca and he mocks it and its rituals.¹¹⁷

CONVERTS TO ISLAM

Medieval Jewish-Muslim polemics include anti-Jewish tracts written by Jewish apostates. One cannot ignore their Jewish provenance and the possibility that their writers had spent much of their lives as Jews and belonging to Jewish communities. They must have absorbed something from this period. Thus, some of the contents they discuss may reflect something of the spiritual "cargo" of their former communities. If so, such contents represent a unique Jewish contribution to Islamic anti-Jewish polemics that in some cases received a Jewish response.

The most famous Jewish apostate who wrote polemical works against his former faith was Samaw' al al-Maghribī, the author of *Ḥfām al-Yahūd*.¹¹⁸ Samaw' al was a Jewish scholar, mathematician, and physician who converted to Islam in 1163,¹¹⁹ and immediately wrote a polemical

Peninsula, see Norman Roth, "Polemic in Hebrew Religious Poetry of Medieval Spain," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34, 1 (1989), 153–77. See further, Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Leiden, 1994), 221–23; Allony, *Studies in Medieval Spanish Literature, Culture, and Society*, 21–28; Ayellet Oettinger, "The Attitude towards Muslims and the Arabic Culture in *Talkemoni*" [Hebrew], *Pe'amin* 138 (2014), 77–112, at 91–92, 95–96; Haggai Mazuz, "The Linkage of Ammon and Moab with Pre-Islamic Arabs and Muslims in Jewish Sources – Prevalence and Motives," *Revue des études juives* 177, 1–2 (2018), 23–36.

¹¹⁶ On his life and work, see *EJW*, s.v. "Moses ben Samuel of Damascus" (Marzena Zawawska).

¹¹⁷ See Jacob Mann, "Moses b. Samuel, a Jewish Kātib in Damascus, and His Pilgrimage to Meclina and Mekkah," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1919), 155–84, at 161–64; Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, 2 vols. (New York, 1972), 2:222–28.

¹¹⁸ On his life and work, see *EF*, s.v. "Samaw' al b. Yalḥā al-Maghribī, Abū Naṣr" (Reuven Firscone); *EJW*, s.v. "Samaw' al al-Maghribī, al-" (Sabine Schmidtke).

¹¹⁹ On Samaw' al's conversion, see Sarah Stroumsa, "On Jewish Intellectuals Who Converted to Islam in the Early Middle Ages," in Daniel Frank, ed., *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity* (Leiden, 1995), 179–97, at 192–96; Sarah Stroumsa, "On Jewish Intellectuals Who Converted to Islam in the Early Middle Ages" [Hebrew], *Pe'amin* 42 (1990), 61–75, at 70–73; Ryan Sepich, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic* (Philadelphia, 2013), 180–92.

anti-Jewish pamphlet, in which he tried to prove that leaving Judaism was justified and that the Jews were ignorant, unreasonable, and inconsistent. *Iḥḡām al-Yahūd* is harsh and the hostility toward the Jews is clear and it has a broad distribution and influence in the Islamic and Jewish societies.

Iḥḡām al-Yahūd drew the attention of Jewish scholars, such as Maimonides, who responded to some of its arguments in his *Letter to Teiman*.¹²⁰ Judah al-Ḥarizī (c. 1166–1225)¹²¹ attacked Samaw'al in one of his poems with the epithets "evil," "villain," and "tyrant" (*ḡarīb, ṣalīb, ṭarīb*).¹²² Ibn Kammūna and an anonymous Jewish author from the fourteenth century dedicated efforts in order to refute *Iḥḡām al-Yahūd*.¹²³ Joseph b. Isaac Sambari (1640–1703), an Egyptian Jew living in Cairo and the author of *Sefer Diveri Yosef* (*Book of Joseph's Sayings*),¹²⁴ summarized the arguments of Samaw'al (whom he calls Samuel b. Azarya for an unknown reason) and describes him negatively, wishing him a miserable end.¹²⁵

Among the claims in *Iḥḡām al-Yahūd*: (1) Samaw'al argues that the Jews slandered Lot, whom the Islamic tradition views as a prophet, by asserting that he had intercourse with his two daughters and fathered Ammon and Moab in so doing (see Genesis 19:33–38). He further claims that the story of Judah and Tamar, mother of Perez and Zerah (see Genesis 38:12–30), is a falsification. The appearance of these two stories in the Bible, he claims, is a result of a plot by Ezra the Scribe, whom he accuses of falsifying the Bible. Samaw'al charges that as a priest, Ezra sought to delegitimize the kingship of the Davidic line because Moab, ancestor of Ruth, and Perez, ancestor of David, are products of incest. What is more, Samaw'al claims, Ezra succeeded in his nefarious scheme – after all, it was the priests (i.e., the Hasmoneans) and not David's descendants who ruled Judea in the Second Temple period.¹²⁶

(2) Samaw'al refers to several verses that appear on a list of anthropomorphic accounts in the Bible – accounts that, he claims, prove that the Bible has been falsified. He makes note of Exodus 24:10, "And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness."¹²⁷ He also uses Genesis 6:6: "And the Lord regretted (*va-yināhem*) having made man on the earth, and was aggrieved (*va-yit'asev*) in his heart." Samaw'al cites additional verses in which the two roots *nām* and *šv* appear, such as Genesis 3:16 and I Samuel 15:11 and 35.¹²⁸ He also uses Genesis 8:21: "And the Lord smelled (*va-yarab*) a sweet savor."¹²⁹

(3) Samaw'al employs the second part of Exodus 22:30 to criticize Jews further: "Neither shall you eat any flesh that is torn of beasts (*terefah*) in the field; you shall cast it to the dog." He argues that the Jews go too far in not partaking of Muslims' food because Jews are enjoined only against consuming torn flesh. In this, he accuses them of inventing the laws of ritual slaughter; he then proceeds to discuss the Jewish dietary laws extensively.¹³⁰

Sa'id b. Ḥasan al-Iskandarī (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries) was born to a Jewish family in Alexandria and converted to Islam in May 1298, in response, he claims, to his miraculous recovery from a severe illness.¹³¹ In April 1320, twenty-two years after his conversion, he wrote *Kitāb Masālik al-Nazar fi Nubuwwat Sayyid al-Bashar* (*Book of Paths of Investigation concerning the Prophethood of the Master of Mankind*) in Damascus to prove that the Bible alludes to the advent of Muḥammad and that Islam is the supreme religion.¹³² Sa'id had some familiarity with

¹²⁰ Mazuz, "The Identity of the Apostate," 363–74.

¹²¹ On his life and work, see *Ej/W*, s.v. "Ḥarizī, Judah ben Solomon al-" (Jonathan P. Decter).

¹²² Joseph Yabalom and Na'ora Katsumata, eds., *Talḡemoni or The Tales of Hermon the Earthly by Judah Alharizi* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2010), 113.

¹²³ See Ibn Kammūna's *Examination of the Inquiries into the Three Faiths*, 67, with the *Kammūna's Examination of the Three Faiths*, 2–9, 100–157; Bruno Clisan and Sahing Schmidek, "The Jewish Reception of Samaw'al al-Maghribī's (d. 570/1175) *Iḥḡām al-Yahūd*: Some Evidence from the Abraham Firkovich Collection I," *Jewish Studies in Arabic and Islam* 32 (2006), 327–49.

¹²⁴ On his life and work, see *Ej*, s.v. "Sambari, Joseph ben Isaac" (Shimon Shoshani).

¹²⁵ *Ej/W*, s.v. "Sambari, Joseph ben Isaac" (Benjamin Hary).

¹²⁶ Shimon Shoshani, ed., *Sefer Diveri Yosef by Yosef ben Yitzhak Sambari: Eleven Hundred Years of Jewish History under Muslim Rule* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1994), 146–49.

¹²⁷ Samaw'al al-Maghribī, *Iḥḡām al-Yahūd*, 15a–16b (60–65). See further, Haggai Mazuz, "The Story of Lot and His Daughters as a Topic of Muslim-Jewish Polemics" [Hebrew], *Da'at* 89 (2020), 59–64.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 11b (44–45).

¹²⁸ Ibid., 11b–12a (46–47).

¹²⁹ Ibid., 12a (47).

¹³⁰ Ibid., 19b (76).

¹³¹ On his life and work, see David Thomas, "Sa'id ibn Ḥasan al-Iskandarī," in David Thomas and Alex Mallett, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 4 (1200–1350)* (Leiden, 2013), 775–77. On Sa'id's conversion, see Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative*, 192–96. For a presentation of *Masālik al-Nazar* in its Zeigist, see Daniel Bouček, "Sa'id ibn Ḥasan z. Alexandrie: Židovský konvertita k islámu a jeho důkaz Muhammadova proroctví z hebrejské Bible," *Acta Fidei et filozofické Západočeské univerzity v Plzni* 12, 2 (2012), 52–73.

¹³² The first to address *Masālik al-Nazar* was Ignaz Goldziher, who published it in part in 1895. See Ignaz Goldziher, "Sa'id b. Ḥasan d'Alexandrie," *Revue des études juives* 30 (1895), 1–23. In 1903, Sidney Adams Weston published a thirty-seven-page critical edition of the entire work and added an English translation. See Sidney Adams Weston, "The *Kitāb Masālik al-Nazar* of Sa'id Ibn Ḥasan of Alexandria: Edited for the First Time and Translated with Introduction and Notes," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 24 (1903), 312–83. Recently, Dennis Hāft published a later recension of Sa'id b. Ḥasan's work that was written twelve years after *Masālik al-Nazar*. See Dennis Hāft, "Sa'id b. Ḥasan al-Iskandarī: A Jewish Convert to Islam," *Editio princeps* of the

the Bible, the Qur'an, the Gospels, and, possibly, Maimonides' and Islamic arguments in *Iggeret Teiman*.¹³³ He was also exposed to rabbinic and midrashic sources such as *Pirghei de-Rabbi Eli ezer*, tailoring them to his polemical purposes in at least five chapters of his treatise.¹³⁴

Among the claims in *Masālik al-Nazār*: (1) As mentioned, Muslim polemicists argue that the phrases "from among your brethren" (Deuteronomy 18:15) and "from among their brethren" (Deuteronomy 18:18) refer to Muhammad. Unlike previous polemicists, Sa'id adds to the verse the words "from the children of Ishmael":

An additional proof from the proofs of his prophethood, *peace be upon him*, is an explicit text in the fifth book of the Torah, [in which] Allāh told to Moses, "Speak to the children of Israel in the Hebrew language: a prophet shall I appoint to them from among your brethren, the children of Ishmael" (*naḥi anpin la haqān mi qārīb aḥī kbān mī-banī Yishma' il*). The meaning of these [words is]: We will send unto you a prophet from your kindred, of the children of your brother Ishmael.

(2) Sa'id depicts Ishmael as Abraham's favored son and as the son bound on the altar by Abraham by providing an altered transliteration into Arabic of the first part of Genesis 22:2. The biblical text reads: "And He said, now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get you to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I will tell you." While the rest of the verse clearly refers to Isaac, Sa'id argues that the words "your only son" can refer only to Ishmael because Ishmael is the elder son.¹³⁶ By so doing, Sa'id presents an alternative biblical narrative, according to which the bound son is actually Ishmael (and not Isaac) – who, his reader should infer, received the Abrahamic legacy. Sa'id's purpose is to show that Ishmael – ancestor of Muhammad and the Arabs in Islamic eyes – is the successor to Abraham, the first man who returned to monotheism after many generations of idolatry, and that Isaac is not. By implication, Muhammad continues the Abrahamic legacy, making Islam and not Judaism the true faith.

Abū Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī was an apostate Jew who probably lived in Ceuta in the late fourteenth century.¹³⁷ He testifies to having converted to Islam at the age of forty and having convinced his

family to do the same. Sixteen years after that event, he wrote the polemical tract *al-Sayf al-Mamūd fī al-Radd 'alā Abhār al-Yahūd* (*The Outstanding Sword for Refuting the Rabbis of the Jews*).¹³⁸ 'Abd al-Haqq demonstrates familiarity with and use of Jewish sources and ideas for polemical use.¹³⁹ Although some of 'Abd al-Haqq's arguments appear to resemble those of Samaw'al al-Maghribi and Sa'id b. Hasan, the former do not seem to have been inspired by the latter and his thinking was actually highly original and independent.¹⁴⁰ 'Abd al-Haqq makes a number of polemical claims, among them that (1) the Jews are ungrateful. 'Abd al-Haqq claims that the words "reign of malice" (*malḥhut sudon*), in the twelfth benediction of the core of the Jewish prayer service, refer to Islamdom. He adds that while the Muslims treated Jews better than others – they curse them in return.¹⁴¹ (2) 'Abd al-Haqq presents the second part of Exodus 22:30, "The flesh of a torn thing, do not eat it but throw it to a dog," in Arabic transliteration and explains it as an anti-Islamic slander, arguing that the Jewish sages regard the word "dog" as a metaphor for Muslims and see no difference between the former and the latter.¹⁴²

In the year 1405, in the town of Pedrola (Aragon, Spain), Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Umar al-Raqīf (second half of the fourteenth century and the early fifteenth century)¹⁴³ copied an anti-Jewish treatise entitled *Ta'yid al-Milla* (*Fortification of the Community*).¹⁴⁴ This work was originally composed in Huesca, in 1360. The possible converso origin of both al-Raqīf and the author of this work is disputed. What is for sure is that, whatever the author's religious affiliation might have been at the time of

¹³³ On 'Abd al-Haqq's conversion, see Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative*, 196–200.

¹³⁴ Haggai Mazuz, "Additional Contributions of 'Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī to the Muslim-Jewish Polemic," *Al-Qanṭara* 37, 1 (2016), 111–28. See further, Moshe Perlmann, "'Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī, a Jewish Convert," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 31 (1940–41), 171–91; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Contribution of a Jewish Convert from Morocco to the Muslim Polemic against Jews and Judaism" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 42 (1990), 83–90.

¹³⁵ Haggai Mazuz, "'Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī – An Independent-Minded Polemicist or a Mimic of His Predecessors?" *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 107 (2017), 179–90.

¹³⁶ 'Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī, *al-Sayf al-Mamūd fī al-Radd 'alā Abhār al-Yahūd*, ed. and trans. Esperanza Alfonso (Madrid, 1998), 109.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹³⁸ On his life and work, see David Thomas, "al-Raqīf," in David Thomas and Alex Mallat, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 5 (1350–1500)* (Leiden, 2013), 298–99.

¹³⁹ The share of al-Raqīf in the transmission of the *Ta'yid al-Milla* has been a point of disagreement among scholars, who have brought different arguments about whether he was the author or its copyist.

Later Recension (732/1331) of His Biblical 'Testimonies' to the Prophet Muhammad" *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicaire d'Études Orientales du Caire* 30 (2014), 267–310.

¹³³ Haggai Mazuz, "Sa'id b. Hasan, Biographical Notes through the Prism of *Masālik al-Nazār*," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 68, 1 (2015), 49–57.

¹³⁴ Haggai Mazuz, "The Midrashic Sources of Sa'id b. Hasan," *Revue des études juives* 170, 1–2 (2016), 67–81.

¹³⁵ Weston, "Masālik al-Nazār," 327.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 337.

¹³⁷ On his life and work, see Eij/W, s.v. "'Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī" (Esperanza Alfonso).

writing the *Ta'yid al-Milla* – and unlike the above-mentioned conversion he lived under Christian rule.¹⁴⁵

The *Ta'yid al-Milla* is a manual spanning some five chapters; he begins by calling upon Jews to acknowledge Jesus and Muhammad as true prophets and uses verses from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to prove his point. To provide further support for his agenda, he also writes about the virtues of Ishmael, the abrogation of the Torah, Muhammad's miracles, and the transgressions of the Jews.¹⁴⁶ Another contribution of al-Raqīl to interreligious polemics is his copying of *Kitāb al-Mujtada' wa al-Yahūd wa-l-Nasārā* (*Book of Disputation with the Jews and the Christians*), the work of an anonymous Mudéjar that is the only example known thus far of the circulation of philosophy and logic – mainly Aristotle's natural philosophy and its commentary by Ibn Rushd – among Mudéjars and Moriscos.¹⁴⁷

Polemical works continued to be written after 1492 by Jews¹⁴⁸ (and Jewish apostates¹⁴⁹) although, as far as it seems, this continued on a

smaller scale than in the medieval period. Future research may change the current picture.

CONCLUSION

The prominent scholar of Jewish-Muslim polemics Eliyahu Ashror explained that:

The religious polemics between Muslims and Jews captured the attention of our best scholars in the nineteenth century and important compositions about the topic have been written, but we have not yet been privileged with a comprehensive book that would discuss it from a literary-historical perspective.¹⁵⁰

Indeed, such a work remains a desideratum. Only one extensive scholarly attempt to study the entire field has been made thus far, that of Moritz Steinschneider. The latter published *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache* in 1877, a seven-chapter work that examines different aspects of polemics and apology. His seventh chapter, 144 pages long, gives an overview of Jewish polemical references against Islam.¹⁵¹ As an accomplished bibliographer, Steinschneider strove to include every potential source of polemical treatment in his work. By doing so, he provides an excellent overview of, and a fine introduction to, Jewish-Muslim polemics for students and researchers of the topic. Indeed, many articles about polemics refer back to his work. However, his discussion of these sources, their contents, and their contexts is far from exhaustive; his analysis of the matter is not thorough. Hence further academic attention to the topic is essential.

Although the study of Jewish-Muslim polemics requires further research, a few things are known with a high level of certainty: (1) Jews in the Islamic world were well-aware of Islamic arguments against their religion and they paid attention to them. The fact that such prominent Jewish figures took the trouble to treat this topic suggests that these arguments did pose, at least somewhat, a real theological challenge for Jews.¹⁵²

(2) Not a few of those who engaged in polemics with Islam had a personal experience that may explain, inter alia, their motivation to do so.

¹⁴⁵ Between Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Pre-Modern Iran (Würzburg, 2010), 73–82; Haggai Mazuz, "The Origin of the Author of al-Risāla al-Sabī'iyya fī Ibtāl al-Diyāna al-Yahūdiyya" [Hebrew], *Pe'amin* (forthcoming, 2021).

¹⁴⁶ Eliyahu Strauss (Ashror), "The Muslim Polemics" [Hebrew], in *Memorial Volume of the Vienna Rabbinical Seminary* (Jerusalem, 1946), 182–97, at 182.

¹⁴⁷ Moritz Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache* (Leipzig, 1877), 244–388.

¹⁴⁸ Pace Lazarus-Yafeh, *Interrupted Worlds*, 149–50.

¹⁴⁸ E.g., Zechariah b. Se'adyah al-Dahiri, *Sefer ha-Ma'ar: Mahbarot R. Zechariah al-Dahiri*, ed. Yehuda Ratzaib [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1965), 124–29. See further, Martin Jacobs, "An Ek-Sabbatean's Remorse? Sambari's Polemics against Islam," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97, 3 (2007), 347–78; Haggai Mazuz, "Aspects of Polemics with Islam in the Seventh Magāma of R. Zechariah al-Dahiri's *Sefer ha-Ma'ar*" [Hebrew], *Tema* 15 (2018), 67–80; Haggai Mazuz, "Ma'ashe Meharit: Reexamination and Critical Edition" [Hebrew], *Qenes 'Al Yad* 27, 37 (forthcoming, 2021).

¹⁴⁹ See e.g., Joseph Sadan, "A Convert in the Service of Ottoman Muslim Scholars Writing a Polemic in the Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries" [Hebrew], *Pe'amin* 42 (1990), 91–101; Sabine Schmidke, "Epistle Forcing the Jews [to Admit Their Error] with Regard to What They Contend about the Torah, by Dialectical Reasoning (*Risalat li-shan al-futur fi ma'za' amū fi l-tawrat min qibāl 'ilm al-kalām*) by al-Salām 'Abd al-'Allān. A Critical Edition," in Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidke, eds., *Contacts and Conversations*

¹⁴⁶ For a critical edition and translation, see Leon J. Kassir, ed., "A Study of a Fourteenth Century Polemical Treatise *Adversus Judaeos*" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1991). See further, Mónica Colominas Aparicio, "The Mudéjar Polemic of the *Ta'yid al-Milla* and Conversion between Islam and Judaism in the Christian Territories of the Iberian Peninsula," in Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, eds., *Polemical Encounters: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Iberia and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2019), 51–69.

¹⁴⁷ See Colominas Aparicio, *The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia*, 93ff., and the forthcoming critical edition of the work by this author.

¹⁴⁸ See Mónica Colominas Aparicio, *The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia: Identity and Religious Authority in Mudéjar Islam* (Leiden, 2019), 90–91. The first to address the *Ta'yid al-Milla* was Miguel Asín Palacios, who published it in part in 1909. See Miguel Asín Palacios, "Un Tratado morisco de polémica contra los judíos (El códice arábigo n. XXXI de la Colección Gayangos: 'al-Jahid')," in Gerardo Maspero, ed., *Mélanges Hartwig Derenbourg par ses amis et ses élèves* (Paris, 1909), 141–50. *dédiés à la mémoire de Hartwig Derenbourg par ses amis et ses élèves* (Paris, 1909), 141–50.

¹⁴⁹ For a critical edition and translation, see Leon J. Kassir, ed., "A Study of a Fourteenth Century Polemical Treatise *Adversus Judaeos*" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1991). See further, Mónica Colominas Aparicio, "The Mudéjar Polemic of the *Ta'yid al-Milla* and Conversion between Islam and Judaism in the Christian Territories of the Iberian Peninsula," in Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, eds., *Polemical Encounters: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Iberia and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2019), 51–69.

These experiences ranged from participating in interreligious theological debate to forced conversion.

(3) Karaites had a much more belligerent attitude toward Islam than Rabbanites. While the latter were mainly apologetic, the former were mainly polemical. The reason for this is still unclear, and this is particularly intriguing in light of the positive relations between Islamic authorities and the Karaites. Rabbanites, as mentioned, were not blind to the challenges posed by polemical debates. Although Rabbanite Jews were integrated in the Islamic sphere, the boundaries between Rabbinic Judaism and Islam were clear, perhaps explaining why they chose an apologetic strategy. The proximity between Karaites and Muslims may have soured relations between the two or raised concern among the Karaite religious authorities of the risk of assimilation and the potential loss of their identity.¹⁵³ In return, they chose harsh and uncompromising polemics. Future research may help answer some of these questions.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahroni, Reuben. "From *Bustān al-'Uqūl* to *Qisat al-Banīl*: Some Aspects of Jewish-Muslim Religious Polemics in Yemen," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 52 (1981), 311–60.
- Ben-Shammai, Haggai. "The Attitude of Some Early Karaites toward Islam," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 3, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA, 1984), 3–40.
- Friedländer, Israel. "Qirqisānī's Polemik gegen den Islam," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 26 (1912), 77–110.
- Hirschfeld, Hartwig. "Historical and Legendary Controversies between Mohammed and the Rabbis," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 10, 1 (1897), 100–116.
- Jacobs, Martin. "Interreligious Polemics in Medieval Spain: Biblical Interpretation between Ibn Hazm, Shlomo ibn Adret, and Shim'on ben Šemah Duran," in Joseph Dan, ed., *Gershom Sholem (1897–1982) – in Memoriam II* (Jerusalem, 2007), 37–57.
- Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava. "Ezra-ʿUzayr: History of a Pre-Islamic Polemical Motif through Islam to the Beginning of Biblical Criticism [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 55 (1986), 359–79.

- Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, 1992).
- Mazuz, Haggai. "Tracing Possible Jewish Influence on a Common Islamic Commentary on Deuteronomy 33:2," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 67, 2 (2016), 291–304.
- "Ma'aseh Mehmet: Reexamination and Critical Edition" [Hebrew], *Qeṣet 'Al Yadd* 27, 37 (forthcoming, 2021).
- Pertles, Joseph. *R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adreth: Sein Leben und seine Schriften nebst handschriftlichen Belegen zum ersten Male herausgegeben* (Breslau, 1863).
- Pertmann, Moshe. "The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism," in Shlomo Dov Goitein, ed., *Religion in a Religious Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), 103–38.
- Rabbi Simon b. Šemah Duran. *Qeset u-Magen* (Jerusalem, 1970).
- Roth, Norman. "Polemic in Hebrew Religious Poetry of Medieval Spain," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34, 1 (1989), 153–77.
- Shluter, Shimon. "Present at the Dawn of Islam: Polemic and Reality in the Medieval Story of Muhammad's Jewish Companions," in Michael M. Laskier and Yaacov Lev, eds., *The Convergence of Judaism and Islam: Religious, Scientific, and Cultural Dimensions* (Gainesville, 2011), 64–88.
- Steinschneider, Moritz. *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache* (Leipzig, 1877).

¹⁵³ See further, Daniel J. Lasker, "Islamic Influences on Karaite Origins," in William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions: Papers Presented at the Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies* (Atlanta, 1986), 23–47. Naḥshon Samaw'al argues that "most of the Karaites were little by little converted to Islam," see Samaw'al al-Maghribī, *Iḥyā' al-Yahūd*, 21b (82).