

Muslim Views of Jews and Judaism in the Medieval Period: A Comparative Study of Ibn Ḥazm and al-Shahrastānī¹

By
Aamir Bashir

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Muslim views of Jews and Judaism in the Medieval period by engaging in a comparative study of two important encyclopedic works of comparative religion, composed in that period. These are *Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal* [Book of Distinctions between Religions, Heresies, and Sects] of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) and *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* [Book of Religions and Sects] of al-Shahrastānī (d. 1163). This paper argues that in line with the general methodology of the Islamic genre of comparative religions, these two authors take Islam's truth-claim as the starting point. Moreover, they also seek to prove Islam's truth by pointing out the errors in Judaism (and other religions). This is more pronounced in the case of Ibn Ḥazm whose language is often combative and polemical, but is, nevertheless, also present in al-Shahrastānī's work. Furthermore, this paper argues that of the two, Ibn Ḥazm's discussion of Jews and Judaism is more informed and systematic, and indicates his vast personal knowledge of Judaism through reading and personal interaction with Jews in Medieval Iberia. On the other hand, while al-Shahrastānī's discussion of Judaism provides interesting details about certain Jewish sects; on the whole, it is not systematic and does not suggest that its author had a good enough knowledge of Judaism. Finally, this paper argues that these two authors, and by extension, other Muslim scholars of the Medieval period regarded Jews as people of the book, and as holding on to a religion which previously had divine sanction but which had since been abrogated by the final revelation of God, given to Prophet Muḥammad.² Moreover, Muslim scholars considered Jews to have been unable to preserve their holy books and that they had introduced many corruptions into their religion. Muslim scholars also felt confident that they were the recipients of the final message of God to humanity, as given to Prophet Muḥammad.

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in the early seventh century,³ Muslims have claimed Islam to be the continuation and culmination of the same divine message of divine oneness (*tawḥīd*) and belief in the after-life given to all the prophets from Adam onwards. In this regard, the Islamic message was at odds with the Jewish and Christian understanding of the same tradition. It was, therefore, natural for Muslims, from the very beginning, to engage with Judaism and Christianity at the intellectual level to explicate what they believed, based on the Qur'an and Prophet Muḥammad's traditions,

© Aamir Bashir, 2013.

¹ This is the customary Arabic vocalization. This is how Encyclopedia of Islam refers to him. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Brill Online*, s.v. "al-Shahrastānī," by G. Monnot, accessed 17 November, 2012, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.libproxy.wustl.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-shahrastani-SIM_6769?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=Shahrast%C4%81n%C4%AB. In Persian, it is Shahrīstānī. This is how Steven Wasserstrom has referred to him in his dissertation. See Steven Wasserstrom, "Species of Misbelief: A History of Muslim Heresiography of the Jews" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1985), 178-193. Throughout this paper, I have retained the typical Arabic vocalization.

² Whenever Prophet Muḥammad's name is mentioned, it is considered proper etiquette for Muslims to invoke God's blessings upon him, which is usually in the form of *ṣalla Allāh 'alayhi wa ālihi wa sallam* (Allah bless him and his family, and give them peace).

³ All dates are CE.

had gone wrong with Judaism and Christianity. This theological impulse was further given impetus by the socio-political situation of the Muslim World during Medieval times. In many parts of this vast region stretching from present-day Pakistan and Central Asia in the east to Iberia in the west, all three Abrahamic faiths lived together. Muslims wielded the ultimate political authority (with some exceptions) but these were essentially multi-religious and multi-ethnic polities. This was especially true of Iberia, which Muslims referred to as al-Andalus. Here, Muslims had been present since the early eighth century. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Muslims and Christians were the two largest religious communities. In addition, Jews, though small in numbers, were also present. These three communities interacted often, socially, politically and economically.

In the Medieval period, Muslim engagement with other religions, both in al-Andalus and other parts of the Muslim world, took on many forms. One of these was Muslim scholarly works on other religions. In the following pages, I propose to describe and analyze Muslim views of Jews and Judaism through the works of two prominent Muslim scholars of the Medieval period. One is Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064) from al-Andalus and the other is al-Shahrastānī (1086-1153) from Iran/Central Asia. Born in Cordoba, Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥazm is considered one of the scholarly giants produced by Muslim Spain. He was an important figure in the Zāhirī (literalist) school, which was one of the then existing Sunni schools of jurisprudence.⁴ Ibn Ḥazm is known for his many works dealing with Islamic theology, Islamic jurisprudence, and Arabic literature. Amongst his various works on Islamic theology, his magnum opus is *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal* [Book of Distinctions between Religions, Heresies, and Sects] (henceforth *Kitāb al-Faṣl*),⁵ which as the title suggests, is an encyclopedic text dealing with the various religions and sects of his time.⁶ In fact, among the many works of this kind from the Medieval period, two stand out. One is the above-mentioned work of Ibn Ḥazm. It was followed less than a century later by al-Shahrastānī’s similarly titled *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* [Book of Religions and Sects] (henceforth *Kitāb al-Milal*). Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī was a theologian from Iran/Central Asia who composed many works on theology and philosophy. He is mostly remembered for his above-mentioned work.

These two scholars appeared at a juncture in Islamic history when the *Islamic* genre of comparative religions (*muqāranat al-adyān* or *taqābul al-adyān* in Arabic) had matured. This particular Islamic genre is different from the modern discipline of Comparative Religion which does not concern itself with verifying the truth-claims of each religion. The Islamic approach to the study of other religions generally takes validity of Islam’s truth-claim as its starting point. It is because of this that Islamic scholars of Comparative Religion, both pre-modern and modern, quite often engage in a critique of other religions while describing them. In the case of Judaism, an

⁴ The Zāhirī school died out a few centuries after Ibn Ḥazm and remained so until the modern period when it began to make a comeback.

⁵ There is some debate regarding the first part of the title as to whether it is *al-fiṣal* or *al-faṣl*. Ghulam Haider Aasi has discussed the issue at length. See Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions: A Study of Ibn Ḥazm’s Kitāb al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal*, (Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Islamic Research Institute, 1999), 60-63. He provides convincing arguments for the title to be *al-faṣl*.

⁶ Camilla Adang has discussed in detail how the book *Kitāb al-Faṣl* came to be. According to her, Ibn Ḥazm composed different treatises on various topics including Islamic creed, Muslim sects, philosophical groups and the people of the book. Later, he combined them all into one book and called it *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal*. Many of these earlier treatises have not reached us. Therefore, *Kitāb al-Faṣl* remains the best source for his comments on Judaism. See Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Ḥazm*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 64-69.

important part of this critique is to prove that the *Sharī‘ah*⁷ of Moses has been abrogated (*mansūkh*)⁸ by the *Sharī‘ah* of Prophet Muḥammad.⁹

Of all the works written by pre-modern Muslim scholars on comparative religions, *Kitāb al-Faṣl* and *Kitāb al-Milal* appear to be the most comprehensive ones. Moreover, these two are the only ones that have remained popular, among specialists and non-specialists alike, until today. Although both of the two authors penned a number of works in which they discuss Judaism, sometimes in detail, sometimes not; nevertheless, the above-mentioned two works can be considered representative of their thought because of their comprehensiveness. Moreover, the limited scope of this paper also requires that I limit myself to these two texts.

Questions

In this paper, I seek to answer the following questions:

1. What were Muslim scholarly views of Judaism and Jews during the Medieval period as understood from the above-mentioned works, *Kitāb al-Faṣl* and *Kitāb al-Milal*?
2. How do these two works compare with each other? What are the similarities and differences in their presentation styles, content, and expressed opinions?
3. What caused these authors to engage in comparative religious studies? Was it merely academic pursuits or was there some other factor?
4. Were these works an unbiased attempt on the part of their authors to understand and present various sects’ and religions’ doctrines, or were these largely polemical works?
5. Did these authors interact with Jews of their time to gain first-hand knowledge of Judaism and Jews, or did they rely on second-hand sources?

To explore these questions, I begin with a brief overview of their respective biographies.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Ibn Ḥazm was born in Cordoba in the late Umayyad period. His family was close to the caliphal palace and he was himself a passionate supporter of the Umayyad Caliphate.¹⁰ In the last decades of the caliphate, his family suffered the same vicissitudes as the caliphate until it was abolished in 1031. It was replaced by petty kingdoms (*tawā’if*, sing. *ṭā’ifah*) that competed with one another for land and glory. These states were organized along tribal and ethnic lines. Islam had been replaced by tribalism and ethno-centrism as the binding force. Moreover, each of these states sought to reconstruct the splendor that was Cordoba. Pious Muslims had tolerated the worldly indulgence of the Cordoban caliphate because Islam had the highest position (at least, theoretically) in it. Now, with Islam relegated to a secondary position, pious Muslims perceived these states’ elites’

⁷ *Sharī‘ah* refers to the totality of divine commands given to a prophet. In general, it is translated as law.

⁸ *Mansūkh* is the passive participle of the Arabic verb *nasakha*. The infinitive *naskh* is used as a technical term to mean abrogation of a divine command(s) and its replacement with a new divine command(s).

⁹ Whenever a prophet’s name is mentioned, it is considered proper etiquette for Muslims to invoke God’s blessings upon him and Prophet Muḥammad which is usually in the form of *ṣalla Allāh ‘alayhi wa ‘ala nabīyyinā* (Allah bless him and our Prophet).

¹⁰ Caliphate comes from the word caliph, which is the Anglicized version of *khalīfah*, which itself is the shortened form of *khalīfat al-rasūl*, meaning successor of the messenger (Prophet Muḥammad). It was used as a title by Muslim rulers to highlight their legitimacy. Al-Andalus had been ruled by an Umayyad dynasty since the time of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I (d. 788) who founded it in 755 in al-Andalus. One of the later Umayyad rulers, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III (d. 961) claimed himself to be the caliph, in opposition to the Abbasid caliphate which was based in Baghdad. For a detailed discussion of Ibn Ḥazm’s life and career, and his role in politics, see Aasi, 43-58; and Adang, 59-69.

indulgence in luxury as even more repugnant. It was also in this period of political fragmentation, which Ibn Ḥazm calls a *fitnah* (trial/tribulation), that a Jew became the *wazīr*¹¹ of the Berber Muslim King of Granada.¹² Initially, Ibn Ḥazm sought to re-establish the unity of the peninsula through the re-establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate. However, after multiple failures he retired to a life devoted to intellectual pursuits.¹³ Nevertheless, his socio-political environment seems to have deeply affected him. This has led at least one modern observer to claim that Ibn Ḥazm composed all of his works as part of his grand scheme “to analyze the malaise of the society and to re-orient it towards the interdependence between *Sharī‘ah* and *khilāfah* (caliphate).”¹⁴

While Ibn Ḥazm’s life is well-documented, not much detail is available about al-Shahrastānī’s life and career. This much is clear though, that he was born in Shahrīstān, located between Nishapur and Khawarazm, which was part of the Khawarazmian empire.¹⁵ The exact religious composition of the Khawarazmian empire is not entirely clear. It is likely that it was a multi-religious empire with all three Abrahamic religions present. Al-Shahrastānī lived in this region for most of his life. He studied with Shāfi‘ī and Ash‘arī scholars in Nishapur and excelled in *kalām* (dialectic theology), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and philosophy. Most of his works deal with *kalām*.¹⁶

There is some debate among scholars regarding whether al-Shahrastānī was an Ash‘arī or an Ismā‘īlī. Among his contemporaries, al-Khawārazmī and Ibn al-Sam‘ānī accused him of being inclined towards Ismā‘īlism.¹⁷ This was later repeated by other biographers. Amongst these, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī defended him on the basis of his books which he found to be in agreement with orthodox Sunnism.¹⁸ Among modern Western scholars, Monnot has found his works to give credence to the claim that he was an Ismā‘īlī.¹⁹ Among modern Shī‘ī scholars, al-Na‘īnī also contends that he was Ismā‘īlī.²⁰ However, modern Sunni scholars have generally followed al-Subkī in considering him a Sunni.

¹¹ Literally, it means minister but in this context, it would be more appropriate to translate it as prime minister.

¹² This was Ismā‘īl ibn al-Naghrīla (d. 1056?), referred to as Samuel Ha Nagid in Jewish sources.

¹³ Ibn Ḥazm was arrested and released three times due to his political activities. Later on, he chose to dedicate himself to intellectual works. See his biography referred to above in Aasi, 43-58.

¹⁴ Aasi, 50. Aasi sees this grand scheme in the particular sequence in which Ibn Ḥazm composed his works from logic to philosophy to history of religions to *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and then ethics.

¹⁵ The Khawarazmian empire was a Persianate empire that controlled the areas that include present-day Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It was established in late eleventh century and was swept away in the early thirteenth century by Mongol invaders.

¹⁶ See Khayr al-Dīn al-Zirikī, *al-A‘lām: Qāmūs Tarājīm li Ashhar al-Rijāl wa al-Nisā’ min al-‘Arab wa al-Musta‘ribīn wa al-Mustashriqīn*, (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 2002), 6: 215.

¹⁷ See Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), 3: 377. Also see Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyyah al-Kubrā*, (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, n.d.), 6: 130.

¹⁸ Al-Dhahabī has mentioned in his biographical note on al-Shahrastānī that he was accused of being inclined towards people of the castles and calling towards them and defending them. This seems to be an obvious reference to the group of Niẓārī Ismā‘īlī mercenaries who had gathered around Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ (d. 1124) in Alamūt castle in northern Iran. See Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, (Damascus: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, 1982), 20: 287. Also, see al-Subkī’s commentary on this in al-Subkī, 6: 130. For a detailed recent discussion of the subject, see Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Suḥaybānī, *Manhaj al-Shahrastānī fī Kitābihi al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1997), 119-196.

¹⁹ EI², s.v. “al-Shahrastānī.” This article also provides a good overview of the debate in English including modern scholars’ take on it.

²⁰ Ibid.

METHODOLOGIES OF STUDYING RELIGIONS

Ibn Ḥazm's Methodology

To understand Ibn Ḥazm's description and analysis of Judaism, one must understand his overall methodology in *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. On first sight, Ibn Ḥazm comes across as a historian of religions in this work. However, a closer look reveals that he is more than that. He is also a theologian who seeks to establish the truth, a truth which he is convinced of, and which he thinks can be established using simple criterion, viz. the basic sources of knowledge that all rational people would agree to. These are the five senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting, as well as a sixth sense, which he calls intuitive knowledge of the first principles of reason (*awā'il al-'aql*). The latter refers to basic intuitive knowledge that even a child has, i.e. that the whole is greater than the part, two contradictory things cannot occur together such as a person sitting and standing at the same time, one thing cannot be in two places at the same time, two things cannot occupy the same place at the same time, every act needs an actor, no one by himself has knowledge of the unseen, etc. Ibn Ḥazm declares these basic principles, viz. the five regular senses and the sixth sense sufficient for sound reasoning.²¹

After stating these principles, he proceeds to establish various truths that will eventually lead to proving the truth of Islam such as that realities of things are established, that these realities can be known with certainty, that the world is originated etc.²² In the process, he also demolishes the "errors" of other religions as he sees them. Thus, he gradually moves from those religious/philosophical groups that are farthest from Islam to the ones that are closest to Islam. The total categories are six. Jews and Judaism fall in the last category of groups closest to Islam, along with those Christians who deny Trinity, those Sabians who accept prophet hood, and those Magians who consider Zoroaster to be a prophet, while denying other prophets.²³ Ibn Ḥazm wraps up his discussion of the first five groups in the first half of the first volume. The second half of this volume is dedicated to Judaism. The first half of the second volume is devoted to the discussion of Christianity. The rest of the three and half volumes deal with Muslim sects. Throughout this book, Ibn Ḥazm displays his erudition and vast knowledge of other religions and sects, their primary beliefs, practices, internal debates and evolution. While he tries to be accurate in describing other religions, he does not limit himself to mere reporting of the facts. He also engages in debates with them, in a tone that is quite often combative and polemical. In spite of his stated goal alluded to above, viz. he would judge each belief using the basic principles he delineated at the beginning of his book, he also employs his own understanding of Islamic theology to critique these beliefs.

Al-Shahrastānī's Methodology

Al-Shahrastānī's book *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* has received praise from many quarters, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Wasserstrom has praised him abundantly for being rigorous and less polemical, calling him "the greatest pre-modern historian of religion in any language."²⁴ He has

²¹ Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1982), 1: 41-42.

²² I was alerted to this particular aspect of *Kitāb al-Faṣl* by Arnaldez's entry on Ibn Ḥazm in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Brill Online*, s.v. "Ibn Ḥazm," by R. Arnaldez, accessed 08 December, 2012. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ibn-hazm-COM_0325.

²³ Ibn Ḥazm, 1: 35-36.

²⁴ Wasserstrom, 178 & 193.

also quoted a number of modern scholars who have found his book to be extremely useful and unbiased.²⁵ Among his detractors, Kazi and Flynn have mentioned A. J. Arberry who declared *Kitāb al-Milal* to be a loose collection of quotations from older writers without the slightest acknowledgement.²⁶ Notwithstanding this remark, al-Shahrastānī's admirers outnumber his detractors. The best feature of *Kitāb al-Milal* is its conciseness and excellent order. Generally, al-Shahrastānī's presentation is clear but sometimes it tends to be ambiguous, especially the section on Judaism. Unlike Ibn Ḥazm, al-Shahrastānī is not combative. He does engage in some debate with his subjects but on the whole his attitude is that of mere presentation of facts as he knows them. It is this attitude of his that could explain why so many modern scholars seem to be happy with him. Another aspect which stands out is that before delving into discussion of a particular religious group, al-Shahrastānī defines all the important terms that he will be using.

In comparison to *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, *Kitāb al-Milal* is a shorter work. Unlike Ibn Ḥazm, al-Shahrastānī has organized his book in terms of a religion's or sect's increasing distance from Islam. After the introduction and a few preliminary sections, al-Shahrastānī devotes about two-fifths of the book to a discussion of Muslim sects. This is followed by a chapter on the "people of the book." It includes two sections, one on those who actually have a (revealed) book, viz. Jews and Christians; the other on those who have something akin to a (revealed) book, viz. Magians and Manicheans. The last two-fifths of the book is devoted to people of opinions and creeds (*ahl al-ahwā' wa al-niḥal*). By this, he is referring to all those who do not have any revelation, pseudo or otherwise, to support their ideas and beliefs. Within this section, he has devoted the largest space to philosophers, Greek and Muslim.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF JUDAISM

Ibn Ḥazm on Judaism

As mentioned above, in his typology of religions, Ibn Ḥazm has placed Judaism in the sixth category, which is the closest to Islam. This section is quite large. Ibn Ḥazm begins by mentioning five Jewish sects along with a brief description of their beliefs, origin, location, etc. These groups are the Sāmiriyyah (Samaritans), the Ṣadūqiyyah (Saducees), the 'Anāniyyah (Karaites), the Rabbāniyyah (Rabbanites), and the 'Īsawiyyah (Isawites). He describes the Sāmiriyyah as possessing a Torah different from other Jews. Moreover, unlike other Jews they do not regard Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) as the holy city; rather, they consider Nablus to be the holy city. Furthermore, they deny all prophets after Moses and Joshua. The Ṣadūqiyyah are named after a person called Ṣadūq. According to Ibn Ḥazm, among all the Jews, they claim that al-'Azīz²⁷ is the son of Allah. With regards to the 'Anāniyyah, he mentions that they are the followers of 'Ānān al-Dāwūdī, and that the Jews call them the Qarrāyūn (Karaites). He also describes them as those who believe in the Torah and the books of all the prophets after Moses, but deny the works of Rabbis, i.e. the Oral Torah. He identifies the Rabbanites as being in the majority and thus representative of

²⁵ Ibid., 184.

²⁶ A. K. Kazi & J. G. Flynn, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslims Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī*, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 4.

²⁷ This could be a typo. Perhaps, he is referring to al-'Uzayr. In written Arabic, there is a difference of only one dot between the two.

the Jews. Later on, throughout his presentation and critique of Judaism, he mainly deals with this group.

While each of these four groups receives a paragraph, Ibn Ḥazm devotes a full page to the 'Īsawīyah. He describes them as the companions of Abū 'Īsā al-Aṣbahānī, a Jew from Isfahan in Iran. The distinctive feature about this group is that they accept the prophet hood of Jesus and Prophet Muḥammad, except that they say that Prophet Muḥammad was sent only to the Arabs.

Naskh (Abrogation of Divine Command):

After describing the five Jewish sects, Ibn Ḥazm classifies all Jews into those who do not consider *naskh* to be possible and those who do consider it possible but deny that it ever occurred. He argues with each group successively, arguing that not only is abrogation possible, it occurs in a number of places in the Torah as well. For example, the Torah mentions that Jacob simultaneously married Leah and Rachel, the two daughters of Laban, but later marriage to two sisters was prohibited under the Mosaic law.²⁸ In fact, Ibn Ḥazm's attack against the Jewish stance on abrogation is based on his use of two distinct Islamic theological terms *naskh* and *badā'* (God changing His mind because of new information that was previously unknown to Him). He has defined the first in his section on Judaism but not the second.²⁹ For him, *naskh* is not a problem but *badā'* is because the latter entails that God changed His mind after learning something new or after finding some fault in His previous command, while the former merely means that God changed His command without implying any imperfection in His omniscience or omnipotence. Ibn Ḥazm considers Jews at fault for not differentiating between the two.³⁰

Prophet hood:

Proving the possibility and actual occurrence of *naskh* is one of the ways for Ibn Ḥazm to prove the possibility of Prophet Muḥammad's prophet hood. He also engages in an attempt to prove that there are rational reasons for Jews to accept the prophet hood of Jesus and Prophet Muḥammad. He maintains that the main criterion for accepting a person's claim to prophet hood is his performing miracles. This he says is the reason why the Jews believed in the prophets sent to them. By the same token, they should be accepting Jesus and Prophet Muḥammad as prophets. Moreover, in the case of 'Īsawīyah, who accept these two as prophets, denying the teachings of these two is self-contradictory. Ibn Ḥazm refutes Jews who claimed that Moses had told them to not accept any prophet who comes to them with a *Sharī'ah* different than his even if he performs miracles. According to Ibn Ḥazm, the Torah actually says "whoever comes to you claiming prophet hood, while he is actually a liar, then do not confirm him (*man atākum yadda ṭ nubuwwah wa huwa kādhib fa lā tuṣaddiqūhu*)."³¹

Although Ibn Ḥazm strongly disputes the authenticity of the then extant Torah, as will be seen in the next section, it seems he could not resist the temptation to still quote passages that prophesied the coming of Prophet Muḥammad. Thus, in addition to the remark above, he also mentions that it is stated in Torah that "Allah came from Sinai, then appeared from Sā'īr, and then manifested from the mountains of Fārān (*jā'a Allāh min Sīnā*')." He analyzes this by saying that

²⁸ Ibid., 1: 180-181.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Aasi, 82-86.

³¹ Ibn Ḥazm, 1:190.

Sinai is the place where Moses received the revelation, Sā'ir is the place where Jesus received the revelation, and Fārān is the place where Prophet Muḥammad received the revelation.³²

Biblical Criticism:³³

Within his section on Judaism, Ibn Ḥazm has devoted the largest space to a historical and textual criticism of Torah and other Biblical books.³⁴ The title is instructive. It reads “*faṣl fī munāqadāt zāhirah wa takādhib wāḍiḥah fī al-kitāb alladhī tusammīhi al-Yahūd al-Tawrāh wa fī sā'ir kutubihim wa fī al-Anājīl al-arba'ah yatabayyanu bi dhālik taḥrīfuhum wa tabdīluhum wa annahā gḥayr alladhī anzala Allāh 'azza wa jalla*” (section concerning manifest contradictions and obvious lies in the book named by the Jews as the Torah and in the rest of their books and in the four Gospels wherefrom their corruption and alteration is manifest, and that they are not what Allah, the Exalted and the Sublime, revealed).³⁵ It is in this section that Ibn Ḥazm uses the harshest language which perhaps justified the proverbial saying “the sword of Ḥajjāj³⁶ and the tongue of Ibn Ḥazm are twin sisters.”³⁷

His main critique of the Torah is that the Torah of his time was not the same as the one revealed to Moses. The term he uses for this is *taḥrif*, which means corruption or distortion. He goes about proving this in three ways.

1. The first is his attempt to prove that the then extant Torah had so many inner contradictions and errors that it could not be the word of God. It must have been tampered with by humans. He provides a long list of internal contradictions, factual mistakes, historical and geographical inaccuracies, computational mistakes, unfulfilled prophecies, and immoral conduct ascribed to the prophets and angels. Here he applies his rational criterion for judging religions and beliefs which he had mentioned in the beginning of the book. However, he does not limit himself to that. He also uses Islamic principles to evaluate the contents of these books such as when he finds certain things attributed to the prophets and angels objectionable because they violate the Islamic concept of a prophet or angel. Examples of some of these issues are given below:

- i. The Torah claims that Adam is a god when it mentions that God says that Adam has become one of Us when he ate from the tree of life.³⁸ This violates the Jewish and Islamic concept of oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).
- ii. Torah's claim that Lot slept with his daughters.³⁹ Incest is unbecoming of a prophet.

³² Ibid., 1: 194.

³³ For a detailed critique of Ibn Ḥazm's Biblical criticism and its position within the Islamic genre of Biblical criticism, see Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures*, (Atlanta: American Academy of Religion, 1998). Also see Aasi, 92-114; and Adang, 237-248.

³⁴ In the edition of *Kitāb al-Faṣl* that I have before me, the section on Judaism is from the beginning of p. 177 till the end of p. 329. Of this, the section on the contradictions of Torah and other Biblical books begins on p. 201 and last until p. 285. This is followed by a section on how Torah was corrupted, which begins on p. 287 and lasts until p. 329. For a detailed table of contents of the section on the contradictions of Torah, see the translation of this table as given in Pulcini, 58-59.

³⁵ The translation is from Aasi, 89. Strangely, the word “not” at the end is missing in Aasi's translation. Apparently, it is a typo. I have added it because of the Arabic original requiring it.

³⁶ Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d. 714) was the governor of Iraq and the eastern provinces during the Umayyad Caliphate (r. 661-750) in the early period of Islam. He is known in Islamic history as being especially brutal. He massacred many, including prominent religious personalities of his time.

³⁷ Aasi, 91.

³⁸ Ibn Ḥazm, 1: 207.

³⁹ Ibid., 1: 223.

- iii. Confusion in the Torah regarding the ages of the sons of Noah.⁴⁰ This is a case of internal contradiction.
- iv. The Torah claims that the Children of Israel will rule the land between the Nile and Euphrates. He claims this prophecy has not been fulfilled so far.⁴¹

2. Ibn Ḥazm's second approach is to trace the history of Torah from Moses until his time. Here he finds a number of problems regarding the continuity and reliability of the chain of transmission of Torah from Moses to his time. It is interesting to see how Ibn Ḥazm uses the tools that Muslims had developed for *Ḥadīth*-criticism to examine the authenticity of Torah. According to Ibn Ḥazm, the first problem is that there were at least seven times when Israelites committed mass apostasy.⁴² These periods were of different durations, the shortest being three years and the longest being forty years. It is impossible for the Torah to have been preserved during this time because there was no one left to transmit it.⁴³ Secondly, even though many Israelite kings were God-fearing, there were many others who were not and they persecuted the religious amongst them thereby hindering Torah's transmission.⁴⁴ Moreover, during Moses' time and later on as well, Torah was entrusted to only a small group of people, the priests. The average person did not have direct access to it. It is highly unlikely that such a small number of transmitters could have preserved Torah during periods of persecution and apostasy. In fact, during the periods of mass apostasy, the longest of which lasted for forty years, it is certain that Torah would have been lost.

Finally, Ibn Ḥazm mentions that the fate of Torah was unequivocally sealed when Nebuchadnezzar raided Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, enslaved the Israelites and took them to Babylon. The only copy of Torah (whichever version it may be) was in that Temple. With its destruction, it would have been destroyed. Moreover, according to Ibn Ḥazm, Jews themselves agree that Ezra the Scribe (‘Adhrā al-Warrāq al-Hārūnī) dictated to them the Torah from his memory. This dictation had many mistakes so he fixed them later on. This dictation by Ezra was forty years after the Jews' return to Jerusalem from captivity, which itself lasted for seventy years.⁴⁵ According to Ibn Ḥazm, Torah began to spread only after this dictation by Ezra, and even then it did not acquire a large number of transmitters, making the reliability of Ezra's version doubtful as well.

3. Ibn Ḥazm mentions that the Samaritans have a Torah different from that which all the other Jews have. He says he has not seen it because the Samaritans do not leave Palestine and Jordan but that it has reached him through definitive (*qaṭ‘ī*) evidence that it is also corrupted and altered like the Torah of the rest of the Jews.⁴⁶

It seems Ibn Ḥazm also had access to Rabbinical homiletic literature called *midrash aggadah*. He found it extremely problematic because it had numerous anthropomorphisms. As a *Zāhirī* theologian, who rejected esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah, he found this as

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1: 212.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1: 203.

⁴² Ibid., 1: 288 & 290.

⁴³ Ibid., 1: 298.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥazm, 1: 202.

further proof that the Rabbis who are credited with transmitting Torah were not credible transmitters.

Al-Shahrastānī on Judaism

As mentioned earlier, al-Shahrastānī's has devoted much less space to Judaism as compared to Muslim sects and philosophers. Moreover, compared to *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, this section is quite small as well. It almost makes one think that perhaps he included it only to fulfill the encyclopedic nature of his book. However, though brief, the section contains a lot of information.

As mentioned earlier, the section on Judaism is part of the chapter on the "people of the book." Like elsewhere, al-Shahrastānī begins by defining *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book) and then Judaism.⁴⁷ Here, al-Shahrastānī follows a comparative method. First, he compares people of the book with the Arabs, and then Jews with the Christians. He goes on to say that *qiblah* (direction to turn to for worship) of the people of the book was Jerusalem while that of the Children of Ismā'īl (Arabs) was Makkah.⁴⁸ Later, he compares Jews to the Christians saying the Jewish nation is greater (in merit) than the Christian nation because the law was given to Moses, because all of the Children of Israel submitted to it and were obligated to follow the rulings of Torah.⁴⁹

In his section on Judaism, al-Shahrastānī follows a different order than that of Ibn Ḥazm's. He begins by defining the meaning of Judaism. Hence, he says: "*hāda al-rajul* means he returned and repented. This name stuck with them because of the saying of Moses, peace be upon him: Indeed we return to You, i.e. we return and beseech [You] (*hāda al-rajul ay raja 'a wa tāba wa innamā lazimahum hādihā al-ism li qawl Mūsā 'alayhi al-salām innā hudnā ilayka ay raja 'nā wa taḍarra 'nā*)."⁵⁰ Later, he describes their main beliefs including their opinions regarding *naskh*, free will, and anthropomorphism. This is followed by a detailed discussion of Jews' belief regarding the impermissibility of *naskh*, his detailed argument against it and in support of the prophet hood of Prophet Muḥammad. He ends with his presentation of the main Jewish sects from whom he claims all other Jewish sects are derived. I will discuss these one by one.

Naskh (Abrogation of Divine Command) and Prophet Muḥammad's Prophet hood:

With regards to *naskh*, al-Shahrastānī's presentation of arguments for the Jews is similar to Ibn Ḥazm's in that the Jews consider *naskh* impermissible because they equate it with *badā'*. While al-Shahrastānī also takes issue with this, unlike Ibn Ḥazm, he is relatively brief and on the whole, quite civil. His main argument rests on proving to his readers that Jews acknowledge that Torah contains mention of Abraham and his son Ismā'īl, that Abraham prayed for Ismā'īl and his progeny, and that God accepted it by saying that "I have blessed Ismā'īl and his progeny, I have placed all good in them, I will dominate them over all nations, and I will soon send in them a messenger from among them who will recite My verses upon them (*innī bāraktu 'ala Ismā'īl wa awlādihi wa ja'altu fīhim al-khayr kullahu wa sa-uzhīruhum 'ala al-umam kullihā wa sa-ab'athu fīhim rasūlan yatlu 'alayhim ayātī*)."⁵¹

⁴⁷ Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, ed. Amīr 'Alī Mahnā & 'Alī Ḥasan Fā'ūr, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1993), 1: 247 & 250.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1: 248

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1: 250.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1: 253.

According to al-Shahrastānī, the Jews acknowledge this, except that they say that God accepted his prayer for kingdom (government) and not for prophet hood. Al-Shahrastānī responds to this by saying that the divine gift of kingship which the Jews accept for Ismā‘il and his progeny, it could either be by a kingship (government) upholding truth and justice or not upholding them? If it was not upholding truth and justice, then this would not be a favor that God would remind Abraham of; and if Jews accept truth and justice in terms of kingship (government), then it is necessary that the king should be truthful with respect to God, as well in what he claims and says about Him.

Al-Shahrastānī also quotes the verse of the Torah which Ibn Ḥazm had quoted to prove that the Torah had prophesied the coming of Jesus and Prophet Muḥammad. His analysis is the same as that of Ibn Ḥazm’s.⁵²

Jewish Sects:

Al-Shahrastānī’s presentation of Jewish sects is quite different from Ibn Ḥazm’s. It is more detailed with one strange oddity; Rabbanites, the largest group of Jews, are conspicuous by their almost absence. They are mentioned only in passing while discussing Jewish beliefs. In the main discussion of Jewish sects, al-Shahrastānī mentions four sects and claims that all other Jewish groups are derived from these four.⁵³ These four are the ‘Anāniyyah (Karaites), the ‘Isawiyah (Isawites), the Maqāribah and the Yūdh‘āniyyah,⁵⁴ and the Sāmiriyyah (Samaritans). He also mentions another group called the Mūshkāniyyah. In the edition that I have generally followed, it is listed as a separate sect.⁵⁵ However, in another edition, it is listed as a sub-sect of the Maqāribah and the Yūdh‘āniyyah.⁵⁶ The author’s count of four would be valid only if the Mūshkāniyyah were to be not counted as a separate sect.

In his discussion of the ‘Anāniyyah, al-Shahrastānī does not mention that they are also called Karaites as Ibn Ḥazm had done. Interestingly, he does use this term in passing while discussing Jewish beliefs when he compares Rabbanites to the Mu‘tazilah and Karaites to the Mujbarah.⁵⁷ Regarding the ‘Anāniyyah, he mentions that they are the followers of ‘Anān ibn Dāwūd. He does not mention their rejection of the Oral Torah as Ibn Ḥazm had done. He only mentions that they differ from the rest of the Jews in the Sabbath and the festivals, that they forbid eating birds, deer, fish and locusts, and that they slaughter the animal on the nape. He spends more time describing what they think of Jesus. According to him, they hold Jesus to be a sincere friend of Allah, and not a prophet of God. They claim that he confirmed the Torah and called people towards it. The Jews of his time transgressed twice; once when they denied him, and second when

⁵² See p. 9 above.

⁵³ Al-Shahrastānī, 1: 261.

⁵⁴ These are two names for the same group.

⁵⁵ Al-Shahrastānī, 1: 258.

⁵⁶ See Abū al-Faḥ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Muḥammad al-Wakīl, (Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakah, 1968), 2: 22. This contains the sentence *minhum al-Mūshkāniyyah* (from among them are the Mūshkāniyyah). Apparently, the editors of the 1993 edition understood *minhum* to refer to Jews in general, and dropped it while editing; whereas it may have referred to the Maqāribah and the Yūdh‘āniyyah in particular.

⁵⁷ Al-Shahrastānī, ed. Mahnā & Fā‘ūr, 1: 252. The Mu‘tazilah were an Islamic sect mostly known for their emphasis on reason to the extent of over-ruling revelation when they felt it contradicted reason. Mujbarah is another name for the Qadariyyah, which was an Islamic sect that believed that humans do not have a free will.

they had him killed. Some of them also think that the Gospels were not divine revelation because they were gathered by four of his companions after his death.⁵⁸

Al-Shahrastānī's discussion of the 'Īsawīyah is longer than that of Ibn Ḥazm's and according to Wasserstrom, it is "the fullest extant report on this sect."⁵⁹ Like Ibn Ḥazm, he identifies their founder as Abū 'Īsā al-Asfahānī. Interestingly, he does not mention their belief about Jesus and Prophet Muḥammad being prophets. He does give a detailed account of their founder and his claims regarding him being a messenger whom God had spoken to. Oddly, at the end of this section, he mentions that the Torah of the people was compiled by thirty rabbis for some king of Rome so that every ignorant person would not tamper with its rulings. It is not clear whether he is referring to the Torah accepted by most Jews or he is suggesting that the 'Īsawīyah had a different Torah.⁶⁰

While discussing the Maqāribah and the Yūdh'āniyyah, al-Shahrastānī devotes considerable space to discussing how some of them claim that God took away the prophets through an angel which He had chosen, and gave him precedence over all creation and made him a successor over them. They say: all that is in the Torah and all the books regarding attributes of Allah Most High, is [in fact] a report about that angel. Otherwise, it would not be permissible to describe Allah Most High with an attribute.⁶¹ Apparently, this is a reference to the angel Metatron which some Jews believed in. Al-Shahrastānī's description of these beliefs seems sympathetic. By way of comparison, he mentions how certain passages of the Qur'an which apparently refer to God, and therefore would be problematic, are interpreted by Muslims as actually referring to the archangel Gabriel.⁶² While discussing the Mūshkāniyyah, a sub-sect of the Maqāribah, he identifies them as believing that Prophet Muḥammad was a prophet sent to all humanity except the Jews.

Al-Shahrastānī's discussion of the Samaritans is also longer than that of Ibn Ḥazm's. He mentions how their Torah is different from that of other Jews, and how they consider Nablus to be the holy city instead of Jerusalem. He also mentions two sub-groups of Samaritans: Dūstāniyyah, also called the Alfāniyyah, and the Kūstāniyyah. The main difference between them is in terms of their belief regarding the afterlife. The latter accept it while the former deny it saying reward and punishment happen in the world.⁶³

SOURCES

Jewish Informants

Ibn Hazm:

Ibn Ḥazm lived in al-Andalus all his life. As mentioned above, it was a multi-religious society. Ibn Ḥazm had ample opportunity to interact with Jewish scholars and discuss with them Jewish beliefs and practices. In fact, he had been interacting with Jews from an early age.⁶⁴ Most of these would

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1: 256.

⁵⁹ Wasserstrom, 187.

⁶⁰ Al-Shahrastānī, ed. Mahnā & Fā'ūr, 1: 258.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1: 259-260.

⁶² Ibid., 1: 260.

⁶³ Ibid., 1: 261.

⁶⁴ Adang, 94.

have been Rabbanites who were the majority among the Jews.⁶⁵ He had held disputations with Ismā‘il ibn al-Naghrīlah (Samuel Ha Nagid), a Rabbanite Jew, before the latter became the *wazīr* of Granada.

In his discussion of the ‘Anāniyyah, Ibn Ḥazm mentions that some of them live in Toledo and Talavera in central Iberia. It is possible that he may have met some of them. According to Adang, his strong anti-Rabbinical stance as well as reproduction of Karaite anti-Rabbinical accusations suggest that his main source(s) was Karaite. However, there could be another reason for that. Ibn Ḥazm belonged to the *Zāhirī* (literalist) school of thought within Islam, which rejected blind following of scholars (*taqlīd*) and preferred direct access to the Qur’an and Sunnah, the twin sources of Islamic doctrine and law. The Karaites were similar to the *Zāhirīs* in that they rejected the mediation of Rabbis and preferred direct access to the Bible. It is plausible that Ibn Ḥazm felt sympathy for them, and therefore, was harsh on the Rabbanites more than he was on the Karaites.

His discussion of the ‘Isawīyah also suggests that he may have met them. As for the other two groups that he mentions, viz. the *Ṣadūqiyyah* and the *Sāmīriyyah*, he admits to having never met them.⁶⁶

Al-Shahrestānī:

Al-Shahrestānī’s incomplete description of Karaites and almost non-description of Rabbanites suggests that he did not have any informants from these two sects. According to Wasserstrom, if al-Shahrestānī’s description of the Jewish sects is taken as a whole, it would seem that he only had an ‘Isawite informant, whose presentation and understanding of other Jewish sects colored al-Shahrestānī’s understanding.⁶⁷ The details that he mentions regarding this sect support this hypothesis. However, the fact that he does not even mention their belief regarding Jesus and Prophet Muḥammad as prophets, which is the distinctive feature of this sect, supports the claim that he did not have any ‘Isawite informant. In my opinion, al-Shahrestānī’s description of Jewish sects is not systematic, and he ends his discussion abruptly. He does mention arguing with some Jew but it is not enough to draw any firm conclusion about his Jewish informant(s).⁶⁸

Jewish Textual Sources

Both Ibn Ḥazm and al-Shahrestānī have engaged in Biblical criticism, Ibn Ḥazm to a much greater extent than al-Shahrestānī. This raises a number of questions. Did they know Hebrew or not? Did they have access to the Hebrew Bible, or did they rely on Arabic translations? Ibn Ḥazm’s use of Hebrew words and phrases in different works suggests that he had some knowledge of Hebrew. However, according to Adang, this was limited knowledge, not enough to allow him to read the Bible in its original version.⁶⁹ Moreover, according to Adang, the description that Ibn Ḥazm has provided of the Torah indicates that he had an abridged version of the Torah before him.⁷⁰ As to what is the source of this abridged Torah? Whether it was prepared by a Muslim or a Jew? It is not entirely clear.

⁶⁵ Ibn Ḥazm, 1: 178.

⁶⁶ Adang, 97.

⁶⁷ Wasserstrom, 187-193.

⁶⁸ Al-Shahrestānī, ed. Mahnā & Fā‘ūr, 1: 253.

⁶⁹ Adang, 135-136.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 136-137.

It also seems he had access to some Karaite anti-Rabbinical literature which he may have used to attack Rabbinical Judaism.⁷¹ Moreover, Adang has found numerous instances where she thinks Ibn Ḥazm may have relied on a Karaite source.⁷²

Muslim Sources

Ibn Ḥazm and al-Shahrastānī appeared at a time in Muslim history when most of Islamic sciences/disciplines had already matured. This also included the field of comparative religions. Within that, a number of Muslim scholars had contributed extensively to the study of Jews and Judaism. These included Ibn Rabban (d. 865), Ibn Qutaybah (d. 889), al-Mas'ūdī (d. 956), al-Ya'qūbī (d. 905) and others. In the case of a polymath like Ibn Ḥazm, it is logical to assume that he was familiar with the work of these authors. Adang has mentioned instances where she thinks he may have used their works.⁷³ Al-Shahrastānī came after Ibn Ḥazm. One would assume that he would have access to all of this literature as well. While he did rely upon previous Muslim scholars for the rest of his *Kitāb al-Milal*;⁷⁴ his not so coherent presentation of Judaism suggests that he had not studied much of this previous literature with respect to Judaism.

In terms of sources, the last question that remains is, did these scholars rely on Christian sources for their description and analysis of Judaism? It is not entirely clear. Wasserstrom thinks that Christian sources had influenced early Islamic literature about Judaism.⁷⁵ If that is indeed the case, then it is possible that Ibn Ḥazm and al-Shahrastānī may have used this material without fully knowing that it was of Christian origin.

MOTIVATIONS

The last issue to consider is, what motivated these authors to study Judaism? A simple answer could be that they were attempting to write encyclopedic texts on the world's religions and sects. Therefore, it was logical for them to include a section on Judaism. While this may be true, we have already seen that Muslim scholars writing in the Islamic genre of comparative religions assumed the validity of Islam's truth-claim. It was not just an academic exercise. Moreover, Ibn Ḥazm's *Kitāb al-Faṣl* is characterized by a strong polemical tone. This is particularly true of his discussion of Judaism. According to Adang, Ibn Ḥazm's main goal for composing *Kitāb al-Faṣl* was polemical. It was to prove the truth of Islam with respect to all religions, and in the case of Judaism, to prove that the Torah had been abrogated and that Prophet Muḥammad was a prophet who abrogated previous religions. While the polemical tone is subdued in the case of al-Shahrastānī, it is present nevertheless. He also seeks to prove the truth of Islam, to prove that the Torah had been abrogated and that Prophet Muḥammad was a prophet whose *Sharī'ah* abrogated previous religions.

More importantly, in the case of Ibn Ḥazm, as mentioned earlier, Aasi contends that his academic endeavors were, in fact, meant to achieve a single goal, viz. to systematize all extant knowledge according to an Islamic pattern. This, he hoped, would pave the way for Muslims to see the connection between *Sharī'ah* and caliphate, which would eventually help re-establish the

⁷¹ Ibid., 102.

⁷² Ibid., 246.

⁷³ See, for example, Adang, 105 & 251.

⁷⁴ Al-Suḥaybānī, 231-249.

⁷⁵ Wasserstrom, 299.

caliphate in al-Andalus. It is possible that that was his motivation. However, to verify such a claim one would have to engage in a thorough study of all of Ibn Ḥazm's works, and that is beyond the scope of this paper.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding description and analysis of *Kitāb al-Faṣl* and *Kitāb al-Milal*, we have seen what their authors, and by extension, Muslim scholars of the Medieval period, thought of Jews and Judaism. In brief, Muslim scholars regarded Jews as people of the book, and as holding on to a religion which previously had divine sanction but which had since been abrogated by the final revelation of God given to Prophet Muḥammad. Muslim scholars considered Jews to have been unable to preserve their holy books and that they had introduced many corruptions into their religion. Muslim scholars felt confident that they were the recipients of the final message of God to humanity, as given to Prophet Muḥammad.

Among the many books written in the Islamic genre of comparative religions, *Kitāb al-Faṣl* and *Kitāb al-Milal* stand out for their comprehensiveness and erudition. Both authors had set out to compose encyclopedias of religions and sects. Both succeeded at that. Both also sought to prove Islam's truth as they saw it. They engaged with their subjects to point out the errors in other religions and to establish the veracity of Islam's claim as the only true religion. Both made use of previous Islamic literature on the subject. While the former is more detailed than the latter, the latter is more concise and better organized. Over the centuries, both books have received scholars' attention. Of the two, *Kitāb al-Milal* has gained more popularity, both among Islamic scholars and modern academics, due to its generally non-polemical tone. Among classical Islamic scholars, the above-mentioned al-Subkī compared the two and considered *Kitāb al-Milal* to be much better than *Kitāb al-Faṣl* in terms of organization and accuracy.⁷⁶ While al-Shahrastānī may have been accurate in his description of other religions and Muslim sects, this is not really the case with his section on Judaism.

With regards to Judaism, Ibn Ḥazm had a better grasp and understanding of Jewish beliefs and practices, as well as of their literature. He had held disputations with their religious scholars over the course of his long intellectual career. He also apparently had some knowledge of Hebrew. On the other hand, al-Shahrastānī comes across as someone with limited knowledge of Jewish religion and culture including language. Apparently he did not get a chance to interact with many Jews. However, because of his providing more detail about certain Jewish sects, his book is still considered a valuable resource for Jewish history, among other things.

⁷⁶ See al-Subkī, 6: 128-129.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources [Arabic]

- Al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. Vol. 20, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* [Biographies of Distinguished and Outstanding Individuals]. Damascus: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1982.
- Al-Ḥamawī, Yāqūt. Vol. 3, *Mu'jam al-Buldān* [Compendium of Countries]. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977.
- Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad. Vol. 1, *Al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal* [Book of Distinctions between Religions, Heresies, and Sects]. Edited by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr & 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1982.
- Al-Shahrastānī, Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm. *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* [Book of Religions and Sects]. Edited by Amīr 'Alī Mahnā & 'Alī Ḥasan Fā'ūr. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1993.
- Al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn. Vol. 6, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah al-Kubrā* [The Great Biographical Listing by Eras of Shāfi'ī Scholars]. Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.

Secondary Sources [English & Arabic]

- Aasi, Ghulām Haider. *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions: A Study of Ibn Ḥazm's Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*. Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Islamic Research Institute, 1999.
- Adang, Camilla. *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Brann, Ross. "An Andalusī-Muslim Literary Typology of Jewish Heresy and Sedition" in Ross Brann, *Power in the Portrayal: Representations of Jews and Muslims in Eleventh- and Twelfth-century Islamic Spain*, 54-90. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Available at <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.libproxy.wustl.edu/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2>.
- Kazi, A. K. & Flynn, J. G. *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslims Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1984.
- Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava. *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Pulcini, Theodore. *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures*. Atlanta: American Academy of Religion, 1998.
- Steigerwald, Diana. "The Contribution of al-Shahrastānī to Islamic Medieval Thought." In *Reason and Inspiration: Islamic Studies in Honor of Hermann A. Landolt*, 262-273. Edited by Todd Lawson. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.
- Al-Suḥaybānī, Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir ibn Ṣāliḥ. *Manhaj al-Shahrastānī fi Kitābihi al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* [al-Shahrastānī's Methodology in his Book *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*]. Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1418 AH/1997 CE.

- Wasserstrom, Steven. "Species of Misbelief: A History of Muslim Heresiography of the Jews."
PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1985.
- Al-Ziriklī, Khayr al-Dīn. Vol. 6, *Al-A'lām: Qāmūs Tarājim li Ashhar al-Rijāl wa al-Nisā' min al-Arab wa al-Musta'ribīn wa al-Mustashriqīn* [Outstanding Individuals: Biographical Dictionary of Famous Men and Women from Among the Arabs, the Arabists, and the Orientalists]. Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 2002.

APPENDIX I

Translations of Selections from Ibn Hazm's *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*¹

This appendix consists of two parts. The first part is the translation of the author's introduction to the book. The second part provides translation of the first few pages of the section on Jews. The third part gives a detailed table of contents of the section on the contradictions of Torah and other Biblical books, which occupies two-thirds of the book's section on Jews.

Part I

Introduction [vol. 1, pp. 35-42]

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

May Allah bless our master Muḥammad and his family and companions, and give [them] peace.

The shaykh, the unique Imam, the memorizer, the noble, helper of the religion, Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa'īd ibn Ḥazm, Allah be pleased with him, says:

All praise is due to Allah. May Allah bless His slave and messenger, Muḥammad, the seal of the prophets, morn and eve, and give him peace.

To proceed: numerous people have written too many books regarding the division of people into religions and regarding their beliefs. Some wrote excessively long [books], committed mistakes and [caused] confusion. This prevented understanding and denied [the reader] knowledge [of the contents]. Others omitted and wrote briefly, and ignored many of the strong objections of those who held the beliefs [being studied]. [Such a scholar] was unjust when he himself would not accept such deception in explanation, and was oppressive towards his opponent when he did not fulfill his right of objection. [Such a person] was also neglecting the right of the one who would read his book because he would not be able to prove the falsehood of the other with [such a book]. All of them [the above-mentioned authors], barring very few, wrote in such a convoluted way that it was difficult for most people of understanding to understand their writing. [These authors also] made the meanings so disconnected that the ending of the statement would make one forget the beginning. Most of this occurred from them as veils hiding the incorrectness of the content. Thus, this was unbecoming of them, then and later.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: we collected this book of ours, along with seeking guidance from Allah, the Exalted and Mighty, regarding its compilation. We intended by it to mention the evidences which are derived from sensorial premises, or which refer back to sense, either directly or indirectly (*min qurb aw min bu'd*). [We did this] in accordance with establishment of such proofs which do not contradict the origin from which they are derived for a certain end. [We did this also] so that, of it, only the above-mentioned proofs would be valid. The reason is that there is no truth but this. We have excessively engaged in verbal description and in giving up convolution. We did this, hoping for a great reward from Allah, the Exalted and Mighty, over this. He is the patron of whomsoever seeks Him as his patron, and He gives to the one who seeks from him. There is no god but He. Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best disposer of affairs.

¹ I am using the following edition: Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*, edited by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr & 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah, (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1982).

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: we say, [acknowledging] that all success is from Allah, that the root of all the sects differing from the religion of Islam are six. Then, each of these sects divides into [many more] sects. We will mention the majority of them, Allah willing.

The six we mentioned are [listed below] in degree of their distance from us:

1. The first of these are those who deny realities. These are the ones whom the *mutakallimūn* call al-Sūfastā'iyah (Sophists).
2. The second of these are those who accept realities but say that the world is pre-eternal, and it does not have an originator or a manager.
3. The third of these are those who accept realities, and who consider the world to be pre-eternal and that it has a pre-eternal manager.
4. The fourth of these are those who accept realities. Some of them consider the world to be pre-eternal; others consider it to be contingent. But they all agree that the world has multiple pre-eternal managers, and that they are more than one. They disagree regarding their [managers'] number.
5. The fifth of these are those who accept realities. They consider the world to be contingent. They consider it to have one pre-eternal manager. However, they deny all prophet hood.
6. The sixth of these are those who accept realities. They consider the world to be contingent. They consider it to have one pre-eternal manager. They also accept prophet hood. However, they disagree regarding some prophets. So they accept some, but deny others.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: between these opinions, other opinions occurred, which are derived from these primary ones, and are composed of them. There are some among them which some groups of people subscribe to such as those which hold the opinion of trans-migration of souls, or those who believe in the un-interrupted existence of prophet hood at all times, and that there are prophets in all types of animals. Examples of these also include some groups which I met and debated who held that the world is originated, and it has a pre-eternal manager, except that the *nafs* (soul), *makān muṭlaq* (mere space), which is space, and *zamān muṭlaq* (mere time) have also existed pre-eternally with Him.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: this is the opinion on which 'Abdullāh ibn Khalaf ibn Marwān al-Anṣārī, 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Sulamī, and Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Aṣḥabī al-Ṭabīb debated with me. This is the opinion which is reported from Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī al-Ṭabīb. We have [written] a unique book regarding this, in response to him, and in critique of his book regarding that. It [the book] is known as *al-'Ilm al-Ilāhī* [Divine Knowledge]. Examples of these [also include] those people who hold that the *falak* (celestial sphere) is pre-eternal, that it is other than Allah Most High, and that it is the manager of the world, who acts in it. They did this out of awe for Him, claiming that it is beyond Allah, the Exalted and Mighty, to be described as doing something. Some of them referred to it [the pre-eternal manager] as *'arsh* (throne). Among these [opinions] is that which we do not know of anyone holding it, but from which not all of the opponents are safe from, when their proofs are applied against them. [Because then], they will be forced to hasten towards it. Therefore, Allah willing, it is necessary to mention those of them which the narrative will require.

An example of such [an opinion] is [the opinion] that the world is originated but it has no originator. With the power of Allah Most High, one must accept the existence of an originator after

discussing the existence of the originated. All success and help lies with Allah Most High, and there is no god but He.

Comprehensive Proofs Which Lead to Knowledge of Truth

[This is] a brief and concise chapter regarding the structure of comprehensive proofs which lead to knowledge of truth regarding all that people differ in, and the method of establishing it.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: we thoroughly presented this chapter in our book known as *al-Taqrīb fi Hudūd al-Kalām* [Limits of Speech Made Easy]. We have examined it thoroughly for you over there. All praise is to Allah, Lord of the worlds. However, we will mention here a sufficient portion [of it] so that it can be an introduction to that which comes after it of those [beliefs and ideas] that people disagree in. [It will be found,] Allah willing, [that such differences] refer back to it [this introduction]. Thus, we say, and all success is with Allah.

Man comes out to this world while his soul has lost all memory. This is according to the one who says that it had memory before that. Or [he comes out] while it never had any memory. This is according to the one who says that it is originated then, or that it is a newly-occurred mixture (*mizāj*). [There is this difference of opinion regarding pre-birth] except that this much is known [with everyone agreeing] that the child has no memory or discernment at the time of its birth, except that which all animals have, viz. only sensation and intentional movement. Thus, you see it contracting its legs and stretching them, and turning its limbs according to its power. It feels pain when it senses cold or heat or hunger, and when it is hit or pinched. Apart from that, it has those features which are common to both animals and those growing beings that are not animals, such as seeking food for the preservation of its body as it is, and for its growth. Thus, it naturally suckles and discerns it with its mouth and not from the rest of its limbs. This is similar to how leaves of trees and plants take moistness of the soil and water for the preservation of their bodies as they are, and for their growth. Thus, when the soul becomes strong, according to the one who says that it is a mixture, or that it is originated then; or when it begins to remember its memory and discernment, according to those who say that it had memory before that or that it is [like] someone who recovered from sickness, then the first discernment which occurs for it, which makes the rational animals (*ḥaywān nāṭiq*) unique is, understanding of that which it perceives through its five senses. These are like the following: its knowledge that good smell is naturally pleasing and bad smell is naturally repulsive; its knowledge that red is different than green, yellow, white, and black; [its knowledge of] the difference between rough and smooth, and between compact, dispersed, and stretched, and between hot, cold and warm; [its knowledge of] the difference between sweet and sour, between bitter, salty, and acrid, between spicy and bland, and between sweet and acrid; and [its knowledge of] the difference between sharp sound and a thick one, and between soft, joyful and dreadful [sounds].

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: So these are the perceptions of the senses for what they sense.

The sixth perception is its [soul's] knowledge of given facts of reason [*badhiyyāt*]. Among these is its knowledge that a part is smaller than the whole. Thus, when a small child who has just achieved discernment is given two dates, he cries but if he is given three, he is pleased. This is his knowledge that the whole is greater than the part, even though he is unable to delineate what he knows of that. Among that is his knowledge that two contradictory things cannot occur together. Thus, if you force him to stand, he cries and argues to sit down, knowing that he cannot be standing

and sitting at the same time. Among that is his knowledge that a single body cannot be in two places [at the same time]. Thus, if he intends to go to some place, and you forcibly stop him, he cries, and says something to the effect that “let me go.” [He does this] knowing that he cannot be in the place where he wants to go, as long as he is in one place. Among that is his knowledge that two bodies cannot be in the same space. Thus, you see him arguing to be in the place in which he wants to sit, knowing that that place is not enough for him as long as whatever is in it is still there. Thus, he pushes whoever is in that place in which he wants to sit, because he knows that as long as that which occupies that space is there, it is not enough for him. If you say to him, “give me that which is in this wall,” while he does not perceive it, he will say, “I don’t see it.” This is because of his knowledge that long is greater in measurement than that which is shorter than it. You see him walking towards something that he wants to get to. This is because of his knowledge that a finite [body] is limited and is crossed by traversing, even though he is unable to delineate what he knows of it properly. Among that is his knowledge that no one knows the unseen. Thus, if you ask him about something he does not know, he denies it, and says, “I do not know.” Among that is his distinguishing between truth and falsehood. Thus, if he is told of some report which you find happening sometimes, he will not accept it until he considers it to be strengthened by another person’s reporting it. Then, he will accept it, and will be satisfied with it. Among that is his knowledge that something can only occur in some time. Thus, when you mention some matter to him, he will ask “when was it?” If you say to him, “why did you do such and such?”, he will say “when was I doing that?” This is because of his knowledge that everything in the world does not exist except in time. He knows that things have natures and essences (*māhiyyāt*), which limit them and they do not transgress them. Thus, you see that when he sees something which he does not know, he says: what is this thing? When it is explained to him, he is satisfied. Among that is his knowledge that an action cannot take place except by some doer. Thus, when he sees something, he says “who did this?” He is not satisfied at all [if told] that it happened without a doer. If he see something in someone else’s hand, he says “who gave him that?” Among that is his knowledge that a report is either true or false. Thus, you see him denying some of that which he is told, while accepting some, and pausing in some.

All of this is observed in all people from the time they begin to grow up.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: these are the first principles of intellect/beginnings of intellect (*awā’il al-‘aql*) in which people of intellect do not differ. Here, there are other things as well which we did not mention; if they are investigated, they will be found, and each person of intellect will discern them in himself and others. No one knows how in any way did he acquire knowledge of all of these things?

A person of sound discernment will not disagree that all of these things are correct, and there is no doubt regarding them. Only someone whose intellect is afflicted by a calamity, and whose discernment is corrupted or who has inclined towards one of the corrupted opinions, will doubt in these things after having sound knowledge of them. This will also be a calamity which befalls his discernment, such as the calamity which afflicts someone who has cholera. Thus, such a person finds honey bitter. [Similarly,] the one who is beginning to experience eye disease, sees things which are unreal. It is similar to all the calamities which afflict the senses.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: these are the valid premises which we mentioned, in which there is no doubt. No one will find room here for demanding a proof for them except a crazy person or an ignorant person who does not know the realities of things, and someone

from whom the child is more guided. This is a matter, admitting to which, is common to the young and old of all of the children of Adam, peace be upon him, in the [many] regions of the world, except the one who deceives his sense, and contradicts his intellect, thus joining the crazies. The reason is that deduction for something cannot be, except in some time. It is necessary that this be known in the beginning of intellect because it is known by necessity of intellect that everything in the world does not exist except in some time. There is no moment at all between the first time of discernment of intellect in this world and between its perceiving all that we mentioned. It is neither a minute, nor less or more. Therefore, there is no way to seek proof for it because there is no time in which seeking a proof for it would be possible. Thus, it is proven that these are necessarily known things which Allah Most High puts in the soul. There is no way to reason at all except with these premises. Nothing is proven valid except by testing it with them. Thus, whatever any of these premises testify to as being valid, is valid and certain; and whatever's validity they do not testify to, is null and void. It is true that sometimes, referring to these premises is direct and sometimes indirect. That which is direct is clearer to every soul, and is easier to understand. Whenever the above-mentioned premises go farther, the process of deduction becomes difficult, until one commits that mistake, except the one with strong power of understanding and discernment. Just as that [the above-mentioned] premise is true, that which refers back to it is also true. It cannot be objected to. There is no difference between them in that they are true. This is similar to numbers. Whenever, the numbers are less, it is easier to add them, and mistake does not occur in it. When the numbers increase, and the process of adding them also increases, then it becomes difficult such that mistake occurs in it except in the case of an expert mathematician. Whatever is near to it or far from it, is all true. We do not differentiate between any of that. Neither does any premise among them as mentioned by us contradicts any other premise of them, nor does it contradict that whose validly refers back to another premise of them. All of this is known with certainty. Because of the knowledge of the soul that unseen is not known, it is necessarily valid that it is not possible that someone narrates a long false report, and then another person who has not heard it narrates the exact same report, without increasing or decreasing in it. The reason is that if that were to be possible, then the narrator of such a report would be knower of the unseen because this is knowledge of the unseen itself, which is reporting about *mukhbar 'anhu* (about which the report is being given) as it really is. If that is the case without a doubt, then whatever report two or more different people about whom we can be certain that they did not get together or discuss, narrate and do not disagree in it, then it is necessarily known that it is true and certain, and its being unseen is definitive. Through this, truth of the death of the one who dies, of the birth of the one who is born, the removal from power of whomever is removed, assumption of power of whoever takes power, sickness of whoever falls sick, recovery of whoever recovers, catastrophe from among catastrophes, the lands distant from us, events and kings, the prophets, peace be upon them, their religions, the scholars and their opinions, and the philosophers and their wisdom, is necessarily known. Anyone whose intellect has given him his full share has no doubt regarding anything which we mentioned. And Allah Most High give success.

Part II

About the Jews, Those Christians Who Reject Trinity, [About] the Religion of the Sabians, and [About] Those Magians Who Accept the Prophet hood of Zoroaster and Reject Other Prophets, Peace Be Upon Them, Besides Him. [vol. 1, pp. 177-180]

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: the people of this religion, i.e. the Jews, and the people of this sect, i.e. those Christians who reject trinity, agree with us in accepting oneness of God, the prophet hood, the signs [miracles] of prophets, peace be upon them, and the sending down of books from Allah, the Exalted and Mighty. However, they disagree with us regarding some prophets, peace be upon them, and not others. Similarly, the Sabians and Magians agree with us in accepting some prophets, and not others. As for the Jews, they are divided into five sects. These are as follows:

1. Al-Sāmiriyyah (Samaritans): They say that the blessed city (*madīnat al-quḍs*) is Nablus, which is eighteen miles from Bayt al-Maqdis. They do not know any sanctity for Bayt al-Maqdis, and they do not respect it, and they have a Torah other than the Torah which is in the hands of all the Jews. They deny all the prophet hoods (*nubuwwāt*) which existed among the Children of Israel after Mūsā, peace be upon him, and Yūshaʿ, peace be upon him. They deny the prophet hood of Shamʿūn, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Ishʿiyā, al-Yasaʿ, Ilyās, ʿĀmūṣ, Ḥabqūq, Zakariyyā, Irmiyā, and others. They do not accept resurrection at all. They are located in Syria. They do not consider it permissible to leave it.
2. Al-Sadūqiyyah (Saducees): They are named after a person called Ṣadūq. Among all the Jews, they claim that al-ʿAzīz [sic. ʿUzayr?] is the son of Allah; Allah is beyond such things. They are found in the direction of Yemen.
3. Al-ʿAnāniyyah (Karaites): They are the companions of the Jew, ʿĀnān al-Dāwūdī. The Jews call them al-Qarrāyīn (Karaites) and al-Mīn/al-Mayn. Their opinion is that they do not go beyond the laws of Torah, and that which is to be found in the books of the prophets, peace be upon them. They wash their hands of the opinion of the Rabbis (*al-aḥbār*), and deny them. This sect is found in Iraq, Egypt and Syria. In al-Andalus, they are found in Toledo and Talavera.
4. Al-Rabbāniyyah (Rabbanites): They are al-Ashʿaniyyah. They subscribe to the opinions of the Rabbis (*al-aḥbār*). Their religion is the religion of the majority of Jews.
5. Al-ʿĪsawiyyah: They are the companions of Abū ʿĪsā al-Aṣbahānī, who was a Jewish man. He was in Isfahan. It has reached me that his name was Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā. They believe in the prophet hood of ʿĪsā, peace be upon him, and of Muḥammad, Allah bless him and give him peace. They say that Allah, the Exalted and Mighty, sent ʿĪsā to the Children of Israel as is mentioned in al-Īnḡīl, and that he is one of the prophets of the Children of Israel. They say that Muḥammad, Allah bless him and give him peace, is a prophet whom Allah sent with the laws of the Qurʾan to the Children of Ismāʿīl, peace be upon them, and to all the Arabs, just as Ayyūb (Job) was a prophet among the Children of ʿĪṣ, and just as Balʿām was a prophet among the Children of Muʿāb, as agreed to by all sects of the Jews.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: I met many among the Jewish elite who subscribe to this opinion. I have read in [a book of] their history, which was compiled by an Aaronite man. He was among them in ancient times, and was among their elders and leaders, and among those who were surrounded by one-third of their city, by one-third of their wars, and one-

third of their armies during the period of the War of Titus and the destruction of the House. He had great affect during these wars. He was alive at the time of the matter of the Messiah (Jesus), peace be upon him. His name is Yūsūf ibn Hārūn. He mentioned their kings and their wars until he reached the [case of] the murder of Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā (John the Baptist), peace be upon him. He mentioned him in a beautiful manner, extolled his station, and [mentioned] that he was killed unjustly because of his true speech. He mentioned the matter of al-Ma‘mūdiyyah in a good way. He did not deny them or reject them. Then, while mentioning that king Hardūs ibn Hardūs, he says the following: it has been said that this king was among the wise men of the Children of Israel and was the best of the community. He did not mention the Messiah, son of Maryam, peace be upon them both, more than this.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: I mentioned this statement because I think this opinion was dominant amongst them, and was wide-spread among their leaders from then until now.

The Jews altogether are divided into two groups: those who deny abrogation (*naskh*) [of Torah], and do not consider it possible, and the second type, who consider it possible but hold the opinion that it did not take place.

The main basis of those who deny abrogation is that it is impossible for Allah, the Exalted and Mighty, that He would command something and then forbid it. If that were the case then truth would become falsehood, obedience would become disobedience, falsehood would become truth, and disobedience would become obedience.

Abū Muḥammad, Allah be pleased with him, says: we do not know any other evidence for them besides this, and this is the weakest misrepresentation which has nothing to stand on. The reason is that the one who ponders over all of the actions of Allah Most High, and all of His rulings and commands in this world, will be certain of the falsity of this opinion of theirs. The reason is that Allah Most High gives life, and then gives death, and then gives life. He transfers power from a people whom He honored and then dishonored, to a humbled people whom He honors. He bestows whatever He wills of good and bad character upon whomever He wills. “He will not be asked about what He does and they will be asked” [Qur’an, 21:23].

Part III

Detailed Table of Contents for the Section on the Contradictions of Torah and other Biblical Books

This list is based on the list given by the editors of the edition under consideration. It is not clear whether Ibn Ḥazm himself made such headings in his work. The section on Judaism is from the beginning of p. 177 till the end of p. 329. Of this, the section on the contradictions of Torah and other Biblical books begins on p. 201 and lasts until p. 285. This is followed by a section on how Torah was corrupted, which begins on p. 287 and lasts until p. 329.

1. The Samaritan Torah
2. Lack of disagreement regarding the Jewish Torah
3. Discussion of rivers in Torah
4. Torah's claim that Adam is one of the gods
5. Section regarding Qābīl (Cain) and Hābīl (Abel)
6. Torah's discussion of Hābīl
7. Torah's claim that Allah's children took women [as sexual partners]
8. Confusion in Torah regarding human ages
9. Nūḥ's (Noah) giving blessing to his son Sām
10. Confusion in Torah regarding the actual ages of Nūḥ's sons and about the deluge/flood
11. Torah's opinion regarding the dispersion of the progeny of Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him
12. Torah's claim that the progeny of Ibrāhīm will rule the land between the Nile and Euphrates
13. Expulsion of Ibrāhīm from the land of the Kurds to a safe land
14. Ibrāhīm's meeting with the angels, peace be upon them
15. Glad tidings of the birth of a son to Ibrāhīm
16. Ibrāhīm asking his Lord to not destroy all of Lūṭ's people
17. Torah's claim that Lūṭ, peace be upon him, slept with his daughters
18. Pharaoh imprisons Sarah, the wife of Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him
19. Torah's claim that Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, had more than one wife
20. Ishāq asking his son 'Īsū to hunt
21. Mention of Ya'qūb serving his maternal uncle Lābān and his marrying Rāḥīl
22. Ya'qūb returning from his journey with his wives
23. Ya'qūb's love for his son Yūsuf, peace be upon them both
24. Mention of the sale of Yūsuf, peace be upon him
25. Children of Ya'qūb born in Syria
26. Ya'qūb, peace be upon him, blessing his children
27. Torah informs of giving leadership to the children of Yahūdḥā
28. Sending Mūsā, peace be upon him, to the Pharaoh
29. Miracles of Mūsā, peace be upon him, in front of the Pharaoh
30. Mention of some of the miracles of Mūsā, peace be upon him
31. Confusion in Torah regarding the time the Children of Israel stayed in Egypt
32. The corrupted Torah describes God with words unsuitable for Him
33. Torah's description of the manna which came down from the sky

34. Anthropomorphism of Torah, and its describing Him with human attributes
35. Torah accuses Hārūn, peace be upon him, of making the calf
36. God responds to Mūsā's, peace be upon him, beseeching [Him] to forgive the Children of Israel
37. God's demand that Mūsā and his people go to Palestine
38. Torah's claim that Allah promised Mūsā that he will see Him from His back and not from His face
39. Confusion in books of the Jews regarding their number at the time of their exodus from Egypt
40. Torah's mentioning of the Israelite tribes who left Egypt
41. Israelites desire for earthly vegetables
42. Opposition of Hārūn and Maryam to Mūsā, peace be upon them
43. Mūsā's asking the tribes to go out to the holy land
44. Mūsā's asking his people to not listen to the claim of prophet hood

APPENDIX II

Translations of Selections from al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*²

This appendix consists of two parts. The first part is the translation of the author's introduction to the book. The second part begins with the author's introduction to his sections on the people of the book. This is followed by the translation of the section on Jews.

Part I³

Introduction [vol. 1, pp. 17-20]

Praise be to Allah, that is due from all the grateful, a fullness of praise for all His blessings, a praise that is abundant, pure and blessed as is His due. May Allah bless Muhammad, the chosen one, the messenger of mercy, the seal of the prophets, and his pure family; a blessing lasting till the Day of Judgment, just as He blessed Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm. Indeed, He is worthy of all praise, the Majestic.

To proceed: when Allah Most High gave me the power to study the beliefs of people of the world, i.e. people of religions and creeds, and people of opinions and sects, [and gave me the power] to become aware of their sources and their applications/relevance, and to acquire their important and obscure facts, I intended to gather all of it in a brief volume which would encompass what religionists follow, and which plagiarists claim to profess, as a warning to the one who reflects, and as a reflection for the one who draws a lesson.

Before delving into my main purpose, I must present five premises.

1. First Premise regarding the general types of the people of the world.
2. Second premise regarding the principle on which the number of Islamic sects is based.
3. Third premise regarding the first doubt that occurred regarding the caliphate, who was its source, and who brought it to light?
4. Fourth premise regarding the first doubt that occurred in the Islamic *millah* (religious community), the situation of its differentiation, who was its source, and who brought it to light?
5. Fifth premise regarding the cause which necessitated the organization of this book mathematically.

The First Premise Regarding the General Types of the People of the World

There are those among people who divide people of the world according to the seven regions [of the world]. [Such people] assign each region its share of varied natures and dispositions which are indicated by the colors [of their skins] and languages.

There are those among them who divide people according to the four directions, which are east, west, south and north. [Such people] assign each direction its share of varied natures and different laws.

² I am using the following edition: Abū al-Faḥ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, edited by Amīr 'Alī Mahnā & 'Alī Ḥasan Fā'ūr, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1993).

³ For this part, I have consulted Kazi and Flynn's translation of *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*'s chapters on Muslim sects. See A. K. Kazi & J. G. Flynn, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslims Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī*, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 8-10. The responsibility for this translation, nevertheless, is mine.

Then, there are those among them who divide them according to nations. Thus, they say that the great nations are four: Arabs, Persians, Romans, and Indians. Then, they make pairs between nations, saying that Arabs and Indians are close to one another to the extent of being on a single religion. They [Arabs and Indians] are generally interested in determining the particular characteristics of things, and in judgment regarding the rulings of essences and realities, and pursuing spiritual matters. The Romans and Persians are close to one another to the extent of being on a single religion. They [Romans and Persian] are generally interested in determining the natures of things, and in judgment regarding rulings of conditions and quantities, and pursuing physical/material matters.

Then, there are those among them who divide them according to opinions/beliefs. That is our purpose in compiling this book. According to the foremost correct division, they [people of the world] are divided into people of religions and religious communities, and people of opinions and creed.

Examples of those who just follows religions are Magians, Jews, Christians and Muslims. Examples of those who follow desires and opinions are philosophers, *Dahriyyah* (atheists), Sabians, worshippers of stars and idols, and Brahmins.

Each of these are divided into sects. The opinions of those who follow desires are not limited by a known number. However, the number of sects of those who follow religions is limited by the report [of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace)] regarding it. Thus, the Magians were divided into seventy sects; the Jews into seventy-one sects, the Christians into seventy-two sects, and the Muslims into seventy-three sects. Those who will be delivered (*nājiyah*) are always one of the sects because truth is only one when considering two opposing propositions. When there are two opposing and contradictory propositions, then they must be divided into true and false. Thus, the truth will be in one of them and not the other. It is rationally impossible to declare two contradictory opponents to be right and truthful.

Since, truth in every rational issue is one, therefore, in all issues, truth must be with one sect as well. We know this through transmitted evidence. The revelation informs us of this in the divine statement: “from among those whom We created is a nation who guide by the truth and dispense justice by it” [Qur’an, 7:181].

The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said: “my nation will divide into seventy-three sects. Only one of them will be delivered; the others will perish.” It was said: who are the delivered ones? He said: “those of the way/example (*sunnah*) and community.” It was said: what is the way/example and the community? He said: “That upon which I am and my companions are.”

The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said: “a group from my nation will always be dominant upon the truth until the day of resurrection.” He, blessings and peace be upon him, [also] said: “my nation will not agree on misguidance.”

Part II

Chapter 2: People of the Book [vol. 2, pp. 13-24]

Those who are outside of the straight religion (*al-millah al-ḥanīfiyyah*) and the Islamic law but who follow some law, rules, and limits (*ḥudūd wa a'lām*), are divided into those who have an actual book like Torah and Injīl (Gospel). These are the ones whom the revelation refers to as the people of the book. [The second category is of] those who have something akin to a book, such as the Magians and the al-Mānawiyyah (Manichaens). This is so because the books (*ṣuḥuf*) of Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, were raised to the sky because of things that the Magians caused. This is why it is permissible to establish a treaty and relationship of *dhimmah* with them, and they are to be treated the way Jews and Christians are treated because they are from among the people of the book. However, it is not permitted to inter-marry with them, nor to eat their slaughtered [animals] because the book was raised from them.

We will first mention the people of the book because of their precedence due to the book, and later we will mention those who have something akin to a book.

The People of the Book and the Un-lettered Ones (*Ummiyyūn*):

The two sects who opposed each other before the prophetic mission (*mab'ath*) were people of the book and the un-lettered ones. An *ummī* is the one who does not know how to write. The Jews and Christians were in Madinah while the unlettered ones were in Makkah.

The people of the book supported the religion of the tribes (*asbāt*), and followed the religion of the Children of Israel. The unlettered ones supported the religion of the tribes (*qabā'il*) and followed the religion of the Children of Ismā'īl. The light which had come from Adam, peace be upon him, to Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, spread and then from him it was passed on to two sections; a section in the Children of Israel and a section in the Children of Ismā'īl. The light which came from him to the Children of Israel was apparent, while the light which came from him to the Children of Ismā'īl was hidden. The apparent light was known from the appearance of individuals (*ashkhāṣ*) and from the appearance of prophet hood in a person. The hidden light was known from the appearance of rituals [of the annual pilgrimage], signs and its concealment in individuals.

The *qiblah* (direction to turn to for worship) of the first group was Bayt al-Maqdis, and the *qiblah* of the second group was the sanctified house of Allah which was erected for people in Makkah as a blessing and a guidance for the worlds.⁴ The law of the first [group] was apparent rulings, and the law of the second was observance of the sanctified rituals. The opponents of the first group were non-believers like Pharaoh and Hāmān, while the opponents of the second were polytheists like worshippers of idols. Thus the two groups are symmetrical and the division is valid in terms of these two opposing dimensions.

The Jews and the Christians are from among the two main nations of the people of the book. The Jewish nation is greater because the law was Mūsā's (peace be upon him), and all of the Children of Israel submitted to it, and were obligated to follow the rulings of Torah.

The Injīl that was sent down to 'Īsā, peace be upon him, did not comprise rulings, and did not include permissible and the impermissible. Rather, it was signs and examples, and reminders and admonishments. As for the other rulings and laws, they had to be in accordance with Torah, as we shall explain. For this reason, the Jews did not submit to 'Īsā, son of Maryam, peace be upon her. They claimed against him that he was obliged to follow Mūsā, peace be upon him, and to be in

⁴ This is an obvious reference to the Qur'anic verse [3:96].

agreement with Torah, but that he had changed and altered. They counted these changes [as proof] against him. Amongst these was changing of the Sabbath to Sunday, and changing of eating pork while it had been impermissible in Torah. These also included circumcision and bathing, and others.⁵

The Muslims have explained that the two nations have changed and altered. Otherwise, ‘Īsā, peace be upon him, was confirming that which Mūsā, peace be upon him, had brought, and that both had given glad tidings of the coming of our Prophet Muhammad, the prophet of mercy, may the blessings of Allah be upon them all. Their leaders, their prophets and their books had commanded them of that. Their ancestors had built forts and castles near Madinah only for helping the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet of the end times. They [their leaders] commanded them [the Jews] to migrate from their lands in Syria to these castles and these areas, until when the truth appeared and was manifest in Fārān, and then migrated to the abode of migration, they abandoned him and gave up helping him. That is [contained in] the divine statement: “Before they used to seek victory [through him] against the disbelievers. But when that which they recognized came to them, they disbelieved in him. The curse of Allah be upon the disbelievers” [Qur’an, 2:89].⁶

The disagreement between the Jews and the Christians would not have been removed except with his judgment because the Jews used to say “the Christians have nothing to stand on” [Qur’an, 2:113], and the Christians used to say “Jews have nothing to stand on, while they [both] recited the book” [Qur’an, 2:113]. The Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, used to say to them: “You have nothing to stand on unless you establish Torah and Injīl” [Qur’an, 2:68]. It was not possible for them to establish them except through establishing the Wise Qur’an, and through the judgment of the Prophet of mercy, the Messenger of the end times. When they refused that and rejected the signs of Allah, “they were struck with wretchedness, and they incurred the wrath of Allah. That is because they used to deny the signs of Allah...” [Qur’an, 2:61].

Section 1: The Jews

Hāda al-rajul means he returned and repented. This name stuck with them because of the saying of Mūsā, peace be upon him: “Indeed we return to You, i.e. we return and beseech [You].”

They are the nation of Mūsā, peace be upon him. Their book is Torah, which is the first book sent down from the sky. By that I mean that whatever was sent down upon Ibrāhīm and other prophets, peace be upon them, was not called *kitāb* (book); rather [they were called] *ṣuḥuf* (scrolls). A tradition has been reported from the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, that he said: “Indeed, Allah created Adam with His hand, and created the Garden of Eden with His hand, and wrote the Torah with His hand.” Thus, he proved a specialty for it over the rest of the books. It comprised *asfār* (books). Thus, the beginning of creation would be mentioned in the first *sifr*. Then the rulings and limits, and conditions and stories, and sermons and reminders would be in different *asfār*.

Tablets (*alwāh*), which were like an abridgement of that which is in Torah, were also sent down upon him. They comprised practical and theoretical types. Allah Most High says: “and We

⁵ It seems these claims are from the Jews of later times against the Christians, and by extension, against ‘Īsā, peace be upon him. Author’s statement in the next paragraph suggests that.

⁶ The translations of Qur’anic verses throughout this document are based on Muftī Taqī ‘Usmānī’s and Prof. Abdel Haleem’s translations with some modifications on my part. See Muftī Taqī ‘Usmānī, *The Meanings of the Noble Qur’an with Explanatory Notes*, (Karachi: Maktaba Ma‘ārif al-Qur’an, 2007) and M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an: A New Translation*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

wrote advice of every kind for him in the tablets” [Qur’an, 7:145]. This is a reference to the whole theoretical type. [He Most High also says]: “and explanation of all things” [Qur’an, 7:145]. This is a reference to the whole practical type.

They say:⁷ Mūsā, peace be upon him, used to inform Yūsha‘ ibn Nūn, his deputy [*waṣiyy*] and servant, who established the matter after him, of the secrets of Torah and the tablets, so that he would inform the children of Hārūn. The reason is that the matter was shared between him and his brother Hārūn, peace be upon them both. This is so because He Most High said regarding Mūsā, peace be upon him, regarding his prayer when he first received the revelation: “and make him share my task” [Qur’an: 20:32]. He was his deputy. When Hārūn died in the lifetime of Mūsā, the deputyship was transferred to Yūsha‘ ibn Nūn as a trust so that he would pass it on to Shabbīr and Shibr, the two sons of Hārūn, [where it was supposed] to reside. This is so because some forms of deputyship [*waṣiyyah*] and leadership [*imāmah*] are stable while others are a trust.

The Jews claim that *Sharī‘ah* (law) can only be one. It began with Mūsā, peace be upon him, and ended with him. There was no *Sharī‘ah* before him except rational limits and useful [ad-hoc] rulings.

They do not permit *naskh* (abrogation of divine command) at all. They say: there can be no *Sharī‘ah* after him at all because abrogation in commands is *badā’* (God changing His mind because of new information that was previously unknown to Him), and *badā’* is not possible for Allah Most High.

Their [theological] issues revolve around the permissibility/possibility or otherwise of abrogation, and upon the permissibility/possibility or otherwise of anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*), and upon believing in free will or compulsion, and upon the possibility or impossibility of rescission (*raj‘ah*).

As for abrogation, it is as we mentioned earlier.

As for anthropomorphism, this is because they found Torah filled with ambiguous ideas such as image, handshake, speaking aloud, descending upon Mount Sinai [Ṭūr] as a [physical] transfer, establishment on the throne as a permanent residence, and the possibility of being seen above, and others.

As for believing in free will, they disagree regarding it like the disagreement of the two parties in Islam. The Rabbanites are like the Mu‘tazilah among us, and the Karaites are like the Mujbarah⁸ and the Mushabbihah (anthropomorphists) among us.

As for the possibility of rescission (*raj‘ah*), this occurred for them only because of two matters. One of these is the report of ‘Uzayr, peace be upon him, when Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, and then resurrected him. The second is the report of Hārūn, peace be upon him, when he died in Tih. They had accused Mūsā of murdering him with his tablets. They said, he was jealous of him because the Jews were more inclined towards him than Mūsā. They disagreed regarding his death. There were some of them who said that he died and will soon return, and there were some of them who said that he has gone into hiding and will soon return.

It should be known that all of Torah comprised indications and signs [declaring] that the *Sharī‘ah* of our prophet, the chosen one, peace and blessings upon him, is true, and that the one

⁷ Here, he is apparently referring to the Jews.

⁸ Mujbarah is another name for the Qadariyyah, which was an Islamic sect that believed that humans do not have a free will.

who brings that *Sharī'ah* is [also] truthful. However, they altered it and changed it either through alteration in terms of writing and image, or in terms of exegesis and interpretation.

The most obvious of these is the mention of Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, and his son Ismā'īl, his prayer for him and for his progeny, and God's acceptance of it [saying] I have blessed Ismā'īl and his progeny, I have placed all good in them, I will dominate them over all nations, and I will soon send in them a messenger from among them who will recite My verses upon them.

The Jews acknowledge this matter, except that they say: Allah accepted his prayer for kingdom and not for prophet hood and messenger-ship.

I forced⁹ them to accept [our argument by saying] that the kingdom which you accept [for him], was it kingship with justice and truth or was it without them? If it was not with justice and truth, then how is He reminding Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, of a favor upon his children whereas it was tyranny and oppression. And if you accept justice and truth in terms of kingdom, then it is necessary that the king should be truthful with respect to Allah Most High in what he claims and says about Him. How can someone who lies against Allah Most High be a person of justice and truth because there is no oppression worse than lying against Allah Most High? Thus, in his denial is his tyranny, in tyranny is removal of favor with blessing, and that is non-fulfillment of promise.

It is strange that it is said in Torah that the descendants (*asbāt*) from the Children of Israel used to refer to tribes (*qabā'il*) from the Children of Ismā'īl, and they knew that there is such divinely provided knowledge (*'ilm ladunnī*) in those people, which Torah does not contain. It is mentioned in histories that the Children of Ismā'īl were called family of Allah (*Āl Allāh wa Ahl Allāh*), while the Children of Israel were called family of Ya'qūb, family of Mūsā, and family of Hārūn. This is a great defect (*kasr*).

It is mentioned in Torah that Allah came from Mount Sinai (Ṭūr Sīnā'), and appeared at Sā'īr, and manifested at Fārān. Sā'īr refers to the mountains of Bayt al-Maqdis which was the place of appearance of 'Īsā, peace be upon him, and Fārān refers to the mountains of Makkah, which was the place of appearance of the Chosen One, Allah bless him and give him peace.

Since the divine secrets and divine lights regarding revelation, prayer and interpretation are of three levels: beginning, middle and perfection; and [since,] arrival (*majī'*) is similar to beginning, appearance (*zuhūr*) is similar to middle, and manifestation (*i'lān*) is similar to perfection; therefore, Torah referred to the rising of the morning of *Sharī'ah* and revelation as coming from Mount Sinai, it referred to the rising of the Sun as appearance on Sā'īr, and referred to reaching perfection as zenith and manifestation on Fārān. These words contain the proof of the prophet hood of 'Īsā, peace be upon him, and that of Muḥammad, the chosen one, Allah bless him and give him peace.

The Messiah (Masīḥ) has said in Injīl: I have not come to nullify the Torah; rather I have come to complete it. The one who brought Torah said: "a soul for a soul, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and wounds are to be retaliated for." I say: "if your brother slaps you on your right cheek then put [forward] your left cheek for him."

The last *Sharī'ah* came with both the matters. As for retaliation, this is in the divine statement: "retaliation is prescribed for you in cases of murder" [Qur'an, 2: 178]. As for forgiveness, it is in the divine statement: "forgiveness is closer to God-fearingness" [Qur'an, 2: 237].

⁹ This suggests al-Shahrestānī had engaged in debates with Jews.

Torah's rulings contain rulings for apparent and general management, while Injil contains rulings for inward and specific management. The Qur'an has both types of management. [Thus,] "there is life for you in retaliation" [Qur'an,] refers to realization of apparent management, while the divine statements "forgiveness is closer to God-fearingness" [Qur'an, 2: 237] and "forgive and enjoin good and turn away from the ignorant" [Qur'an, 7:199] refers to realization of internal management. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, has said: "it is that you forgive the one who oppresses you, and you give to the one who denies you, and you join [ties of kinship] with the one who cuts them from you."

It is strange that the one who sees someone else confirming what he has and perfecting it and raising it from one level to another, how it is permissible for him to deny him?

In reality, abrogation is not nullification; rather, it is perfection. Torah contains general rulings, and those that are specific to individuals or eras, and when the era ends, these must end as well. This cannot be called nullification or *badā'*. The same is the case here.

As for the Sabbath, if the Jews [only] knew that the obligation was not observance of the Sabbath. Whose day is it? With respect to which condition or time is it? [If they knew this] they would have known that the last *Sharī'ah* is the truth, and that it has come to confirm the Sabbath and not nullify it. They are the ones who transgressed with respect to the Sabbath such that they were mutilated as monkeys, and were despised. They admit to it and to that Mūsā, peace be upon him, built a house and drew in it images and individuals, and explained the levels of images, and pointed at those signs. However, when they could not find the door i.e. the door of forgiveness, and it was not possible for them to climb over the habits of thieves, they were confused and lost, and wandered in confusion. Thus, they divided into seventy-one sects.

Of these, we will mention the most famous and the most apparent among them. We will leave the rest. And Allah alone gives success.

1. Al-'Anāniyyah:

These are attributed to a person called 'Anān ibn Dāwūd, who was the *Ra's al-jālūt* (exilarch, i.e. the head of community during its captivity).¹⁰ They differ from all the Jews with respect to the Sabbath and the festivals. They forbid eating birds, deer, fish and locusts. They slaughter the animal on the nape. They confirm 'Īsā, peace be upon him, in his advices and signs. They say he did not oppose the Torah at all; rather, he affirmed it, and called people towards it. [They also say that] he was from the Children of Israel who submitted to the Torah, and was from among those who responded to Mūsā, peace be upon him. [They say all this] except they do not accept his prophet hood and his messenger ship.

Among them, there are those who say that 'Īsā, peace be upon him, did not claim that he is a prophet sent from on high. [They also claim] that he is not from the Children of Israel, and that he did not bring a *Sharī'ah* which abrogated the *Sharī'ah* of Mūsā, peace be upon him. Rather, he is from among the sincere friends of Allah, who knew the rulings of Torah. [They also say] that Injil is not a book sent down upon him as a revelation from Allah Most High; rather, it is a collection of his accounts from his beginning until his perfection. It was only gathered by four of his companions (*hawāriyyūn*); therefore, how can it be a revealed book?

¹⁰ This was the title used for the official head of the Jewish community under Muslim rule. See Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 77.

They say: the Jews transgressed when they denied him at first while they did not recognize him, and [they transgressed when] they killed him at the end while they did not know his place or his importance. The mention of Mashīḥā occurs in Torah in a number of places. That is the Messiah (al-Masīḥ). However, it does not mention prophet hood or an abrogating *Sharī'ah* for him. Fārqaḻīt, who is a knowledgeable man is mentioned [in it]. Similarly, he is mentioned in the Injīl. Therefore, it is obligatory to interpret it to refer to that which is found. Only the one who claims otherwise has to prove it.

2. Al-‘Īsawīyyah:

They are attributed to Abū ‘Īsā Ishāq ibn Ya‘qūb al-Asfahānī. It has been said that his name was ‘Ūfīd Aloḥīm i.e. worshiper of Allah. He was in the time of al-Manṣūr. His call began during the time of the last of the Umayyad kings, Marwān ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥimār. A large number of Jews followed him, and claimed for him signs and miracles. They [also] claimed that when he was fought, he drew a line around his companions with a myrtle stick, and said: stand in this line, and the enemy will not be able to hurt you with weapons. The enemy would attack them until they reached the line [but then] would retreat from them out of fear of the magic or the spell which he had perhaps placed. Later, Abū ‘Īsā came out of the line alone on his horse, and fought. He killed a lot of Muslims and [then] went to the companions of Mūsā ibn ‘Imrān who were across the sandy river to make them hear the speech of Allah. It has [also] been said that when he fought the companions of al-Manṣūr, him and his companions were killed.

Abū ‘Īsā claimed that he was a prophet and the messenger of the awaited Messiah. He claimed that the Messiah would have five apostles before him who would come one after another. He claimed that Allah Most High had spoken to him, and had given him the responsibility to free the Children of Israel from the hands of the transgressing nations and oppressing kings. He claimed that the Messiah is the best of the children of Adam, and that he was above the previous prophets in rank, and because he [Abū ‘Īsā al-Asfahānī] was his apostle; therefore, he was superior to everyone as well. He claimed that it was obligatory to confirm the Messiah. He would give great importance to the call of the caller. He also claimed that the caller was the Messiah.

In his book, he forbade all kinds of sacrifice, and forbade eating of any living being, be it a bird or animal. He made ten prayers mandatory, and commanded his companions to establish them and to remember their times. He opposed the Jews in many of the rulings mentioned in Torah.

The Torah of the people is the Torah which thirty rabbis gathered for some king of Rome so that every ignorant person would not tamper with its rulings. And Allah alone gives success.

3. Al-Maqāribah and al-Yūdh‘āniyyah:

They are attributed to Yūdh‘an from Hamadān. It has been said that his name was Yahūdḥā. He used to exhort [people] to asceticism and increase in prayer, and forbade them from meats and wines. Among the things reported from him is exalting the matter of the caller. He used to claim that Torah has an outward and an inward, a revelation and an interpretation. He opposed the generality of Jews with his interpretations. He opposed them in anthropomorphism (*tashbīḥ*), and was inclined towards free-will. He insisted that in reality, deeds belonged to the slave. [Therefore] the reward and punishment was based on it. He went to extreme in this regard.

4. Al-Mūshkāniyyah:

They are the companions of Mūshkān. He was on the way of Yūdh‘ān except that he considered it obligatory to go out [to fight] against his opponents, and ordained fighting against them. He went out among nineteen men, and was killed near Qom. It is mentioned from a group of Mūshkāniyyah that they considered the prophet hood of Muḥammad, the chosen one, peace and blessings be upon him, to be for the Arabs and all people except the Jews because they were [already] people of a religion (*millah*) and a book.

A group of Maqāribah claimed that Allah Most High had snatched away the prophets, peace and blessings be upon them, through an angel which He had chosen, and given him precedence over all creation and made him a successor over them. They say: all that is in Torah and all the books regarding attribute of Allah Most High, is [in fact] a report about that angel. Otherwise, it would not be permissible to describe Allah Most High with an attribute.

They say: the one who spoke to Mūsā, peace be upon him, was that angel, and the tree mentioned in the Torah was that angel. God Most High is exalted above speaking to any man. They interpret all that is mentioned in Torah viz, asking for vision, shaking hands with Allah, Allah came, Allah looked from the clouds, He wrote the Torah with his hands, He established Himself on the throne permanently, that He has the image of Adam, short curly hair, black hair extending to the ears (*wafrah*), that He cried over the flood of Noah until His eyes became swollen, that the Almighty laughed until His molar teeth showed, and so on, to refer to that angel. He said: it is permissible in custom that He sends a spiritual angel from among His closest group, and uses His name for him, and says: this is My messenger, and his position among you is that of My position [among you], that his word is My word, that his matter is My matter, and his dominance over you is My dominance. Thus is the situation of that angel.

It has been said that when Arnaūs said regarding the Messiah that he is Allah, and that he is the chosen of the world, he took his statement from them. They were before Arnaūs by four hundred years, and were people of asceticism and mortification.

It has been said that the one who made this statement was Benyāmīn al-Nahāwandī. He established this way for them, and told them that all of the ambiguous verses in the Torah were to be interpreted metaphorically, and that Allah cannot be described with human attributes, and that neither does He resemble any of His creation, nor does any of it resemble Him. [He also said] that these statements which appear in the Torah refer to that great angel.

This is similar to how coming [of God] in the Qur’an is interpreted to refer to an angel from among the angels. It is like what Allah Most High said regarding Maryam, peace be upon her, that “We breathed into her of Our spirit” [Qur’an, 21:91] and in another place “We breathed into him of Our spirit” [Qur’an, 66:12]. The one who breathed was only Jibrīl, peace be upon him, when he appeared before her in the form of a perfect man to give her [the gift of] a pure son.

5. Al-Sāmīrah

These people live in the mountains of Bayt al-Maqdis and in some villages in some districts of Egypt. They mortify themselves for purification more than the mortification of all the Jews. They accept the prophet hood of Mūsā, Hārūn, and Yūsha‘, peace be upon them, and deny the prophet hood of other prophets after them. They say that Torah gave glad tidings of only one prophet who would come after Mūsā, who would confirm the Torah before him, would judge according to it, and would not oppose it at all.

A person called al-Alfān appeared in al-Sāmīrah. He claimed prophet hood, and claimed that he is the one that Mūsā, peace be upon him, had given glad tidings of, and that he is the shining star, [about] which [it] is mentioned in the Torah that he will give light like moonlight, and that his appearance will be about a hundred years before the Messiah, peace be upon him.

The Sāmīrah divided into Dūstāniyyah, who are the Alfāniyyah, and the Kūstāniyyah. The meaning of Dūstāniyyah is “a separate denying group,” while Kūstāniyyah means “the truthful group.” They accept the hereafter, and reward and punishment in it; while the Dūstāniyyah claim that reward and punishment is in the world. There is disagreement between the two groups regarding laws and rulings.

The *qiblah* of the Sāmīrah is a mountain called Kuzayrīm, which is between Bayt al-Maqdis and Nablus. They say that Allah Most High commanded Dāwūd to build the Bayt al-Maqdis on the mountain of Nablus, which is the Tūr, on which Allah spoke to Mūsā, peace be upon him. Dāwūd changed it to Īliya’, and built the house there. He opposed the command, so he transgressed. The Sāmīrah apart from all the Jews, turn towards that *qiblah*. Their language is other than that of the Jews. They claim that Torah was in their language, which is closer to Hebrew than Syriac.

These four sects are the larger ones.¹¹ They [the Jews] were divide into seventy-one sects.

All of them agree that Torah gave glad tidings of one [prophet] after Mūsā. Their disagreement is only regarding the identification of that one person, or regarding increase over that one. Mention of the Mashīhā and his signs are apparent in the books (*asfār*). The appearance of one person in the end times who will be a shining star, through whose light the earth will lit up, is also agreed upon. The Jews are waiting for him. Sabbath is the day of that man. It is the day of [God] establishing [Himself over the throne] after creation.

All the Jews agree that when Allah Most High completed the creation of the heavens and the earth, He established Himself over His throne, lying down on His back, placing one of His feet over the other.

A group of them says that the six days in which Allah Most High created the heavens and the earth, were [actually] six thousand years because a day with Allah is like a thousand years of what you count, according to the lunar calendar. That is the time that has passed since Adam, peace be upon him, until our time. Through that the creation was completed. Then, when creation reached the end, the command began. From the beginning of command is establishment over the throne and completion of creation. That is not a matter which happened in the past; rather, it is in the future if we count the days in thousands.

¹¹ This statement seems to contradict the number of sects discussed above which is five. To resolve this, I consulted another edition of *Kitāb al-Mīlāl wa al-Niḥāl*, in which only four sects are discussed. The Mūshkāniyyah are listed as a sub-sect of the Maqāribah and the Yūdh‘aniyyah. See Abū al-Faḥ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Mīlāl wa al-Niḥāl*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Muḥammad al-Wakīl, (Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakah, 1968), 2: 21-23.