

Attitudes towards the  
Other in Muslim  
Poetry and Letters  
in Andalusia



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By

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I dedicate this book to the souls of my parents and my family,  
especially to my wife Londw, Maram, Marwa, Alaa',  
and Mohammad.



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## BACKGROUND

According to the written sources and poems that have been preserved from the Middle Ages, we may get the impression that the struggle between the three religions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism went through several stages. In the pre-Islamic period, there was a conflict between Arabs and Jews in the Arabian Peninsula, but this did not have a religious connotation before the advent of Islam. The disputes recorded do not have only religious motives; we can recognize that there were also reasons stemming from jealousy, dominance, and political and financial matters.

The social and economic status of the Jews created hostile attitudes against them, especially with the advent of Islam. The religious struggle received a particular impetus with the appearance of the Prophet Muḥammad, who advocated principles that paved the way for a change of consciousness among the Arabs who accepted the new religion. Jewish society treated the mass hostility as hatred directed against the Jews, and this hatred caused a similar reaction against the Muslims. The Jews tried to dominate Judaism, persecuted the Prophet Muḥammad, and spread rumours that lied about the principles of his new faith. This enmity was expressed in the poetic work of Yehuda Halevy, Saadia Gaon, and others, even though the entry of Muslims into Andalusia was positive for the Jews living there. Indeed, the tenth century was considered the golden age of Jewish culture in Spain, a period of flowering and cultural prosperity that was created thanks to the meeting between the two cultures. It should not be ignored, however, that there were ups and downs in the lives of the Jews, especially during the reign of the Mūjahideen and the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria, who sometimes persecuted them and limited them in certain areas.

The relationship became troubled, and the attitude of the Jews toward the Muslims became insulting. They attached offensive nicknames to the Muslims, as seen in certain songs describing their bad situation and the persecution against them, and they made calls and cries for deliverance. In the lamentations, they used nicknames and curses such as son of the mother-slave, the Hagaraim, a fire will burn the field of an Arab, and the like.

The second part of the book illustrates a number of letters in Arabic that were exchanged between Muslim and Jewish poets. From a study of these epistles, it is possible to learn that Jewish poets mastered the Arabic language to a high level. The connections and relations between the two groups in Andalusia are also examined in this light.



## CHAPTER ONE

# THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER IN ARABIC POETRY

### Introduction

This chapter deals with the images and nicknames that stuck to the figure of the Other in Arabic and Hebrew poetry. It also focuses on the relationship that prevailed between Muslims and other religions throughout history, from the beginning of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula to the reign of the Mamluks in Egypt (1250–1382) and the Andalusian period in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

The Other in Arabic poetry usually refers to the Jewish and Christian populations living in Arab Muslim-majority states. The Andalusian and Mamluk period, which scholars of Arabic poetry have often neglected, is key to understanding how images of the Other were constructed and represented in classical Arabic poetry and the role intertextuality with the Qur'ān plays in these representations. Consequently, this study focuses on images of the Jewish Other in Arabic poetry during the Andalusian and Mamluk period.

The Other refers to anyone who differs from the majority in terms of religion, race, colour, ideology, or social status. All religions and scriptures encouraged the acceptance of the Other and stated that minorities must be integrated and treated with respect. However, the Other has not always been treated with respect by the majority, who often had different perspectives. In addition, negative attitudes toward the Other and the desire to abolish or underestimate the rights they deserve have existed widely since ancient history.

Hence, although all religious scriptures preached the acceptance of the Other, some groups and individuals did not show this type of respect or tolerance. Instead, they pushed the Other to the margins of society on the pretext that they had caused them suffering and humiliation during a specific period in their history. Jews lived in peace under Muslim rule. In some periods, they were treated with tolerance, while in others, they were not.

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<sup>1</sup> All dates in this work are CE, unless otherwise indicated.

In the present study, I wish to examine attitudes toward the Other, in this case, Jews and Christians (Crusaders). The research question focuses on the image of the Other in medieval Arabic and Hebrew poetry, especially in Muslim Spain. The Muslim approach toward the Other must take into account the attitudes of Muḥammad and Islam toward the Jews in the Arabian Peninsula as a starting point for an examination of this issue in Andalusian Arabic and Hebrew poetry. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the relations between Muslims and members of other religious communities and how these were reflected in Arabic and Hebrew poetry in Muslim Spain.

### **The position of the other in the holy books**

In order to understand the relations between Jews and Arabs, it is necessary to go back to early Muslim and Jewish sources, ranging from the Arabian Peninsula to Muslim Spain. The historical background will make it possible to shed light on attitudes toward the Other in the poetry of the respective groups, especially in Muslim Spain.

Muslim Spain was not the first place where Arabs and Jews encountered each other. Relations between them had already begun in the Arabian Peninsula in pre-Islamic times in a period in which Arabs had contacts with the surrounding nations, especially through commerce. Yosef Ṭobi argues that the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qaīs (501–544) visited places in which there were Jewish communities and drank wine in Jewish taverns or had wine delivered by Jewish merchants to places in which he sojourned in Arabia.<sup>2</sup> The Jews of northern Arabia were known producers of wine, which they sold, for example, in the market of the Banū Qaynuqā' tribe in the Arabian city of Yathrib.<sup>3</sup>

Jews and Christians lived in the Arabian Peninsula in the days of the Prophet Muḥammad, but it is difficult to estimate their numbers. Scholars are agreed that three Jewish tribes lived in Medina, a Jewish tribe of agriculturalists lived in Khaybar, Jews lived in Yemen, and a Christian community existed in Najrān. Early Christianity was a monotheistic Abrahamic religion that developed gradually from the first century and spread from Palestine. At first, it comprised a small Jewish sect of believers in Jesus, but later it evolved into a universal faith that did not require Gentile

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<sup>2</sup> Yosef Ṭobi, "Ties and contexts in Imru' al-Qays' poetry" [in Hebrew], *Ben 'Ever le-'Arav* 5 (2011): 34.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia: From Ancient Times to Their Eclipse Under Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 77–87.

converts to observe the Torah commandments. Islam, too, is a monotheistic religion that was influenced by both Judaism and Christianity.

In the Qur'ān, Jews and Christians are called *ahl al-kitāb* or People of the Book. According to the Qur'ān, both religions are based on books of divine origin, and therefore there is no need to forcibly convert their adherents, although it is forbidden to adopt their faith. People of the Book are permitted to reside among Muslims and maintain their traditions and religious practices as long as they accept Muslim rule. The Christians of Najrān received special treatment because they agreed to accept the Prophet's authority, although they did not convert to Islam.

The Prophet Muḥammad was more influenced by Judaism than by Christianity but had better relations with the Christians, despite the fact that the Qur'ān rejects the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity. Despite their sympathy for the Jewish faith, Muslim sources are sharply critical of the behaviour of the Jewish in Arabia and maintain that the Christians there were preferable.<sup>4</sup>

In the initial stages of the formation of Islam by Muḥammad, Jewish influences were considerable. Many elements of Jewish faith and worship were adopted by the Prophet, including praying toward Jerusalem, a fast on the tenth day of the first month (Muḥarram), and more. These steps testify to a period when Muḥammad wished to make Islam similar to Judaism and emphasize their connections. For Muḥammad to obtain a favourable reaction to his message on the part of the People of the Book, Mecca was the appropriate place.<sup>5</sup> Because he adopted Jewish commandments such as circumcision and ritual slaughter, Muḥammad did not foresee any problem in animating Jews to accept his vision.<sup>6</sup>

Relations among the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula underwent certain changes with the appearance of the Prophet and the beginning of Islam. Jews, Arabs, and Christians lived there together. The Christians in pre-Islamic Arabia were known for their great piety and strict observance of the laws of their faith. Many of them led an ascetic way of life, chose to live in solitude, and devoted their lives to prayer and religious rites. They also disseminated their faith among the Arabs and elsewhere. (A distinction is made here between Arabs and Muslims because at least some of the Christians in Arabia spoke the same language as the Arabs.) The attitude of the Arabs toward the Christians was less negative than their attitude toward

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<sup>4</sup> Goitein, "Muḥammad", 27–81; Michael Laker, *Muḥammad and the Jews* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2014), 69–70.

<sup>5</sup> Goitein, "Muḥammad," 53.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 32.

the Jews. The Prophet's scribe, Ḥusān b. Thābit, used humiliating language when referring to Jews, whom he considered evil and accused of having broken their agreements with Muḥammad.<sup>7</sup> The Christians, on the other hand, were perceived as modest and flexible, such that Arabs befriended them more easily, despite the religious polemic concerning Jesus' nature: Christians believe in the Holy Trinity and consider Jesus the Son of God who was crucified, while Muslims reject the idea that God had children and maintain that Jesus was not crucified but ascended to heaven:

Say, O Prophet, "He is Allah—One and Indivisible; Allah—the Sustainer needed by all. He has never had offspring, nor was He born."<sup>8</sup>

[They were condemned] for boasting, "We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah." But they neither killed nor crucified him—it was only made to appear so.<sup>9</sup>

Christians were viewed by Arabs as harmless, pious people and were described as such in their poems. The Jews, too, were very attached to their faith. They engaged in commerce and took an active part in the social life of Arab society. The high status they enjoyed aroused others' envy.

With the emergence of Islam, attitudes toward the Jews changed for the worse because of the Jewish hostility toward Islam, which they perceived as competing with the Jewish faith. In the Arabian Peninsula, the Jews rejected Muḥammad's prophecy, and as a result, relations between the two faiths deteriorated. Hostility toward the Jews increased with the exposure of a plot that Jews hatched together with the tribe of al-Aws, whom they supported in their conflict with the al-Khazraj tribe in Yathrib. The Jews' support of al-Aws was a cause of unrest among the Arabian tribes.

The poet Ka'b b. Mālik describes the Muslims' response to the Jews' deed and how the Muslims took the Jews of the Banū al-Naẓīr from their homes and killed their leader, Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, whom they accused of having courted the Prophet's wives.

The following lines describe the shame attached to the Jews for having violated their treaties with the Muslims and how fate punished them for this:

<sup>7</sup> Ḥasan Ibn Thābit Al-'Ansārī, *Dīwān Ḥasan Ibn Thābit Al-'Ansārī* [The Poetry Collection of Hasan Ibn Thabit al-Ansari] (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' Al-Turāth Al-'Arabī, 2006), 133, 196.

<sup>8</sup> أَحَدٌ كُفُّوا لَهُ يَكُنْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَلِدْ لَمْ، الصَّمَدُ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ هُوَ قُلْ (Sūrah Al-Ikhlās 1–3).

<sup>9</sup> اخْتَلَفُوا الَّذِينَ وَإِنَّ لَهُمْ شَيْئَةً وَلَكِنْ صَلَبُوهُ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا اللَّهُ رَسُولٌ مَرَّتْ ابْنُ عِيسَى الْمَسِيحَ قَتَلْنَا إِنَّا وَقَوْلِهِمْ يَبْقَى قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا الظَّنَّ اتَّبَاعَ إِلَّا عِلْمٌ مَنْ بِهِ لَهُمْ مَا مِثْلُ شَيْءٍ لَفِي فِيهِ (Sūrah An-Nisa 157).

كذلك الدهر ذو صروف يدور / لقد خزيت بغدرتها الحبور

وذلك أنهم كفروا برب / عزيز أمره أمر كبير<sup>10</sup>

Because of their disloyalty, their rabbis were humiliated, and thus the wheel  
of fortune/time turned  
They also disbelieved in a dear Lord, a very powerful one.

The poet al-Murqash al-Asghar described the Jews as well-to-do merchants:

سبأها رجال من يهود تباعدوا / يلان يدينها من السوق مريح<sup>11</sup>

It was captured by Jews from two generations ago, who traded it in the  
market and made a profit.

Pre-Islamic poems in which Jews are mentioned tell us that they were wealthy merchants, money lenders, engaged in occupations that the Arabs shunned, and pious. This made them unpopular.

Jews were eventually exposed to Islam, Arab philosophy, the Arabic language, science, and the political arrangements in the Arab empire. As a result of this encounter, Judaism experienced a renewal based on the confrontation between Jewish and Muslim ideas.

It is important to note that Jews considered Christianity idolatry and so viewed it with hostility. But despite the terrible persecution of the Jews by Christians throughout the ages, Jews were instructed by their faith to treat their persecutors with kindness.<sup>12</sup> Islam, on the other hand, was not considered idolatry. This difference was also reflected in the decision Jews made when faced with the choice of conversion or harsh consequences.

Yusuf b. Abraham HaKohen al-Baṣīr was a halakhist and philosopher active at the beginning of the eleventh century, when he served as head of the Karaite community in Jerusalem. His main interests were theology and exegesis, as we learn from the topics of his treatises, some of which were monographs on theology.<sup>13</sup> Recent studies show that al-Baṣīr also took an active part in religious polemics. He participated in public debates and also

<sup>10</sup> Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Ibn Hishām* (1955), 3:205.

<sup>11</sup> Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Al-Dabbī, *Al-Mufaḍḍal, al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, eds. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir and ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut, 1964), 242.

<sup>12</sup> Shimon Federbusch, “Jewish attitudes towards Christianity,” *Sinai* 56 (1964): 1–2.

<sup>13</sup> Moshe Gil, *The Land of Israel during the Early Muslim Period (634–1099)*, Part I [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1983), para. 938.

wrote polemical treatises against rabbinic Jews, Samaritans, and Muslims, in addition to his other teaching and writing activities.<sup>14</sup>

The Arab-Christian polemical literature focused on the theme of the triumph of the faith and its dissemination through war and organized violence. At first, the dissemination of a new faith should be carried out by proselytizing rather than by imposition, according to the Christians. R. Yehuda Halevy (1075–1145) goes a step further in this polemic: Islam and Christianity are both guilty of this to the same extent; the only religion which appeared in a supernatural and non-political manner was the religion of Israel.<sup>15</sup> Rubin has noted that some of the Muslim polemic, both overt and covert, was targeted at Christianity, not only Judaism. He also showed that in pre-Islamic times, in the fifth century, Arabs were already aware of monotheistic Abrahamic-Ishmaelite traditions.<sup>16</sup>

After Muḥammad emigrated to Yathrib and accumulated political and military power, violent clashes took place between his supporters and the Jewish tribes in Yathrib and Khaybar. Muḥammad's massacre of the Jewish tribe of Banū Qurayṣa is a subject of debate. In his "Covenant of the Nation" (*'ahd al-umma*), Muḥammad committed himself to protecting and respecting the Jewish tribes as long as they did not help the tribes that fought against the Muslims.<sup>17</sup> But relations between the Jews of Yathrib and the Arab tribes in the city deteriorated shortly after Muḥammad's arrival.<sup>18</sup>

Muḥammad conducted two battles against the Jews: one against the tribe of Qurayṣa and the other against the Jews of Khaybar. The battle against the Qurayṣa ended with the massacre of most of the men and the capture of the women and children. Muslim tradition relates that the people of Qurayṣa betrayed Muḥammad in the Battle of the Trench (*al-khandaq*) and fought on the side of the Quraysh. This was considered a violation of the covenant.

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<sup>14</sup> David Sklir, "Unknown Karaite Compositions in the Firkovitch Collection" [in Hebrew], in David Sklir, *Judeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovitch Collections: Yūsuf al-Baṣīr: An Example Catalog: Sources and Studies* (Jerusalem, 1997), 139–142.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Struma, "Dāud Ibn Marwān al-Maḡmaṣ and His *'Ishrūn Maqāla*" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1983), 305.

<sup>16</sup> Uri Rubin, *Between Jerusalem and Mecca: Salvation and Redemption in the Quran and the Islamic Tradition* (Jerusalem: Magness, 2019), 174–175.

<sup>17</sup> Goitein, "Muḥammad," 56: "He of the Jews who is behind us [i.e., Jews who live in Yathrib but are not converts] will receive assistance and support. No wrong shall be done to him, nor shall we help his enemies against him."

<sup>18</sup> Haim Zeev Hirschberg, "The Jews in the Lands of Islam" [in Hebrew], in *Chapters in the History of Arabs and Islam*, ed. Lazarus Yafe (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1967), 266–267.



Many Muslims considered the men of Qurayṣa as heroes for their adherence to their faith and their refusal to convert to Islam.

As for the Jews of Khaybar, despite the many victims in the battle, there was no actual massacre because the local Jews agreed to surrender and give the Muslims half of the date harvest. The capitulation agreement following the Battle of Khaybar is considered the paradigm for a suitable relationship between the Muslim government and its Jewish and Christian subjects. The Khaybar Jews who were expelled by the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634–644) were among the Jews from Ḥijāz who settled in the Jewish community of Taymāʾ, which continued to exist many years after the emergence of Islam.<sup>19</sup>

In the pre-Islamic period, the dominant culture in Arabia was tribal, and tribal unity was a supreme value. The collective spirit demands that all members protect the tribe from strangers. Islam opposed this tribalism, called *al-ʿaṣabiyya al-qibliyya* in Arabic, and promoted tolerance. Although the Covenant of Medina of the seventh century paid lip service to the tribal hierarchy, it made it clear that the “nation of believers,” that is, the nation of Islam, prevails over tribal and family ties. Laker states that “from the time a member of the community, a *muʾmin* (believer), was forbidden to kill another member, even if the latter had killed the former’s unbeliever brother, the basic principle on which tribal solidarity was founded ceased to exist.”<sup>20</sup>

Many Qurʾānic verses praise the Children of Israel and emphasize their superiority over other nations. Islam accepts the fact that God considered Israel as His chosen people, more so than Christian Scripture: “O Children of Israel, remember My favour that I have bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the worlds.”<sup>21</sup>

The Jews of Medina were not known for their scholarship, but they did possess numerous *midrashim* and legends and were more cultured than the surrounding nations. The Prophet at first tried to convert them softly, with pleasant words and arguments.<sup>22</sup> He wished to prove to the Jews that the Qurʾān could play a mediating role in their conflicts, for it admits that Israel is a chosen nation, gifted with prophecy and wisdom: “Indeed, We gave the Children of Israel the Scripture, wisdom, and prophethood; granted them

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<sup>19</sup> Simḥa Asaf and L. A. Meir, *Sefer Hayishuv II: From the Conquest of the Land of Israel by the Arabs until the Crusades* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1943), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Laker, *Muḥammad and the Jews*, 69–70.

<sup>21</sup> Sūrah Al-Baqarah 47. See also Sūrah Al-Baqarah 122.

<sup>22</sup> Shimon Marcus, “Jew hatred in Islam” [in Hebrew], *Maḥanayim* 71 (1993), 70:6.

good, lawful provisions; and favoured them above the others”;<sup>23</sup> “Do not argue with the People of the Book unless gracefully.”<sup>24</sup>

Islam strove to treat all those who lived within its borders equally. The Qur’ān clearly states, “Certainly, Allah’s only Way is Islam,”<sup>25</sup> a call which attracted numerous believers in other religions, who believed that under Islam, they could live well and securely. Islam permitted those who did not convert to practice their faith as clients. Jews and Christians in the Muslim empire enjoyed freedom of worship and were able to retain their social customs. Elsewhere, Islam is said to have abolished all previous faiths: “Whoever seeks a way other than Islam, it will never be accepted from them, and in the Hereafter they will be among the losers.”<sup>26</sup>

Muḥammad believed that his success depended on a positive attitude toward the new religion on the part of Yathrib’s Jews. Just as he wanted to attract the polytheists, he expected the Jews, though not all and not all at once, to recognize him as their Messiah. He said that it would be enough if a handful accepted him at first, for many would then follow in their footsteps. The Jews of Yathrib were politically and culturally prominent, so it was natural for him to seek their support. In the Muslim tradition, there are intimations that the siege of Medina in 627 (the Battle of the Trench) was instigated by some leaders of the tribe of Nadhīr who had gone into exile in Khaybar and went to Mecca, where they advised the people to convince the tribe of Ghaṭafān, whose encampment was south of Khaybar, to join them in an attack on Medina. Events related to this period appear in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. However, the story is unlikely since the Jews did not go to war against the Muslims during this entire period.<sup>27</sup>

Jerusalem was captured after the Muslims’ victory at the Battle of Yarmuk (636). The Arabs besieged the city for two years before it capitulated. A late Muslim tradition relates that when Jerusalem yielded in 638, the commander of the Arab troops invited the caliph ‘Umar to enter the city. He entered Jerusalem on the back of a camel, accompanied by Ka’b al-Aḥbār, a Yemenite Jew who had converted to Islam. Ka’b also accompanied ‘Umar when the latter ascended the Temple Mount, which at the time was desolate and filled with rubble. ‘Umar wished to stand on the Foundation Stone and ordered the area to be cleared. One Muslim source adds that ‘Umar was helped by Jews to clear and protect the Temple Mount precinct.

<sup>23</sup> الْعَالَمِينَ عَلَىٰ وَفَضَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ مَنْ وَرَرَفَتَاهُمْ وَالتَّوْبَةَ وَالْحُكْمَ الْكِتَابِ إِسْرَائِيلَ بَنِي آدَمَ وَلَقَدْ جَآثِيَا (Sūrah Al-Jathiyah 16).

<sup>24</sup> أَحْسَنُ هِيَ الْبَالِي إِلَّا الْكِتَابَ أَهْلُ تَجَادَلُوا وَلَا (Sūrah Al-‘Ankabut 46).

<sup>25</sup> ۞إِلَّا سَلَّمَ اللَّهُ عِنْدَ الَّذِينَ إِنَّ (Sūrah Al-‘Imran 3).

<sup>26</sup> الْخَاسِرِينَ مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فِي وَهُوَ مِنْهُ يُقَالُ قُلْنَا دِينًا الْإِسْلَامَ غَيْرَ يَتَّبِعُ وَمَنْ (Sūrah Al-‘Imran 85).

<sup>27</sup> Goitein, “Muḥammad,” 68–69.

As he entered Jerusalem, 'Umar formulated a capitulation agreement for its residents, as he had done in other cities. The agreement was a contract of clienthood, which defined the rights of the occupied city's residents and their duties. The agreement is quoted in full by the Muslim historian al-Ṭabarī (838–923), who wrote his chronicle some 250 years after the event. The document's overall attitude toward the occupied population was identical to that of others of its kind issued by Muslim occupiers. The arrangements between the Muslim state and non-Muslim communities, whose religion was monotheistic and based on revelation, were defined in a document called "‘Umar's Pact" (*al-‘uhda al-‘umariyya*).<sup>28</sup> According to al-Ṭabarī, the following text is the covenant that 'Umar offered to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

In the name of Allah. This covenant is the protection agreement that 'Umar, the leader of the believers, gave to the people of Jerusalem: "This covenant protects each person and their property, their guards, and crosses, the sick and the healthy, and all members of all religions. We will not have Muslim soldiers in churches, and we will not destroy those churches. We will not take anything away from the churches, their possessions, or their crosses..."<sup>29</sup>

Contemporary scholars disagree about the reliability of this source. Some argue that the covenant was written when 'Umar was in Jerusalem. At the same time, others claim that the agreement was written when he was in the Golan Heights while he met with a delegation from Jerusalem. Still others argue that it was never even written by 'Umar but instead written later as an interpretation of 'Umar's character. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that 'Umar allowed the Jewish communities to stay in Jerusalem despite the Christian communities requesting that they should not be allowed to.

In this era of early Islam, Islamic Arabic poetry defended the Islamic faith and portrayed Muslim relations with the Jewish communities differently from the representations described in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. During this period, Muslim poets began to employ negative imagery to

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<sup>28</sup> The document defines the status of non-Muslim clients (*ahl al-dhimma*) and Muslims. The agreement exists in a number of versions that differ in structure and content (the conditions). It contains a list of permissions and restrictions that apply to non-Muslims. They are guaranteed the safety of their persons, their families and their property, although they do not enjoy all the rights of Muslims. The text is formulated as a letter from 'Umar to an unnamed Christian in an unnamed city, in the form of a writ of clienthood, which is to be respected on the condition that the Christians obey the regulations stated therein.

<sup>29</sup> Boaz Shoshan, *The Muslim Conquest of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2006), 28–48.

represent the Jewish Other, such as depicting them as liars, disbelievers, and as deceptive and disloyal of covenants and agreements. However, the Qur'ān includes many verses emphasizing the importance and uniqueness of Judaism and the Israelites. Most notably, the fact that Allah saw the Israelites as “the chosen people” is known in Islam because of the verse in the Qur'ān that says,

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ<sup>30</sup>.

O Children of Israel! Remember all the favours I granted you and how I honoured you above the others.

Islam thus preaches in favor of equality and confirms that the difference between Arabs and non-Arabs or Muslims and non-Muslims is not recognized except in their degree of faith and belief in God. Additionally, many verses in the Qur'ān encourage respecting the Other and prohibit discrimination based on sex, religion, race, or color. For example:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافُ السِّنِّيَّةِ وَالْوَانِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ<sup>31</sup>

And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. Surely in this are signs for those of sound knowledge.

Such sentiments can also be traced in one of the verses of Muḥammad's *ḥadīth*, in which he encourages respect for one another, regardless of each person's religion, colour, or origin:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَلَا إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّ أَبَاكُمْ وَاحِدٌ أَلَا لَا فَضْلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَى أَعْجَمِيٍّ وَلَا لِعَجَمِيٍّ عَلَى عَرَبِيٍّ وَلَا لَأَحْمَرَ عَلَى أَسْوَدَ وَلَا أَسْوَدَ عَلَى أَحْمَرَ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى إِنْ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اتَّقَاكُمْ.<sup>32</sup>

O people, your Lord is one and your Father is one. The Arab has no superiority over the foreigner, nor the foreigner over the Arab, neither the red over the black nor the black over the red, except in piety.

At first, Muḥammad tried to attract the Jewish tribes in Medina with persuasion and smooth talking.<sup>33</sup> The Prophet thus had to prove to the

<sup>30</sup> Sūrah Al-Baqarah 47.

<sup>31</sup> Sūrah Ar-Rum 22.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Saqqāf, *Al-Durar al-Sunniyya*, 313.

<sup>33</sup> Marcus, “Jew hatred in Islam.”

Jewish tribes that the Qur'ān dictates that the Israelites are God's chosen people and encourages a good relationship between Islam and Judaism:

ولقد آتينا بني إسرائيل الكتاب والحكم والنبوة ورزقناهم من الطيبات على العالمين<sup>34</sup>

We gave the Children of Israel the Scripture, wisdom, and prophethood; granted them good, lawful provisions; and favoured them above the others.

ولا تجادلوا أهل الكتاب الا بالتي هي أحسن<sup>35</sup>

Do not argue with the People of the Book unless gracefully.

In addition, a straightforward reading of the Qur'ān says: "Islam is the belief in God; it is the noble belief." Therefore, Islam dictates the equal treatment of all Muslims and non-Muslims living among them. This reading has attracted many non-Muslims to live in dignity and security under Islamic rule, primarily since Islam protects the right to religious freedom. Jewish people and Christians thus lived securely under Muslim rule because they could practice their religious freedom and lead a social life according to their traditions and customs. However, other Islamic scholars insist that Islam does not recognize other religions. This is based on the Qur'ānic verse that says,

ومن يبتغ غير الإسلام ديناً فلن يقبل منه وهو في الآخرة من الخاسرين<sup>36</sup>

Certainly, God's only Way is Islam. Those who were given the Scripture did not dispute among themselves out of mutual envy until knowledge came to them. Whoever denies God's signs, then surely God is swift in reckoning.

Jews were considered People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*). They were thus defined as clients (*ahl al-dhimma*),<sup>37</sup> in accordance with the Qur'ānic precept "Let there be no compulsion in religion,"<sup>38</sup> and they had the right to the protection of the Muslim authorities. Dhimmīs were guaranteed their personal safety and the right to worship in return for recognizing the superiority of Islam, payment of a head tax (*jizya*), and a number of

<sup>34</sup> Sūrah Al-Jathiyah 16.

<sup>35</sup> Sūrah Al-ʿAnkabut 46.

<sup>36</sup> Sūrah Al-ʿImran 19.

<sup>37</sup> Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, ed., *Muslim Writers on Jews and Judaism: Jews Among Their Muslim Neighbors* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1995), 8.

<sup>38</sup> لا اكراه بالدين (Sūrah Al-Baqarah 256).

restrictions. The client status granted to Jews was thus not one of equality but rather of subservience to Muslims.

Muḥammad was a daring diplomat and strategist and concluded non-aggression pacts with Jewish tribes (the Qaynuqā', Naḍīr, and Qurayza) when the Jews were militarily and economically stronger. However, after their allies had abandoned them, their strongholds, weapons caches, and financial means were no longer able to ensure their safety. Laker exposes the sophisticated political strategy pursued by Muḥammad that enabled him to undermine the Jewish tribes' power base and isolate and defeat them: "There is no evidence that the Jews converted, but it appears that they became amenable to accepting the belief in one God."<sup>39</sup>

One of the causes of the great variation in rulers' attitudes toward the Other was the Muslim state's strength or weakness. In times of greater strength, the authorities were more tolerant than in times of weakness, for example, during the Crusades when it had to repel the Christians. Another factor was the extent to which a dynasty wished to present itself as the protector of Islam. As a result, some dynasties persecuted the Jews who lived in their territory. Jews usually lived as a minority community, separated from the Muslim community by various barriers. They possessed a degree of autonomy under community leaders and judges and so were able to conduct their personal, family, and religious affairs according to their faith. The authorities would, at times, decide to levy taxes on the Jews. The Jewish communities were responsible for collecting them and giving them to the government. Although Jews usually used their own courts, which ruled according to Jewish law, there were also rare cases of Jews going to a Muslim court if they thought that the latter would rule more favourably on the issue at hand.

Jews and Christians under Muslim rule were rarely killed for their faith, although some cases of martyrdom did occur throughout the history of Jews in Muslim lands. Life under Muslim rule benefited some, but the threat of persecution was always present. A new period of Muslim persecution began under the Almohads (*al-muwahhidīn*), a zealous Muslim dynasty founded in North Africa that ruled in Spain in the twelfth century and strove to "purify" Islam. At first, they were tolerant of non-Muslims, but as the territories under their control grew during the reign of 'Abd al-Mu'min, Jews and Christians were forced to convert.<sup>40</sup> During the reign of the Abū

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<sup>39</sup> Laker, *Muḥammad and the Jews*, 16–38.

<sup>40</sup> Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House*, 85; Amir Mazor, "Maimonides' forced conversion to Islam" [in Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 110 (2006): 5–8.

Ya'qūb (d. 1184), spurious conversions were common, and severe restrictions were imposed on Jewish converts to Islam.<sup>41</sup>

The First Crusade, which resulted in the annihilation of the Jewish community of Jerusalem, created a complex social and geographical situation for Jews, especially for the Karaite community, whose centre moved from Jerusalem to the Byzantine Empire. One of the outcomes of this development was a change in the context in which Karaite anti-Christian polemics took place. Before the Crusades, such polemics took place under Muslim tutelage, but after the move to Byzantium, Karaites were a minority community in a Christian country. Anti-Christian statements and expressions can be seen in Judah Hadassi's book *Eshkol ha-Kofer*.<sup>42</sup> Such expressions can be found throughout the book, sometimes as a series of arguments, and sometimes just as an aside as a single sentence or word in a context that has no relation to the polemics.

The physician and philosopher Maimonides (1138–1204), who lived in a time when Jews in Spain, North Africa, and Yemen were often faced with the choice of death or conversion to Islam, wrote in his *Igeret Teman*<sup>43</sup> that Jews were permitted to convert rather than die but should instead continue to observe their faith in secret and return to Judaism when circumstances permitted. He added that Jews were in exile in the lands of Ishmael because of their sins, that they suffered greatly from Ishmaelite persecution, but that they should not lose hope because redemption would come. Maimonides refers here to the rebel Ibn Tumart and the forced conversion imposed by the Almohads in the Maghreb in 1146 and in southern Spain in 1148.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> They were forbidden to marry Muslims, to own slaves, to work as guards, to wear the Muslim headdress, and to engage in commerce.

<sup>42</sup> *Eshkol Ha-Kofer* (Library of the Jewish Seminary, New York, Ms. 3402, fifteenth century, Karaite script) contains 461 pages and begins with the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery." At the beginning there is a note about the book in Arabic and the name of the owner: "Hasda'el the physician, son of ... Daniel the physician of ... Gedaliah Fayrus son of R. Yosef Fayruz." Other anti-Christian statements can be found in *Migdal 'Oz* by Shlomo Yedidiah Ben Aharon Troki and *Hizuk Ha-Emuna* by Yitzhak Avraham Troki the Physician, which was translated into a number of languages. For more, see Golda Akhiezer and Daniel Lasker, "Shlomo Ben Aharon Troki and His Anti-Christian Treatise *Migdal 'Oz*" [in Hebrew], in *Eastern European Karaites in the Last Generations*, eds. Dan Shapira and Daniel Lasker (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2011), 97–129.

<sup>43</sup> *Igeret Teman* was composed in 1173 as a reply to a letter by R. Yaakov b. R. Nathanel Berav al-Fayyumi, leader of the Jews of Yemen, in which the latter asked why the Yemeni Jewish community had to suffer so greatly from pogroms and forced conversions.

<sup>44</sup> Yehuda Eisenburg, "Igeret Teiman," *Sinai* 56 (1964): 1–4.

In order to understand the Jewish attitude toward the Other, we must first understand how foreigners, non-Jews, and converts are defined in Jewish scripture. The biblical Hebrew word *goy*, in the sense of “nation,” was applied equally to Israel and to other nations. It first appears in Genesis 12:1–2: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great *nation*.” In rabbinic Hebrew, the word means “non-Jew,” corresponding to biblical Hebrew *nokhri*. According to the Mishna, “Beloved is man for he was created in the image [of God]” (Pirkei Avot 3:14), that is, all human beings are loved by God.

In the Torah, the Children of Israel are admonished to treat all “strangers” (*ger*) living in the Land of Israel with respect: “And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong. The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33–34).

According to one opinion, these verses show the essential difference between Jews and other nations, Jews being superior to others. But others disagree and maintain that Israel’s special status is due to the Torah, and that there is no essential difference between a Jewish and a non-Jewish person.<sup>45</sup> Any human being can attain the highest level possible, but the people of Israel, thanks to the Torah and its commandments, have a better “starting point” because the Torah enables them to be “a wise and understanding people” (Deuteronomy 4:6). Thus, a non-Jew, if he chose the way of the Torah or some other way that would bring him to the truth, can become equal to a Jew, or even superior. The first approach was taken, for example, by R. Yehuda Halevy, and the second by Maimonides.

But although Halevy insists that there is an essential difference between Israel and the Gentiles with respect to the trait of being God’s “treasure” (*segula*) and with respect to prophecy and revelation, he also stresses the shared features of all mankind, “all of whom are His creatures, may He be exalted.” He thus distinguishes between the role of non-Jews, which is to live in this world and maintain a just society, and Jewish society, which has the additional role of being in contact with the deity through the observance of the Torah’s commandments.<sup>46</sup>

For Maimonides, the essential differences between the Jewish nation and the Gentiles are smaller than they are for Halevy. Every person, according to Maimonides, is to be judged by his own personal achievements, irrespective

<sup>45</sup> In rabbinic Hebrew, *ger* denotes a convert to Judaism.

<sup>46</sup> Yehuda Halevy, *Sefer Hakuzari* [in Hebrew], ed. R. Qafah (Kiryat Ono, 2000), 8, 41, 27–28.



of his nationality. This idea is clearly enunciated in his response to the question of why the Levites did not receive a part of the Land of Israel when Joshua conquered it and divided it among the tribes. Maimonides writes that the tribe of Levy has a unique task: “to worship God, to serve Him and to teach His right ways.” They should, therefore, focus on this task rather than on their own land. Maimonides then adds a general explanation of this issue (*Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Shemita ve-Yovel 13:12–13).

Maimonides called for non-Jews to be respected. Despite his own personal tribulations and those of his nation among the Arabs, he warned his fellow Jews not to treat the Arabs as they treated the Jews. He pointed out that the Torah commanded the Jews not to stray from the path of truth when judging the religion of others, to condemn what deserves condemnation, but also not to ignore its positive aspects.<sup>47</sup> Maimonides was very close to the Ayyubid rulers of Egypt. Despite the accusations against him, he was fully backed by his patron, the vizier, and the sultan himself, who was treated by him, as was his family.<sup>48</sup> Halevy, on the other hand, expressed contempt for non-Jews. However, it may well be that their respective points of departure had the opposite result. Maimonides was very judgmental toward the Gentiles because he believed that every man has the opportunity to attain human perfection, and whoever does not strive to achieve the best that one can fails to fulfil his function in the world and should be treated accordingly. Halevy was less judgmental because, in his view, since Gentiles lack divine *segula*, they are incapable of surpassing their material restrictions.<sup>49</sup>

For a long time, Jews lived in towns and organized themselves in communities throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa. Their spiritual world was an enchanted one of legend (*midrash*) and ritual law (*halakha*), very different from that of their neighbours, although they shared the history and culture of their surroundings almost completely. The Jews fled from the

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<sup>47</sup> Federbusch, “Jewish attitudes towards Christianity,” 3–4: “These Ishmaelites do not practice idolatry at all, which has already been removed from their mouths and their hearts. They worship only God, may He be exalted, and their monotheism is flawless. And just because they lie and say ‘We say that God has a son,’ we should not also lie and say that they are idolators. The Torah testified that they are those ‘Whose mouth speaketh deceit, And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood’ (Psalm 144:11).”

<sup>48</sup> Mazor, “Maimonides’ forced conversion to Islam,” 5–8.

<sup>49</sup> Daniel Lasker, “Judah Halevi as a Biblical exegete in the *Kuzari*,” in *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur’ān presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, eds. Meir M. Bar-Asher, Simon Hopkins, Sarah Stroumsa, and Bruno Chiesa (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2007), 179–191.

battles and outrages of the Byzantines,<sup>50</sup> who massacred them, humiliated them, and raped their women, to the Arabian Peninsula, where they engaged in commerce and pursued a variety of other professions. They also tried to convince the local pagans to convert to monotheistic Judaism, but without success.

The treatment of all mankind with respect has a number of sources of inspiration. In the Jerusalem Talmud, two ethical approaches are presented, one inspired by the principle of mutuality, the other by the fact that God created all men equally in His image: “‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’: R. Akiva says: This is a great principle in the Torah” (Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Nedarim 9:4).

### Stability and fluctuations in relation to others

The status of the Other in Arabic poetry was different from place to place. There are poets who flattered the Jews, and there are others who gave them offensive nicknames.

The poet al-A‘shā (570–629) praised the noble behaviour of Shemuel Ben ‘Adiya, who guarded assets that Imru’ al-Qaīs had placed in his keeping. When the latter’s enemies came and threatened to kill Shemuel’s son if he did not give him the money, he preferred to sacrifice his child rather than betray his friend’s trust:

وقال: لا أشتري عارا بمكرمة / فاختار مكرمة الدنيا على العار<sup>51</sup>

He said: I do not buy shame for money; I choose honour in this world over shame.

Another Jewish poet, Samāk, promised vengeance on Muslims who had attacked Jews, especially after the expulsion of the Banū al-Naẓīr, a Jewish tribe in Arabia:

فإن لم امت نأتكم بالقنا / كل حسام معا مرهف<sup>52</sup>

If I do not die, we shall come with spears and every sharp sword [that we possess].

<sup>50</sup> Binyamin Tūtīlī, *Rihlat al-Tūtīlī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shaykh (Abu Dhabi, 2001), 14.

<sup>51</sup> Al-‘A‘shā, *Dīwān*, 117–118.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Ibn Hishām*, 3:208.

When Islam first emerged, all efforts were devoted to disseminating the faith, making converts, and strengthening the belief in the Prophet and his principles. Muslim poets wrote numerous poems in which they responded to verses composed by Jewish poets. In these Muslim poems, the Jews are described in negative terms: as liars, unbelievers, and crafty traitors who violate agreements.

Representations of the Jewish Other are present in Arabic poetry throughout history. During the pre-Islamic period, the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula frequently interacted with other people, primarily due to trade. Tobi asserts that 'Imru' al-Qaīs often visited places where Jewish communities lived and drank wine in Jewish taverns, and Jewish merchants also brought wine to the poet wherever he resided in the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>53</sup>

A thread that appears throughout Arabic poetry during the pre-Islamic era is that Jewish communities worked in the wine trade and had ample knowledge of winemaking and ageing. This is because the Jewish communities who lived in northern Arabia were engaged in producing and selling wine, such as in the Qaynūqa market in the city of Yathrib.<sup>54</sup> For instance, al-A' shā admires a Jewish man's wine because of the way he prays over it,<sup>55</sup> saying,

وصهباء طاف يهوديا / وأبرزها وعليها ختم  
وقابلها الريح في دنها / وصلّى على دنها وارسم<sup>56</sup>

The Jewish man sealed the wine casket, put it in the sun,  
and prayed over it so that the wine does not go sour.

'Adī Ibn Zayd Al-'Abādī also admired a Jewish trader's expertise in winemaking and aging:

صانها التاجر اليهودي حولين / فأذكى من نشرها التعتيق  
ثم فض الختام عن حاجب الدمن / وحانت من اليهودي سوق<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Tobi, "Ties and contexts in Imru' al-Qays' poetry," 34.

<sup>54</sup> Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia*, 77–87.

<sup>55</sup> 'Ihsān Al-Dīk, "Al-'Ākhar wa-'atharuh fī shi'ir Al-'A' shā Al-Kabīr (Maymūn Ibn Qaīs)" [The Other and Its Effects in Al-Asha Al-Kabir's Poetry (Maymun Ibn Qays)], *Majallit Mujamma' Al-Luḡah Al-'Arabīyah Al-Falasṭīnīyah* (Jerusalem) 24 (2000): 23.

<sup>56</sup> Al-'A' shā Abū Baṣīr Maymūn Ibn Qaīs, *Dīwān Al-'A' shā* [The Poetry Collection of Al-Asha] (Beirut: Al-Shirkah Al-Libnānīyah lil-Kitāb, 1968), 151–152.

<sup>57</sup> 'Uday Ibn Zayd Al-'Abādī, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Jābir al-Mu'īd (Baghdad, 1965), 17.

The Jewish merchant was intelligent in wine ageing; he preserved the wine for two years, then he removed the seal to open the casket and sold the wine in the market.

Pre-Islamic poets represented Jewish people not only in relation to winemaking, ageing, and trading but also in relation to their architecture, which was often described as solid and enormous. For example, al-Qaīs likened his camel to a Jewish building<sup>58</sup> to imply its greatness and strength<sup>59</sup> by saying,

فَعَزِيزٌ نَفْسِي حِينَ بَانُوا بِجَسْرَةٍ / أَمُونُ كِبْنِيَّانِ الْيَهُودِيِّ خَفِيقِ<sup>60</sup>

My strong camel is visible from a great distance, like a Jewish building.

However, during the early days of Islam, images of the Jewish Other began to be represented somewhat differently. This was due to Jewish hostility toward Muslims and the Prophet Muḥammad and their differences in belief. In Islam, the People of the Book have the right to preserve their religions, traditions, and customs under Muslim rule. Therefore, Islam does not infringe on their faith but forbids following in their footsteps. Even so, he had a better relationship with the Christian tribes despite the Qurʾān denying the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In other words, Muḥammad sympathized with the Jewish people living in the Arabian Peninsula but strongly criticized their behaviours and favoured the Christian communities instead.<sup>61</sup>

Nonetheless, Jewish influences are strongly evident at the beginning of Muḥammad's formulation of Islam. This is because he incorporated numerous Jewish religious texts and was specifically interested in their labour and manners. For instance, during the early days of Islam, Muḥammad urged Muslims to pray in the direction of Jerusalem and to establish a fasting day on the tenth day of the first month (Muḥarram). Such moves are a testament to when Muḥammad sought to portray Islam as similar to Judaism and bridge the gap between the two religions. If Muḥammad were to point out the attitude of the People of the Book toward his Gospel, it would be in the holy city of Mecca.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-Kindī 'Imru' Al-Qaīs, *Dīwān 'Imru' Al-Qaīs* [The Poetry Collection of 'Imru' Al-Qais] (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1958), 134.

<sup>59</sup> Nuṣrat 'Abd Al-Raḥmān, *Al-Šūrah al-fannīyah fī ḏū 'al-naqd al-ḥadīth* [Imagery in Modern Criticism] (Amman: Maktabat Al-'Aqsā, 1982), 27.

<sup>60</sup> 'Imru' Al-Qaīs, *Dīwān 'Imru' Al-Qaīs*, 134.

<sup>61</sup> Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> Goitein, "Muḥammad," 53; Laker, *Muḥammad and the Jews*, 69–70.

Muḥammad's positive views on the Islamic adoption of Jewish commandments, such as circumcision and kosher slaughter, did not foresee the problems that later arose from recruiting Jewish people to follow Islam.<sup>63</sup> After Muḥammad's migration from Mecca to Yathrib and his increased political and military powers, serious conflicts arose between him and the Jewish tribes in Yathrib and Khaybar. The poet 'Abdallāh Ibn Rawāḥa, for example, represented this intense hostility between the two parties and criticized the al-'Aws tribe for allying themselves with the Jewish tribes over the al-Khazraj:

ز عمتم انما نلتم ملوكا / ونز عم انما نلنا عبيدا  
وكنتم تدعون يهود مالا / الان وجدتم فيها يهودا؟<sup>64</sup>

You claim that you have become kings, and we argue that you have become slaves. You followed the Jews and their money, but now you cannot even find one Jew among you.

There is a debate about the conflict between Muḥammad and the Jewish Banū Kūrīs tribe. In his "Covenant of the Nation," Muḥammad pledged to protect Jewish tribes and treat them respectfully as long as they did not ally with the tribes that fought against Islam and Muslims.<sup>65</sup> Thus, good neighbourly relations prevailed between the Jewish tribes in Yathrib and the Arab tribes that resided there shortly after Muḥammad migrated to Yathrib.<sup>66</sup> The best-documented conflicts between Muḥammad and the Jewish tribes are those with the Banū Qurayzah and the al-Khaybar. When Muḥammad invaded the lands of the Banū Qurayzah, the poet Ḥassān Ibn Thābit stood in defence of the Muslims and described their courage in fighting the al-Khaybar and the humiliation that befell them by saying,

لقد لقيت قريظة ما ساءها / وما وجدت لذل من نصير  
اصابهم بلاء كان فيهم سوى / ما قد اصاب بني النضير  
غداة اتاهم يهوي اليهم / رسول الله كالقمر المنير  
له خيل مجنبة تعادى / بفرسان عليها كالصقور<sup>67</sup>

The Banū Qurayzah found out what happened to them, but their humiliation did not find a supporter. They were afflicted with a calamity similar to the one that befell the Banū Al-Naḍīr. In the morning, he came to them, the

<sup>63</sup> Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House*, 32.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn Rawāḥa, 'Abdullāh. *Dīwān*, ed. W. Qaṣb. Riyadh, 1982: 58.

<sup>65</sup> Goitein, "Muḥammad," 56.

<sup>66</sup> Hirschberg, "The Jews in the Lands of Islam," 266–267.

<sup>67</sup> Al-'Ansārī, *Dīwān Ḥasan Ibn Thābit Al-'Ansārī*, 133.

Messenger of God like a shining moon, with his horses and knights who fought fearlessly like hawks.

Ibn Thābit represents how the battle with the Banū Qurayẓah ended with the slaughter of many men and the imprisonment of many women and infants, which also happened in the battle with the Banū al-Naḍir. Additionally, Islamic tradition mentions how the Banū Qurayẓah had already betrayed Muḥammad at the Battle of Al-Khandaq and allied against him with the Quraysh. Ibn Thābit represents this incident as follows:

لقد لقيت قريظة ما عطاها / وحل بحصنها ذل دليل  
وسعد كان أنذرهم نصيحا / بأن إلههم رب جليل  
فما برحوا بنقض العهد حتى / غزاهم في ديارهم الرسول<sup>68</sup>

The Banū Qurayẓah have experienced the warnings of Muḥammad, and their fortresses have become humiliated with defeat. Muḥammad had warned them that their God is a great Lord, but they continued to break the covenant until the Messenger of God invaded their homes.

The poet here refers to the betrayal of the Banū Qurayẓah and their breach of the covenant they had with Muḥammad. The battle against them was thus justified because they had betrayed and plotted against Muḥammad.

Nevertheless, Muslims occupied Jerusalem after their victory at the Battle of Al-Yarmūk. When the Muslims first reached Jerusalem in 1238, they imposed a siege on the city that lasted for about two years. Upon the city's surrender in 1240, the enemy commander invited Caliph 'Umar to enter the city. 'Umar entered Jerusalem on his camel accompanied by Ka'b Al-'Aḥbar, a Yemeni Jew who had converted to Islam. Caliph 'Umar then went with Al-'Aḥbar to Temple Mount. When the two men arrived there, they found that the temple area was in ruins and unclean, so 'Umar ordered Muslims to restore and clean up the whole area. According to Muslim history, Caliph 'Umar also received help from the Jewish communities in Jerusalem to restore the Temple Mount area.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, after entering Jerusalem, Caliph 'Umar drew up a covenant of surrender for all its inhabitants, as Muslims had done when they had occupied other cities. This covenant was called "Al-'Ahd Al-'Umarī," and it was cited by the Muslim historian Al-Ṭabarī, who wrote about the events 250 later. This covenant was an agreement between the Muslim state and

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>69</sup> Ahmad Al-Yaqoubi, *Al-Yaqoubi's History*, vol. 2 (Beirut, 2016), 46.