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JEWISH-MUSLIM RELATIONS

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Earliest Contacts and the Paradigms of Relationship

It is impossible to understand the complex nature of modern Jewish-Muslim relations without revisiting Arabia of the 7th century, when the new Believers (*mu'minun*) of emerging Islam began to establish their foundational worldviews. It is already in this earliest context that Muhammad and his followers came into contact with Jews, and this particular contact became extremely important because reactions to it were recorded for posterity in the Qur'an. The only sources for the earliest relations between Jews and Muslims are the Qur'an and its attendant literatures, which, like other sacred literatures, are interested in history only insofar as it helps to define the emerging community and its values and ideas.

Jews lived in Arabia for some generations before the birth of Muhammad. Legends place Jewish penetration into Arabia as early as the Exodus from Egypt, when Moses sent an army into Arabia to pursue the Amalekites. The Yemenite Jewish community claims its origins in the exile following the destruction of the First Temple or further back with the Queen of Sheba, whose child by Solomon was raised as a Jew. There is no reason to believe these legends as accurate history, but they point to the awareness among Arabs that Jews had been living among them for a long time before the birth of Muhammad.

According to the Islamic sources, there is no record of a Jewish community living in Muhammad's home town of Mecca, but there was a thriving community in

Medina. Muhammad was forced out of Mecca by his own tribe in 622 and found refuge in Medina, where he came into contact with the Jewish community living there. It was out of that contact from which Islamic images of Jews – positive, negative and neutral – were first established and then sanctified by their appearance in Islamic scripture.

The Qur'an on the Jews

The Qur'an is ambivalent about the Jews. On the one hand, it instructs Muhammad to go to the Jews and learn from them: 'And if you (Muhammad) are uncertain about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book [that was] before you. The truth has come to you from your Lord, so do not be one of those who doubt' (Q.10:94).¹ The Qur'an also teaches that Jews, Christians and others who believe in God and act righteously will have nothing to fear, suggesting that like Muslim believers, they will find salvation (2:62, 5:69, 22:17). On the other hand, the Qur'an repeatedly condemns the Jews for rejecting the prophetic status of Muhammad. It refers to Jews as stiff-necked and rebellious (2:93, 105, 5:78, 62:5), dishonest (2:100,) violent (2:85, 91, 4:157), usurious and greedy (4:161, 6:146, 9:34), arrogant (3:24, 181, 5:64, 46:10), insidious (2:109, 120, 3:69), jealous (4:54, 5:51), liars (3:71, 94, 5:41, 6:28) and unbelievers (2:55, 103, 3:72, 5:41, 9:30-31, 59:2-4), and it accuses them of distorting their own scripture in order to discredit the message of the Qur'an and the prophet who brought it (2:79, 3:78, 4:46, 5:13, 41).

These references are not always directed specifically to the appellation, 'Jews' (*yahud*). Many refer to 'People of the Book,' and that reference generically concerns

¹ See also Q.16:43: 'So if you do not know, then ask the people of the Reminder (*ahl al-dhikr*).' The great 9th century scholar and collector of tradition, al-Tabari, cites the early tradition that God is referring here to *ahlul-tawrah* – the people of the Torah.

communities of people who were recipients of revelations prior to the revelation of the Qur'an, namely Jews and Christians. But Islamic sources do not contain any information about Christians living in Medina, so the assumption among the traditional Qur'an commentators is that most of the general references to People of the Book (those that do not specify Christians) refer to the Jews of Medina.

Even among some of the negative references to Jews, however, are reminders that not all can be typed one way or the other. 'They are not all alike. Of the People of Scripture is an upright community reciting the verses of God at the approach of night and prostrating themselves. They believe in God and the Last Day, command the decent and refrain from the indecent, vying for the good. These are the righteous. Whatever good they do will not be denied, for God knows the pious.' (3:113-115, and see also 3:199, 4:55, 4:155).

It should not be surprising that the Qur'an contains negative and angry references directed to adherents of established religions. Polemic is a common trait among the scriptures of all three great families of monotheism, and the anger that scriptures direct toward established religions simply denotes the difficult environments in which scriptures always emerge.

All three scriptures direct anger against representatives of the establishment systems that opposed them: the Qur'an toward Jews, Christians and above all, Arabian idol-worshippers; the New Testament toward Jews, Greco-Roman pagans and the Roman establishment; and the Hebrew Bible toward idolatrous nations such as the Moabites and Midianites, idolatrous empires such as Assyria, Egypt and Babylon, and most threatening of all, the establishment religious culture of the local Canaanite peoples. The point of this comparison is neither to reduce the particularities of Judaism, Christianity and Islam nor to avoid taking anti-Judaism seriously. It is,

rather, to avoid the common error of distorting the meaning of anti-Judaism when examining it out of context. Anti-Judaism exists in the Qur'an, to be sure, but it must be seen as a natural, even if unfortunate, expression of an emerging religion's claim to uniqueness.

One might ask why emerging religions must disparage an innocent community such as the Jews. The answer is, in part, that upon closer inspection, communities denigrated or vilified by emerging religions do not generally appear to have been so innocent. We are not trying to blame the victim, but rather to understand how and why established religions threaten the success of new religions. The problem of threat, of course, works in two directions, and the first to threaten the other is typically the new religion or sect that raises the hackles of the establishment. This is apparent, for example, with the rise of sects and 'cults' in our own generation. As a result of this threat, established religions characteristically attempt to prevent the success of the upstart. Most new religious movements die within a generation. Very few succeed, and the tremendous success of the Islamic movement was seen as divine proof to the Muslims that their form of monotheism is the most perfect form of religion. According to this line of thinking, history has proven the eternal superiority of Islam and the secondary status of the other monotheisms.

The Jewish communities of Medina, the only Jews that Muhammad and his followers came to know, appear to have threatened the early Muslims in both the conceptual or ideational sense and the physical sense. The first sense caused the greater crisis, but the second was also significant. Some verses portray the Jews not only as refusing to accept Muhammad's role as prophet but also as trying to discredit him:

O you who believe, do not take as friends those who ridicule your religion, [whether] of those to whom were given Scripture previously or the unbelievers, but be pious to God if you are believers. And when you call for prayers, they take it for ridicule and jest. This is because they are a people without sense. Say: O People of Scripture, are you revengeful toward us only because we believe in God and in what has been sent down to us, and in what has been sent down previously, and because most of you are degenerate sinners? (Q.5:57-59)

The organized Jewish communities of Medina are portrayed quite consistently in the religious sources as refusing to accept Muhammad as a prophet. Those verses condemning the Jews in general while noting that a few are righteous probably refer to individual Jews who left their religion and became followers of Muhammad. The aggregate, however, is portrayed consistently as remaining steadfast (or stiff-necked) in the face of the growing strength of the Muslims. References to the Jews as stiff-necked, arrogant or jealous probably refer to their refusal to accept the new prophet and his religion, to Jews as liars or as distorting their own holy book probably refer to the problem raised by the inevitable contradictions between new revelations and those previously recorded as scripture.

All negative descriptions of Jews recorded in the Qur'an and the early literatures were a result of the friction between the early Muslim community and the organized Jewish communities (tribes) of Medina. The Qur'an represents itself as a universal teaching, however, so because of this aspect of its rhetorical style, it appears to refer negatively to the Jews in general terms. To add to the problem is the fact that to Muslim believers, the Qur'an is inimitable scripture (and the inimitability of the

Qur'an is an absolute dogma of Islamic theology), so its portrayal of Jews represents a level of truth that is extremely difficult to question. As scripture, the Qur'an is a powerful foundation for contemporary Muslims' worldviews all over the globe. The conflicts it reflects ensued for only a few years, but the verses of scripture that record them are eternal.

The Rules of the *Dhimma*

The layer of sacred Islamic literature that follows the Qur'an is the record of the *sunna*, or behaviors and sayings of Muhammad, the prophet. These are recorded in a literature called the *Hadith*. Like the Qur'an, the Hadith reflects the conflicts that grew up between the Jews and early Muslims, and definitive archetypes or stereotypes of Jews were established also in this vast literature. The later juridical literature of Islam was developed primarily from the Qur'an and the Hadith, so it both reinforced these images and created law that would perpetuate them.

Unlike early Judaism and Christianity, early Islam found itself in military and political control of vast populations of non-believers within only a generation after its emergence. It was therefore necessary to develop policy regarding them, and this occurred under the term 'rules of the protected minorities' (*ahkam al-dhimma*). The details vary and the process of creating any kind of official policy was a long one. Moreover, the laws or policies that were developed were often ignored by rulers or were enacted only when it suited them. Once established, however, they were 'on the books,' meaning that they represented an authoritative articulation of expected relations with religious minorities, including the Jews.

It should be stated for the record that the Qur'an nowhere calls for the destruction of the Jews. The policy of relationship between Muslims and Jews is based upon and authorized by Qur'an 9:29: 'Fight those who do not

believe in God or in the Last Day and do not make forbidden what God and His messenger have made forbidden, and do not practice the religion of truth, among those who have been given the Book, until they pay the *jizya* off hand (*>an yadⁱⁿ*), being humbled/humiliated (*wahum §Eghir`n*). 'The meaning and significance of the words marked by italics in the Qur'anic context are unclear and have been discussed by both traditional Muslim and modern Western scholars for generations. Whatever its original intent, the verse has been interpreted to mean that the Peoples of the Book (originally Jews and Christians, but also extended to include Zoroastrians and sometimes others) were to be fought until they capitulate and recognize the political and religious domination of Islam. This recognition was confirmed formally by a special poll tax and by a series of sumptuary laws that legally established inferior status for Peoples of the Book in Islamic society. Once these corporate religious communities acknowledged their secondary status by paying the tax and accepting certain social restrictions, they were protected by the state, which guaranteed their lives, their property, and the right to worship as they chose (with some limits such as public religious processions and ceremonies). This was the rule of the *dhimma* or 'protection,' and the Peoples of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*) were therefore also *dhimmi* peoples (*ahl al-dhimma*), proteges of the Islamic community.

The Pact of 'Umar

Societal restrictions that define the inferior status of Peoples of the Book were formulated from a letter purportedly sent by Christians to the second caliph, `Umar b. al-Khattab, which established the terms of surrender to the conquering Muslim armies. These restrictions include a promise not to build new places of worship or

religious establishments, hold public religious ceremonies, proselytize or prevent people from converting to Islam. They volunteered to distinguish themselves in dress so as not to be confused with Muslims and to always to defer to Muslims. They would not bear weapons of any kind, take slaves designated for Muslims, or build homes higher than those of Muslims.

This document is known as the Pact of `Umar, and it defined relations between Jews and Muslims in the pre-modern Muslim world. Peoples of the Book were forbidden from holding positions of influence in government and society, but this was sometimes observed in the breach when Jews such as Maimonides became personal physicians of governors. The most famous example is Shmuel Hanagid, who was not only vizier of the Muslim king of Granada, but also commander of his armies. He successfully broke the most sacred rules of the *dhimma* by commanding such power, but he also brought his kingdom great fame and influence. His son, Yosef, however, did not fare as well. He fell victim to a mass revolt and massacre in 1066, allegedly caused by what was perceived as Yosef's inflated pride and ambition in high office, which were completely at odds with the letter and law of the rules of the *dhimma*.

Both the interpretation and implementation of the sumptuary laws were thus flexible. Restrictions tended to be relaxed when Jews had valuable skills that were perceived as important to the governing power, especially from the 10th through 12 centuries in such areas as Muslim Spain, Iraq, Egypt, and areas of North Africa such as Ifriqiya (roughly today's Tunisia), and the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. These were 'golden ages' for Jews and their Muslim host countries. When times were economically good, the rules of the *dhimma* tended to be implemented with less zeal. But when times were bad, the situation of the Jews and other *dhimmi* peoples tended to decline.

The golden ages would not last. All of the Islamic Middle East entered a long period of decline in the latter half of the millenium. This period has been called 'the long twilight of the late Islamic Middle Ages,' and it aptly describes the decline and shadowy position of the Jews in these areas. The position of Jews in the Islamic world during the later middle ages and early modern period deteriorated greatly. Although the sixteenth century was good to the Jews under the firm and forward-looking policies of the Ottoman Empire in their massive geographical holdings, the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries became oppressive not only for the Jews but for most of the inhabitants of the Middle East. The ruling Turkish minority tended to treat average Arab Muslims almost as disdainfully as it did the *dhimmis*, and as its control of the provinces waned the various religious communities tended to act out their antipathy and antagonism toward one another. The sumptuary laws that clearly identified and discriminated against Jews and Christians were enforced more and more rigorously, and the *dhimmis* suffered as a result.

The native economies stagnated as the Middle East entered the modern era and became increasingly dominated by Europeans. As European powers encroached increasingly into parts of the Middle East, its impact on the social as well as political and economic levels also increased. The influence of foreign powers and ideas, therefore, became a critical factor on the evolving position of Jews and other religious minorities in the Islamic world.

Jewish Views of Muslims

Jewish attitudes toward Muslims were much less public than Muslim's attitudes toward Jews in the pre-modern period. As a result of their *dhimmi* status, Jews always subject to punishment for any negative public statement or reflection on

Islam or Muslims. We can, nevertheless, glean some sentiments, sometimes only hinted, from the large corpus of Jewish writings from Muslim lands.

Muslims were usually regarded as Ishmaelites in Jewish letters because of the view that the Arabs originated from Ishmael, son of Abraham, and Muslims acknowledged this genealogy in such authoritative sources as the official biography of Muhammad. Jews, therefore, who were familiar with the negative biblical depictions of Ishmael, Hagar, and other ethnically Arab biblical characters, accepted such characterizations in their view of Muslims and tended to express their negative views through the code of comments on the biblical Ishmael.

The Arab Conquests put an end to Byzantine and Persian dominion over most Jews, and some Jewish texts portray these conquests in apocalyptic terms, suggesting that at least part of the Jewish world considered the quick and unprecedented scope of victory to herald the coming of the messiah. A late, pseudepigraphic Midrash attributed to the mystical Shimon Bar Yochai includes the following:

When he saw the kingdom of Ishmael that was coming, he began to say: 'Was it not enough, what the wicked kingdom of Edom did to us, but we must have the kingdom of Ishmael too?' At once, Metatron the prince of the [divine] countenance answered and said, Do not fear, son of man, for the Holy One only brings the kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness. He raises up over them a Prophet according to his will and will conquer the land for them and they will come and restore it in greatness, and there will be great terror between them and the sons of Esau.'....when he, the rider on the camel, goes forth the kingdom will arise through the rider on an ass..." [Jellinek: *Beit HaMidrash* 3:78].

As Islam became entrenched as a religion of empire, it became clear that the messiah was not among the Arab armies. Secondary status, social restrictions, disrespect as Jews and occasional violent victimization laid bare the truth of Jewish status under the new Muslim rulers. As noted above, however, Muslim interpretation and implementation of the sumptuary laws was flexible, so communities at various times and in various parts of the Muslim world experienced their rulers differently. Abraham Ibn Daud, who lived in tolerant 11th century Spain, referred to Muslims positively in his book of history. He remarks that the Caliphs honored both the Babylonian Jewish Exilarch and the head of the academy, and even noted when mentioning the massacre of the Jewish community of Granada that it was provoked by the inappropriate behavior of the Jewish leader, Yosef son of Shmuel HaNagid, according to the laws of the *dhimma* [Gerson Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, pp. 45, 76].

Maimonides suffered exile from Spain during a period of fundamentalist Islamic revival, but nevertheless reached the pinnacle of position and status as personal physician to the sultan of Egypt. In his now-famous letter to the Jewish community of Yemen, which was suffering under an intolerant and abusive regime, he describes the Jewish predicament in the following way: '...on account of the vast number of our sins, God has hurled us in the midst of this people, the Arabs, who have persecuted us severely, and passed baneful and discriminatory legislation against us....Never did a nation molest, degrade, debase and hate us as much as they.' [Halkin, *Epistle to Yemen*, p. xviii].

Both Ibn Daud and Maimonides wrote with specific agendas, so their sentiments need to be read with caution. Taken together, they portray the ambivalence

of Jews toward their Muslim overlords throughout the Islamic world prior to the eruption of modernity. Life apart from non-Jewish masters would clearly have been preferred, but such a life seemed inconceivable prior to the coming of the messiah.

Muslims' view of Jews in the Modern World

We skip through many centuries to the nineteenth, when Europe was in expansion and the Middle East was weak. It was during this period when many Middle Eastern Jews (and even more so, Christians) began to extricate their identity from the local cultures. European pressure on the Ottoman Sultan forced a level of civil emancipation for Christians, and this emancipation was applied also to the Jews, who were also People of the Book. Christian missionary schools entered the Middle East and created an educated class of Arab Christians who, under the protection of European consuls, began to enter social and economic arenas that had been forbidden for centuries. The French Jewish *Alliance Israelite Universelle* and to a lesser extent British, Austrian and German Jewish organizations founded schools for Jews that accomplished parallel results. This movement among European Jews and Christians advanced the position of some of the *dhimmis* in their local situation, but it also tended to Europeanize them (though in rural areas these European influences sometimes did not penetrate at all). Their legal and economic position improved, but these changes became a mixed blessing, especially for Jews living in more provincial areas. Privileging Jews violated the rules of the *dhimma* and thus exposed them, when unprotected by the influence of foreign powers, to the unprotected hostility of the Muslim majority. With deterioration of local government control, law and order tended to breakdown and all those unprotected tended to become victims.

The emergence of Zionism and the Palestine question further added to the Muslim 'othering' of the Jews. From the Jewish perspective, the issue of a Jewish

national home in Palestine was mostly one of modern nationalism and politics, though there was clearly an overtone of religious identity as well. The Palestinian Arab perspective was similar in that it was primarily an issue of land and hegemony, with religion a minor issue. From the Islamic perspective, however, the issue was much larger, and the separation between religion and nationalism has always been fuzzy in the modern Middle East. The Zionists disregarded their secondary status entirely and even built and managed their own independent economy. Zionism thus represented a case of *dhimmi*s attempting to break out of their protected but inferior status by establishing an independent Jewish nation-state in the heartland of the Islamic Middle East.

This was unacceptable on its own terms, but its close historical and phenomenological association with European expansion and colonization made it all the more threatening. The Zionists were overwhelmingly European, and their views of Arabs reflected prevailing European attitudes and expectations. Whatever Zionism was to the Jews and to its British Christian supporters, it represented a reversal of the divine order to religious Muslims, and was regarded increasingly contrary to the way of God by Islamists, those Muslims who were seeking a way out of the decline of the Islamic world through greater religious devotion.

Islamic antipathy to Zionism was apparent from the beginning, but it was often mixed up with Arab political movements and Arab anti-colonialism. Because of the strong Christian and secular components in Arab political movements through the end of the Mandate period, especially in Syria-Palestine, the Islamic component was often underplayed. It always remained under the surface, however, and the large compendium of anti-Jewish material in the Qur'an and the Tradition made for a constant reminder of the negative attributes and evil desires of 'the Jews,' though it

must be remembered that the material actually reflects a conflict that was limited to the Jewish community of seventh century Medina.

Today, therefore, the major subtext for the current Islamic view of Jews is the Israel-Palestine conflict, with its own religious subtext of *dhimmitude*: Jews are expected to acquiesce to Islamic domination. Jews have not done so when they created the Jewish State of Israel against the vociferous protests of the Islamic world. Some Muslims have attempted to draw a distinction between those Jews who live in and support the State of Israel – the 'Zionists,' – and those Jews who do not. Such subtlety, however, seems to be lost on most Muslims.

The Egyptian, Sayyid Qutb, for example, who is one of the most important ideologues of current Islamist groups, portrays the Jews in his work, *Our Struggle with the Jews* (early 1950s), as the ultimate source of adversity that has continuously beset Islam. He and others after him used this antagonistic image of the Jews as a vehicle for promoting Islamic activism and reform.²

Despite such disturbing portrayals, Muslims' views of Jews are both complex and fluid. There is no single authoritative body or institution such as the papacy in the Islamic world that can speak in the name of Islam (or more precisely, in the name of a significant, unified body of Muslims). The decentralized, fragmented nature of religious organization and authority in Islam has mitigated against any kind of unity regarding most religious issues that does not rely simply on inertia. But there has been inertia in reference to Jews, and by the beginning of the 21st century that inertia has moved Islam toward an increasing public anti-Jewish antipathy.

² Jeffrey Kenney, "Enemies Near and Far: The Image of the Jews in Islamist Discourse in Egypt," *Religion* 24 (1990), 255.

Modern Jewish Attitudes Toward Muslims

Zionists viewed the natives in Palestine as Arabs rather than Muslims, partly because the non-Jewish Arab population of Palestine included Christians, and partly because they preferred to think in terms of national rather than religious categories. In any case, they regarded them as rather primitive. In fact, the European Jews considered their Arab Jewish brethren rather primitive as well. Although intended to be hyperbolic, Ahad Ha`Am's observation reflects the general tenor of the European Jewish view of Arabs: "Outside Palestine, we are accustomed to believing that Arabs are all wild beasts of the desert, a people akin to jackasses who do not understand what is going on around them." Inside Palestine where Jews met Arabs daily, their views of Arabs were more realistic, but they nevertheless regarded them overwhelmingly as less civilized than people of European stock. The reasons for this are complex and reflect a variety of influences, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Early on and before the violent Arab actions directed against the Zionist project beginning in 1920-21, antipathy toward Arabs did not reach the level of anger directed by many Eastern European Jews toward their countries of origin. The continuing pogroms and violence directed against Jews in the east, despite promises of emancipation, prompted many to look toward Palestine. The hope of a future golden age of Jewish life under Islam convinced many to leave the misery of Europe and set out for the Holy Land with fellow Zionists, but the dream of a better life under the Muslims was transformed to one of a self-governing Jewish nation-state. Jewish power and numbers increased in Palestine, and Muslim antipathy increased in turn.

The Arabs, it turned out, were not the simple and friendly Orientals depicted in 19th century European Romantic art and literature. They were quite willing to fight and kill those whom they considered to be threatening their social and economic

position. This, then, caused Jews to reconsider their view of Muslims. The war between Jews and Arabs over the land of Israel/Palestine has continued, both hot and cold, from 1921 to the present, and it has become the primary determiner of both Jews' and Muslims' view of the other. It should not be surprising that the overwhelming view of the other is quite negative in both the Jewish and Muslim communities. The "other" tends to represent the enemy. Despite important exceptions to the rule on both sides, it has been largely codified within the social systems of both communities and perpetuated in the general culture.

Notwithstanding this sentiment, Jews have been deeply interested in Islam and in the literary, historical and theological relationships between Jews and Muslims to this day. Jews have played a disproportionate role in the scientific study of Islam from the beginning of modern Western scholarship on religion. Rabbi Abraham Geiger is rightly considered to have ushered in the dawn of historical research on Islam, the work of Ignaz Goldziher continues to be read more than 100 years after its publication, and the dean of this discipline in our own day is Bernard Lewis. In Jewish theology, Franz Rosenzweig compares Islam favorable to Christianity in his *Star of Redemption*. "In a certain sense, Islam demanded and practiced "tolerance" long before the concept was discovered by Christian Europe." (*Star* 216).

Jewish-Muslim Relations Today

At the time of this writing, the issue of Jewish-Muslim relations has become of increasing concern for Jews throughout the world. Especially since the watershed destruction of the American World Trade Center towers in 2001, Jewish fear of Islamic anti-Semitism has placed Jewish-Muslim relations in nearly equal status to Jewish-Christian relations.

Anti-Semitism as known in Europe is not indigenous to the Islamic World. While Christian theologies tend to be predicated on the irrelevance of Judaism or active antagonism to it, Islamic theologies establish their position relative to two rather than one established monotheistic system and critique them less categorically. It is certainly true that tensions and hierarchies, polemics and prejudice, legal discrimination and violence directed specifically against Jews are indeed a part of the Islamic World and have been since the emergence of Islam. But the particular pathology of European anti-Semitism with its blood libels and virulent hatred had to be imported to the Middle East, and it was done so by Christians. Increasingly in response to the watershed events of 1948, 1967, the second or Al-Aqsa Intifada of the 1990s and the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2002-3, Muslim rage against Israel, the United States and the West has been expressed through increased dehumanization and demonizing of Jews in general. The so-called *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has been available in Arabic translation since before mid-century, but has been cited increasingly in newspaper editorials and strongly referenced in popular state-sponsored television series in Egypt and Syria-Lebanon.

The axis around which Jewish-Muslim tensions are arrayed continues to be the Jewish State. The tease of Israeli and Palestinian leaders shaking hands under the protective canopy of the United States, only to have relations reach their lowest historical level in the second or Al-Aqsa Intifada, had repercussions that have rocked relations between Jews and other religious and ethnic groups as well. The state of Israel is the symptom, however. It is the presenting problem and not the only cause for the pathology. The grounds for increased hostility between Jews and Muslims are far more complex, and they reflect the endemic tensions associated with what is now

commonly called the post-modern era: social and economic disruptions associated with an increasingly global economy, growing economic gaps between nations and populations, lack of social and economic integration of Arabs and Muslims into Western Europe, increasing industrial dependence on oil and subsequent Western attempts to prop up dictatorial regimes in the Muslim World, the inability of Middle Eastern countries to bring economic and political stability to their own populations, and the self-perceived shame associated with the failure of Middle Eastern nations to compete with the West economically, technologically, politically, militarily and socially. All have increased the level of tensions between Jews and Muslims at the outset of the twenty-first century, but they reflect the tensions that effect global populations as well.

This chapter is being written during one of the most volatile periods of Jewish-Muslim relations. Because there are no authoritative bodies that represent a plurality of either Jews or Muslims, relations are steered as much by the shapers of public opinion than by authoritative religious positions or their representatives. Public expressions of antipathy expressed by both sides toward the other are palpable. They are formed from public statements made by un-authoritative and unrepresentative 'spokespersons' who are heavily influenced by the violence and politics of the Middle East (including petty internal politics) and, in turn, exert a strong influence on coreligionists on the ground. On the other hand, many dozens and perhaps hundreds of Muslim-Jewish dialogue groups and other joint Jewish-Muslim initiatives have quietly been formed and are functioning in Israel, the US and Europe. The Maimonides Foundation in London is one better known and public group. Another is the Institute for the Study of Jewish-Muslim Interrelations (ISJMI) in Los Angeles. Dozens of others exist in Israel alone, and more span the boundaries between Israel

and the areas across the Green Line dividing pre-1967 Israel and the West Bank.

None but a prophet can successfully predict the future of Jewish-Muslim relations, but if history is any lesson, a *modus vivendi* will slowly emerge that will improve the current situation.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Bodansky, Yossef, *Islamic Anti-Semitism as a Political Instrument* (Houston: Freeman Center for Strategic Studies, 1999). Produced by a Jewish defense organization, this monograph is a good example of how accurate data can be presented in a biased and unbalanced manner with the goal of promoting a narrow and inaccurate picture of reality.

Cohen, Mark and Udovitch, Abraham (eds.), *Jews Among Arabs: Contact and Boundaries* (Princeton: Darwin, 1989). This collection contains articles written by experts in the field of modern Jewish-Muslim history. The individual articles examine Jewish life in Iraq, Tunisia and Morocco, and chronicle Jewish cultural interaction and contribution to modern Arab culture.

Cohen, Mark, *Under Crescent and Cross* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Cohen compares the treatment of Jews in Christian Europe and the Islamic Middle East to suggest where the Jews fared best and why.

Firestone, Reuven, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1990). This is a study of the intertextual relationship between 'Biblical' and 'Qur'anic' narrative literatures through the Abraham stories.

Firestone, Reuven, *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims* (NY: Schocken, 2001). An introduction to Judaism that notes the many parallels as well as differences between Judaism and Islam, treating some of the thorny questions that Muslims ask about Judaism.

Goitein, S. D., *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages* (NY: Schocken, 1955). This is the classic survey of the history of Jewish-Arab relations,

tracing the various intellectual and religious contributions of one to the other community.

Hary, Benjamin, Hayes, John and Astren, Fred (eds.), *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). A recent collection of essays hosting some of the best contemporary scholarship on Judaism and Islam covering history, literatures, scriptures, law, philosophy and ethics, languages and sectarian communities.

Kramer, Martin (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, 1999). Examines the primary Jewish role of scholarship, literature and exploration in the modern European quest to understand Islam.

Lewis, Bernard, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). This has become a classic survey of the intellectual and cultural relations between Muslims and Jews that counters the two competing stereotypes of the Muslim fanatical warrior or utopian pluralist.

Nettler, Ronald (ed.), *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations* (Oxford: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995). This collection of essays is a foray into the scholarly literature of Muslim-Jewish relations, topics from 'Judaizing' tendencies among some Muslims to the use of Muslim narrative as a commentary on Jewish tradition.

Newby, Gordon, *A History of the Jews of Arabia* (Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina, 1988). This brief history examines the history of the Jewish (most likely sectarian) communities of Arabia from the earliest times to the rise of Islam.

Sacher, Howard M., *A History of Israel From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (NY: Knopf, 1976). A largely political history.

Stark, Rodney, and Bainbridge, William Sims, *A Theory of Religion*. NY: Peter Lang, 1987. This book provides a good theoretical foundation for the study of emerging religions.

Stillman, Norman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*, and *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1979 and 1991). This is an excellent two volume source book and commentary that provides a large compendium of translated documents treating the Jews of the Arab Middle East from the earliest sources to the end of the twentieth century.