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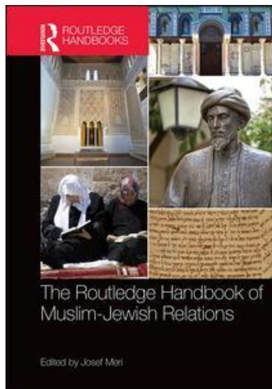

The Routledge Handbook of Muslim–Jewish Relations

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Introduction: Critical reflections on the study of Muslim-Jewish relations

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Introduction

Critical reflections on the study of Muslim-Jewish relations

Josef (Yousef) Meri

The mere idea of "Muslim-Jewish relations" stands in stark contrast with the violent images of Israelis and Palestinians killing one another, of Jews killing Arabs and Arabs killing Jews. We are also reminded of the positive interfaith and intercommunal engagement that takes place daily across the globe. These images exist in tension. It seems that, as often as efforts are undertaken to bring together people from different faith communities, whether in the West or the Middle East, humanity is reminded of its inhumanity. The most recent episodes of violence include Israeli settlers' murder of Palestinians and Palestinian knife attacks against Israeli civilians; the 2014 attack at the Belgian Jewish Museum; and the 2015 terrorist attacks in France, including the killing of 130 people of diverse backgrounds and faiths on 13 November 2015. A grim record to be sure. Such senseless killings have no place in the civilized world and have strengthened the resolve of people who subscribe to humanist values in the West and Middle East to tackle all forms of extremism and racism. Leaders and governments need to strengthen their resolve to end all wars and conflicts that have engulfed the Middle East and have resulted in the spread of fear, paranoia, and desperate acts of reprisal in the Middle East and the West.

In the midst of this strife, we are reminded of humankind's capacity to do good, which is enshrined in the very scriptures and religious traditions that those who seek to destroy human civilization invoke to justify their deeds. We see countless examples of this capacity in contemporary episodes of violence. At a recent attack on a Jewish supermarket in Paris, for instance, a Muslim worker saved the lives of Jewish customers. Historical scholarship has also illuminated a more nuanced understanding of interfaith dynamics than was previously available. For all the adversarial moments between Israelis and Palestinians, Meri's and Bashkin and Schroeter's discussions of medieval and modern history remind the reader of a long history of complex and positive engagements that pre-dates the conflict by over 1,300 years. Any examination of "Muslim-Jewish relations" must account for constructive and cooperative dynamics along with destructive ones, in the context of careful consideration of a broad range of historical and contemporary phenomena.

The study of Muslim-Jewish relations has grown exponentially in the last 15 years. Muslim-Jewish relations, or Jewish-Muslim relations, as it is more commonly known,

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has emerged as an academic discipline that is far-reaching in scope and coverage.[1] A note on terminology may be useful here. *Jewish-Muslim relations* implies that the main focus of study is Jewish-Muslim relations from a Jewish studies perspective, whereas *Muslim-Jewish relations* suggests an Islamic studies perspective. Moreover, the former also suggests, as in the case of Jewish-Christian relations, the influence of the older faith on the younger one – a relationship that in scholarly discourse implies some sort of influence within a given historical context. Geographically and chronologically, the greatest number of interactions occurred between Muslims and Jews in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula. On this basis, it is proper to employ *Muslim-Jewish*. However, in this study and elsewhere, both designations are synonymous.

This volume presents a broad overview of Muslim-Jewish relations beyond the confines of theology and scripture and exegesis that are each allocated a chapter and should not be regarded as the only basis for the study of the historical interactions between faiths and peoples. Unlike the field of Jewish-Christian relations, which traditionally focuses on the theological interactions between Jews and Christians and Judaism, Muslim-Jewish relations is not confined to theology or the comparative study of scripture owing to the absence of a shared physical scriptural text as in the case of Judaism and Christianity, though Muslims believe the Torah was revealed to Moses as the Gospel was revealed to Jesus. Muslims also believe that Islam is the inheritor of the final and most complete of the Abrahamic revelations, paying homage to both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. They venerate the prophets and patriarchs and regard Jesus as a prophet and messenger (*rasūl*, a prophet to whom scripture is revealed) born of a virgin birth and as the awaited Messiah at the end of days.

A long history of European scholarship on Islam exists, rooted in Christian theological and polemical writings of the Middle Ages. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that European Jewish and Christian scholars began studying the relations between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, focusing – though not exclusively – on so-called pagan, Jewish, and Christian influences on Islam.[2] The academic study of Jewish-Christian relations is a more established field of scholarly enquiry in the West than its counterpart, Muslim-Jewish relations, since it has a shared scripture (i.e., the Torah or Hebrew Bible) in common as a basis for the historical relations that existed between Jews and Christians from the time of Jesus.[3] The problem with binary categories is that they are both subjective and imprecise. The three monotheistic faiths and their adherents interacted with one another, not in isolation or neat compartments but in diverse contexts ranging from such intellectual settings as disputations, polemical works, and theology to political, economic, and commercial settings, indeed in virtually all areas of public life that were not governed by the practice of one's own faith in the private and communal spheres. Jews and Christians (including women) in the Middle East often sought adjudication of disputes in Muslim courts, particularly when litigants felt that their religious courts were unable to satisfactorily resolve disputes and despite their own courts' having enacted bans against seeking redress from Muslim courts.[4] In such diverse contexts as intellectual encounters and intersections in philosophy, polemics, disputation, politics, or in society, Muslim-Jewish relations are a critical field of inquiry.

Borrowing and the genesis of the study of interfaith relations

Oral traditions from Judaism and Christianity transmitted from the time of the Prophet Muhammad circulated throughout the Arabian Peninsula. One scholarly approach concerning Islam and its interaction with other faiths explores the origins of Islam in the

light of other monotheistic traditions. Yet this does not mean that Islam merely borrowed from older monotheistic and pre-Islamic traditions.[5] Alternatively, such scholars of late antiquity and early Islam as Garth Fowden regard the rise and spread of Islam as an organic part of the expansion of empire, a shared feature between Islam and Christianity of the first millennium.[6] Other historians such as Fred Donner controversially argue that Jews are part of the *umma* or Islamic community (see Chapter 1).

The adherents of the three faiths interacted in diverse contexts as they do today. The cross-fertilization of ideas makes the study of the Abrahamic faiths a dynamic field of enquiry.[7] The field of Muslim-Jewish relations is an even more recent development with its origins in the philological and linguistic scholarship of the nineteenth century. Orientalist scholarship examines the interconnectedness of the Islamic and Jewish traditions through philological analysis of the traditions of the Middle East. One of the most important Orientalists studying the interconnectedness of Judaism and Islam was the Hungarian Jewish scholar Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921), who had a deeper appreciation for Islam than for Christianity. Goldziher studied Islamic law as well as more popular themes such as the veneration of holy persons especially in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Although Goldziher was concerned with Islamic traditions and law, he cannot be regarded as a scholar of both Judaism and Islam. One of the primary concerns of the Orientalist school is with the origins of Islamic customs, traditions, and rituals, which are often discussed in terms of Islam's borrowing from older traditions. The first scholar to engage in such work was Abraham Geiger (d. 1874), a German Jewish theologian and historian who looked at the interconnectedness of Judaism and Islam. Geiger's argument, though not supported by documentary evidence, is that the Prophet Muhammad borrowed from Judaism. Although Geiger's work was imprecise in the main and includes many generalizations and inaccuracies, it, along with Goldziher's work on Islam, informs the general framework for what has come to be known as the study of Muslim-Jewish relations. The study of Islamic origins and related areas of study represents but one of a number of approaches to the study of interfaith relations. Also related is the study of the Abrahamic faiths, which likewise, encompasses multiple approaches to its study within a religious studies framework.

From the 1950s and 1960s, Jewish scholars adopted the approach of exploring the interconnectedness of the medieval Jewish experience within an Islamic civilizational context, chief among whom are S.D. Goitein and Bernard Lewis. Goitein's work on the Cairo Geniza[8] brought to light some of the most dynamic interactions in the history of Muslim-Jewish relations based on a cache of documents rediscovered in the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fusṭāṭ or Old Cairo during the nineteenth century (see Chapter 1). The creative energies of scholars conducting research in such areas as language and linguistics and law and society have revitalized Geniza studies.

Bernard Lewis first used the term *Judeo-Islamic* to refer to the interaction of the Jews and Muslims of the Middle East and North Africa from the classical period. In his 1984 study *The Jews of Islam,* Lewis further promoted the study of Muslim-Jewish relations by focusing on the range of interactions that existed throughout history and the decline of Judeo-Islamic civilization during the modern era with the exodus of Middle Eastern and North African Jews from their countries of origin.[9]

The focus of Muslim-Jewish relations in the academy has shifted away from an essentially philological approach to more integrative approaches. Since the 1980s and especially the 1990s, scholars have become increasingly more conversant with social scientific and historical methods in order to explain interfaith relations.

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Teaching Muslim-Jewish relations in an academic environment

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, though in certain respects at the core of the study of Muslim-Jewish relations, has regrettably dominated public discussions of the relationship of Islam and Judaism and Muslims and Jews, at the expense of understanding the historical, literary, social, and artistic dimensions. Moreover, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has had a negative impact on the way the public perceives and understands the relationship between Muslims and Jews in particular but also the relationship of the adherents of the three Abrahamic faiths to one another. It is one aspect of the nearly 1,400-year encounter between Muslims and Jews. Merely focusing on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ignores the diverse historical interactions that took place between Jews and Muslims. While today the reactions of Jewish and Muslim communities and others have centred on violent acts committed in the Middle East, Europe, the United States, and elsewhere, whether in the name of Islam or, to a lesser extent, Judaism or Christianity, achieving a historical understanding is often eclipsed by these events.

The university environment of tolerance and openness characteristic of the 1980s and early 1990s was remarkably different for interactions between students of different backgrounds than it is today. Today greater involvement by outside political interest and advocacy groups has negatively affected student-student and faculty-student discussions of sensitive matters related to Islam and Muslim-Jewish relations, especially the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The discussion of certain controversial themes in the classroom or in interfaith settings should not be restricted except by the instructor's or facilitator's range of knowledge and students' and participants' receptiveness to new ideas that have the potential to alter their understanding of certain issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The study of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is often at the centre of controversy on university campuses, particularly in the United States. It is all too easy to be labelled for speaking one's mind and for interrogating history and current events. The suppression of open debate and discussion on university campuses is creating a disturbing and dangerous precedent, which violates the accepted principle that universities are places for the free exchange of ideas, civil discourse, and peaceful protest.

In the absence of a political solution and a worsening situation in the Holy Land, pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel factions clash amidst accusations that pro-Palestinian advocates condone terrorism, are anti-Semitic, and have created a hostile environment for Jewish students on U.S. college campuses. Outside of the classroom, vocal student opposition to Israeli government policies has resulted in heightened tensions and increased factionalism among students and accusations of anti-Semitism. There is a perception among students who advocate for the Palestinian people that it is deemed politically incorrect to criticize the Israeli government lest they be branded not merely anti-Israel or anti-Zionist (see Chapter 17) but, more disturbingly, as anti-Semitic (see Chapter 18). Likewise, pro-Israel advocates are accused of blindly supporting the government of Israel and attempting to suppress the free exchange of ideas and criticism of the Israeli government and its policies. Some Jewish students feel they are being unfairly targeted because of their support for Israel. Yet real hatred of Jews and Muslims, which occasionally manifests itself in physical confrontations and the use of hate speech, does exist and should not be conflated with legitimate criticism of any government and its policies. Criticism does not necessarily involve genuine hatred. However, when it does, it should be confronted head on.

Members of the university community should be allowed to protest anything that devalues human life and dignity as long as the protests do not resort to employing hate

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speech and violence against other members of the university community. In an age of fear, mistrust, ignorance, and heightened conflicts worldwide, universities must do their utmost to foster the open and free exchange of ideas without outside interference from political interest and pressure groups and create a positive environment for the study of interfaith relations. Universities need to create neutral discussion zones and further opportunities for students to exchange ideas without outside interference and the passage of statutes that could negatively affect their right to exercise free speech. Interlocutors must perfect the art of listening, as Akbar Ahmed and Ed Kessler remind us in Chapter 13. We must listen to, not talk at, one another.

Muslim-Jewish relations is about creating a neutral framework that is grounded in historical, literary and visual texts as well as oral history. In the Middle East, a common misperception exists on university campuses as in society – namely that studying Muslim-Jewish relations is tantamount to supporting the aims of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and that it furthers normalization with the Israeli government and its institutions. In popular discourse on the Middle Eastern street, "Jews" are enemies based on the actions of the Israeli government. The suffering and trauma of the Palestinian people, as illustrated in Chapter 14, is part of the collective psyche of Arabs and Muslims. Likewise, in popular Israeli discourse, Arabs and Muslims are seen as the enemy who is determined to murder and convert Israelis, Westerners, and Christians to Islam.

The Qur'anic context offers a clear way forward for Muslims on how to interact with Jews. The paradigmatic Children of Israel (Banū Isrāʾīl) in the Qur'an represent one of a number of themes that illustrate the theological relations between the faiths and a shared "scriptural past." Yet in the Qur'anic context, Muslims are enjoined to engage Jews and Christians with that which is better (Qur'an 29:46) and to "vie with one another in good works" (Qur'an 2:148).

One must engage in order to inform. Two fundamental issues encountered in present-day academic discourse on Muslim-Jewish relations are ethno-national and ethno-religious allegiance and ideological commitment. One's personal background, whether informed by one's ethnicity, religion, or ideological commitment, can potentially lead to bias in discussing an issue, whether in a university or other setting. One successful approach in the context of the Abrahamic religions is Cambridge University academic and Anglican theologian David Ford's Scriptural Reasoning (www.scripturalreasoning.org) initiative, which provides an excellent way to discuss differences and commonalities in the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels, and the Qur'an.

In a context as broad as Muslim-Jewish relations, academic and interfaith practitioners in the field will recognise sensitivities and difficulties in discussing such controversial themes as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Jewish nationalism, the Nakba, the Holocaust, and anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, all of which have been treated sensitively within this volume.

The chapters on the aforementioned themes, like all chapters in this volume, serve as a basis for discussion, outline the salient features of a given theme, provide solid analysis, and raise thought-provoking questions in one's exploration of these themes in academic, interfaith, or policy settings. Moreover, the annotated Further Reading lists offer essential reading for those wanting to study further. The key in any discussion is to confront one's biases early on. Although one may not agree with all aspects of a particular interpretation or argument, this should prompt one to explore further the issues before drawing conclusions.

This volume is a modest contribution to informed debate and discussion about various issues related to Muslim-Jewish relations. By presenting essays on various aspects of Muslim (also Arab)-Jewish relations, this volume seeks to bridge the knowledge gap.

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The public media debate is often framed in us-versus-them terms such as pro-Israel vs. anti-Semitism/anti-Israel. This results in blurring the boundaries between free speech and the legitimate criticism of foreign policy on the one hand and genuine hatred of a religion, ethnicity, or national group on the other.

Moreover, facile approaches to the study of Muslim-Jewish relations preclude an understanding of the larger issues that contribute to a civilized discussion free of polemics and propaganda. In the Holy Land and the Middle East, attacks on innocent civilians of whatever faith have become more prevalent. Similarly, in Europe reprisals against Jews and Muslims have escalated. Yet public discourse should not and must not be guided by the raw emotions that surface among Palestinians, Israelis, Arabs, Jews, Muslims, Christians, Zionists, anti-Zionists, and those subscribing to secular and religious ideologies. The greater tragedy is that violence and killing have resulted in the destruction of trust in the Holy Land as elsewhere in the Middle East and the erosion of trust among faith communities in Europe. Cultivating the human faculty for empathizing with others is essential, regardless of who might be responsible for unleashing death and destruction against civilians. Humanity must strive to restore civil discourse.

Fears and insecurities about the world around us create certain misperceptions that Islam and Muslims are responsible for anti-Semitism in Europe and that Jews are responsible for attacks on Palestinians and Muslims. Such views reflect a lack of understanding of the complexity of European and Middle Eastern societies. Jews and Israelis are one without distinction in the minds of some. Similarly, individuals who have a Middle Eastern or Islamic background are wrongfully accused of supporting terrorism despite constant vocal opposition to violence and the condemnations of terrorism and terrorist groups. Terrorist acts are carried out by those with a Muslim background and, when they are, they set off a chain reaction of recriminations. Raw emotions are coupled with the guttural instinct of responding by committing acts of violence and harassment against Muslim communities and other minorities. This results in "othering the other" and further social discord.

Extremist views persist that have infiltrated mainstream public discourse. The never-ending polemical discourse is as follows: Palestinians are a bunch of terrorists who do not deserve their own state because they kill innocent Israelis. Palestinians are anti-Semitic. Jews *[sic]* are terrorists because they murder innocent civilians in Palestine.

Israeli and Palestinian societies are increasingly polarized and lamentably accepting of militant views that are dressed in religious and secular garb. After nearly 70 years, Palestinians feel they have nothing more to lose in engaging in violence, while Israelis feel that after being targeted by missiles from Gaza they have no alternative but to strike back militarily, thus creating a society that is more accepting of extremist views.

In academic discourse as in the real world, there are no absolutes. Who has suffered the most? Who is more morally justified? So the argument goes, the moral West and Israel stand against Muslims and Islam, or the evil crusader West and Israel seek to occupy the Islamic world and its resources. Such extreme views are part of an increasingly irrational and illogical discourse that persists even among academics and in some Middle Eastern and Western media outlets. Politics define Muslim-Jewish relations for better or worse. A tribal instinct to comment and condemn without engaging with the reality on the ground and understanding the humanitarian dimension of conflict persists. The discourse of victim and oppressor has added fuel to the fire.

Listening is key to academic discourse about interfaith relations. Study of the events surrounding the Nakba (lit. *catastrophe*) that befell Palestinian Arabs (1948), the Farhūd (lit. *violent dispossession*) (1941) in Baghdad, which set in motion the destruction of one of the

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most ancient Jewish communities in the Middle East, or the Deir Yassin massacre (1948), which resulted in the murder of Arab civilians, and other events, must be understood in the light of historical circumstances within the context of reasoned discourse. Major tragedies that are inscribed in the collective memories of Jews and Arabs cannot be expunged, nor should they be. Rather, the inherited knowledge must not be used to delegitimize the other's narrative. Each historical event must be examined without reference to present-day ideologies or making false comparisons. Popular discourse seeks to discredit the Palestinian right of return of the over 750,000 refugees and their descendants and the rights of the nearly 850,000 Arab-Jews who were forced to leave their countries of origin after 1948.

The Christian role in Muslim-Jewish relations

Muslim-Jewish relations do not operate in a vacuum. A trilateral relationship exists among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Where appropriate, contributors have commented about Jewish-Arab relations, including Arab Christians. Christians have an important role to play in facilitating exchanges between Muslims and Jews. For example, the Catholic church has positively enshrined the pursuit of positive dialogue with Jews and Muslims. *Nostra Aetate*,[10] which was proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in 1965, affirms the brotherhood of humankind and urges Christians to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12) and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men (Romans 12:18), so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:45)."

Moreover, the Vatican has been instrumental in bringing Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith leaders together and has taken an active interest in the peace process, mainly behind the scenes. Yet Catholic institutions such as Merrimack College in the United States have supported the growth of Muslim-Jewish relations, particularly in the field of interfaith dialogue. Similarly, Anglicans and other denominations and institutions have played an instrumental role in Jerusalem as well as in local contexts in the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere.

Such Catholic theologians as Pim Valkenberg have shown how Catholics do not always play a front and centre role in mediation efforts and it is just as well that individuals and groups who believe in coexistence promote a wider dialogue in the respective societies.[11]

Goals of this book

The reader may wonder why this book and why now. As the chapters illustrate, there is a need to make knowledge about a range of interactions between Muslims and Jews accessible in order to provide a basis for ongoing conversations.

In the Middle East, an all-too-common perception exists that the study of Muslim-Jewish relations is about normalizing relations with the Israeli government, accepting the "Zionist view" of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, betraying one's faith (Islam, Christianity) or one's people or nation, abandoning one's belief in the struggle against the occupation, etc. Likewise some may incorrectly regard this work as advocating a pro-Israel, a pro-Palestinian, or a pro-Islamist agenda. Such an unhelpful discourse, which has emerged out of a political climate of oppressor versus oppressed, contributes little to understanding the historical interconnectedness of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, making the responsibility of teaching about Muslim-Jewish relations all the more difficult and worthy of the challenge. The goal of this book is simple: to inform about Muslim-Jewish relations, this understudied field of the humanities and social sciences, in such a way as to create useful knowledge for teaching

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and interfaith engagement in the university environment and beyond. The contributions speak for themselves and are a starting point for informed discussion about the past, present, and future.

The chapters in the book are written with the non-specialist in mind, including university students and practitioners of interfaith relations, academics wanting to learn more about Muslim and Jewish themes, and the general public who may be interested in major themes defining the historical relationship between Muslims and Jews. Those who have a background in Christianity, Judaism, or both will find in this volume themes explored by practitioners of Jewish-Christian relations but in radically new contexts and formats. One of the goals of this book is to create a positive discourse that allows students to create a neutral setting for the discussion of sensitive and controversial issues in the study of Muslim-Jewish relations.

This volume is not encyclopaedic in scope and coverage. Where authors employ multiple approaches, it is not possible nor desirable to take a chronological approach or to afford thorough geographical coverage. This work does not aim to cover interactions between Judaism and Islam in all geographical regions, though North Africa and Iran figure in a number of chapters. This would easily result in a multivolume work. This is not a history of Muslim-Jewish relations. Instead authors have employed a variety of methodological approaches to frame the essential features of each chapter and make each theme accessible to non-specialists and specialists alike in the space allocated. Moreover, the book does not make any claims as to the validity of political processes in the Middle East.

The book is meant to be employed in diverse contexts such as in the university or in online courses where it is practical to have background reading on Muslim-Jewish relations as well as in interfaith discussion groups where participants may choose to discuss select themes from the volume over the course of several weeks. Interfaith gatherings studying Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations might discuss the twenty-five chapters (including the introduction) individually or collectively. Each of these chapters, along with the Further Reading lists and the accessible notes, are meant to facilitate further exploration of themes.

In addition to university contexts and interfaith discussion groups, we envisage that this handbook will be employed in synagogues, churches, mosques, and Islamic centres as well as by governments in order to better understand the complex and dynamic interactions that continue to occur between Jews and Muslims. Each chapter includes a Further Reading list with annotations where relevant.

Another goal for this volume involves social media. Positive developments in interfaith relations, including Muslim-Jewish relations, are routinely highlighted on social media, particularly on Twitter and Facebook. This includes interfaith gatherings, conferences, Muslim-Jewish groups, including women's groups, Abrahamic engagement, and Scriptural Reasoning. Yet lamentably, beyond social media, ideas have not been given prominence in the mainstream media in the United States and elsewhere.

Attacks on Muslims and Jews have no place in public discourse. Therefore, the burden lies with local and national governments to prevent acts of racism and incitement against religious communities, not to stifle freedom of speech but to create a positive discourse in which communities and individuals do not feel threatened. The U.K. government is at the forefront of promoting greater social cohesion in British society (see Chapter 12). Significantly, a national dialogue under the auspices of the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life (www.corab.org.uk) has made important recommendations to the U.K. government after bringing diverse communities together, including humanists and atheists, in order to promote a sound vision of national dialogue concerning the role of religion in public life. Jewish and Muslim communities are an important part of that

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dialogue. Leading interfaith organizations such as the Woolf Institute in the U.K. have taken a lead in this regard. Likewise, in the United States such academic centers as the Center for Social Cohesion at Arizona State University are playing an important role in the national discussions concerning social cohesion. However, more must be done to minimize friction and create opportunities for the disenchanted and other groups while striving to meaningfully resolve the various Middle Eastern conflicts in a manner that both ensures the dignity of all peoples and their right to live in peace and leads to a brighter future. Yet tangible results require that the disaffected groups' social and economic needs be addressed and that the issue of immigration from Muslim and Middle Eastern countries be addressed in meaningful terms such that societies do not seek revenge from refugees or their own citizens of a Muslim background. Moreover, governments have not contributed sufficiently to combating the rampant ignorance that exists. One noteworthy initiative that has the support of the U.K. government is Curriculum for Cohesion (www.curriculumforcohesion.org), which aims to enhance the religious education provision that exists in school curricula.

In France, the interfaith youth movement Coexister plays a vital role in youth engagement by creating a positive framework for public engagement that necessarily involves Jews, Christians, Muslims, and the French government. In addition to the valuable resources mentioned in Chapter 13, the Hartford Seminary, the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, and the Islamic Society of North America produced an invaluable popular guide to Muslim-Jewish engagement focused on community engagement, which includes questions about popular aspects of Judaism and Islam.[12] By contrast, the present volume operates on multiple levels as an introductory academic work to various aspects of Muslim-Jewish relations and is meant to be read in conjunction with other more specialized works for students and faculty researching various aspects of Muslim-Jewish relations and the Abrahamic faiths. The annotated Further Reading lists facilitate this task. It is the authors' hope that this resource will be employed in e-learning courses in interfaith relations, history, and other fields of study.

A word about anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

One might ask why include both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in a single chapter rather than separate chapters? First, some argue that only a chapter on anti-Semitism is useful, since it is the older of the two forms of hatred. Others might argue that by leaving out Islamophobia one is being biased. Both would have a point. However, practitioners of interfaith relations and dialogue would immediately recognize similarities and differences between both phenomena. In the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere, the Muslim and Jewish communities typically, as part of the interfaith community, stand shoulder to shoulder against both forms of hatred, whether manifested as attacks against places of worship or marches by militant extremists or acts of violence committed against individuals. The reality is that these heinous forms of discrimination bring Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others together in dialogue. The methodology employed in Chapter 18, namely to examine the phenomena comparatively, is not in itself unique. As the authors indicate, there exists an established scientific discourse in the West that focuses on both phenomena that are characterized by the hatred of a religion, its adherents, or an ethnic or religious group. Islamophobes have difficulty distinguishing between so-called Islamic groups such as Daesh (ISIL) or al-Qaeda and Islam as a religion, regardless of the fact that Muslim groups, communal and religious leaders, governments, and citizens in the West and

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the Islamic world have consistently denounced these groups and their ideologies, sometimes at great risk to their own lives. In the United States, a public discourse has taken root that is not focused on these groups but on American Muslims who, in this malevolent discourse, are regarded as a third fifth and who have reported experiencing fear and acts of hatred, violence, and discrimination. Sadly, none of this is acknowledged or seen as mattering in polemical discourse.

In the Middle East, the issue of anti-Semitism is complex. Arabs and Muslims equate Judaism, Zionism, and the Israeli government. Today this lack of differentiation is related to Muslim and Arab views of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is convenient to regard Muslims and Arabs as anti-Semites because of hatred for the Israeli government and the continued occupation (Chapter 17). Sadly, given the poisonous political climate, there is no incentive in public discourse for Arabs or Muslims to adequately differentiate between Jews, Zionists, and the Israeli government. They are "simply Jews." The perceived reality is that all Jews, Zionists and Israel are responsible for the continued humiliation and oppression of the Palestinians.[13] Likewise, it is all too easy for hate speech and acts of incitement to masquerade as free speech. Unfortunately, criticism of the practices of some Muslims has become the mantra of Islamophobes, who blur the lines in public discourse between backward customs and acts of terrorism committed by so-called Islamic groups on one hand and Islam as it is practiced by the majority of the world's over 1.6 billion Muslims on the other.

To tackle both phenomena, Muslims and Jews must begin by acknowledging the negative impact of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Second, bigoted extremists exist among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Yet, sometimes communities condone racism by remaining silent or otherwise accepting negative discourse about the other.

Chapter overview

The twenty-four chapters included herein cover a range of themes in the study of Muslim-Jewish relations. The essays included synthesize the current state of knowledge on a given theme in a format accessible to students and non-specialists.

In Chapter 1, "Historical themes: Muslim-Jewish relations in the medieval Middle East and North Africa", Josef Meri explores the various phenomena that shaped Muslim-Jewish relations in the Middle Ages and considers such concepts as Golden Ages, violence, and tolerance. Meri argues for being sensitive to the negative and positive historical events that affected Muslim-Jewish relations.

In Chapter 2, "Historical themes: Muslim-Jewish relations in the modern Middle East and North Africa", Orit Bashkin and Daniel Schroeter look at the ways in which various processes of modernization have had an impact on Muslim-Jewish relations in the Middle East and North Africa.

In Chapter 3, "Scripture and exegesis: Torah and Qur'an in historical perspective", Shari L. Lowin and Nevin Reda look at common themes in the study of scripture and exegetical texts.

In Chapter 4, "Theology: The articulation of orthodoxy", Aaron W. Hughes looks at how medieval Jews and Muslims came to develop common themes and ideas in theology. He concludes by looking at the modern era and theologians creating a common framework to accommodate each other.

In Chapter 5, "Medicine: The reception and practice of rationalist medicine and thought in medieval Jewish communities, east and west", Paulina B. Lewicka and Gad Freudenthal

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turn to medicine in both the Islamic world and Christian Europe and the role that Jewish physicians, who were often trained in other professions such as astrology and astronomy, played in Islamic societies.

In Chapter 6, "Medieval literature: Common themes and intersections", Arie Schippers looks at the cross-fertilization of ideas in the development of Hebrew poetry and literature, which was enriched by its Arabo-Islamic environment.

In Chapter 7, "Modern literature: Common themes and intersections", Masha Itzhaki and Sobhi Boustani explore themes concerning cultural rapprochement in Palestinian and Israeli literature, with an emphasis on poetry.

In Chapter 8, "Law: Islamic and Jewish legal traditions", Judith Frishman and Umar Ryad look at Jewish and Muslim legal traditions in the medieval and modern contexts and discuss their applicability to a variety of social and legal contexts.

In Chapter 9, "Philosophy: The intersection of Islamic and Jewish thought", Oliver Leaman looks at the revival of philosophy within the medieval Islamic world, the pivotal role that Jews played, and the differing trajectories of each community in the modern era.

In Chapter 10, "Education: Reclaiming the sacred common ground of Jewish-Muslim experiences of education", Matthew Wilkinson and Moshe Sokolow explore select themes in medieval and Muslim-Jewish education, followed by a discussion of "critical realism" and its applicability to modern-day schools.

In Chapter 11, "Mysticism: The quest for transcendence", Aaron W. Hughes looks at mystical ideas that led to a sharing of a common mystical culture (i.e., "mutual cross-pollination" among Jews and Muslims).

In Chapter 12, "Communities and identity: Continuity and change", Ben Gidley and Nasar Meer explore the evolution of the concepts of "community" and "identity" in a number of pre-modern and modern contexts. Issues explored include social cohesion, the impact of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism on communities, and the role of the Muslim and Jewish communities in the West in facilitating social cohesion.

In Chapter 13, "Constructive dialogue: A Muslim and Jewish perspective on dialogue between Islam and Judaism", Akbar Ahmed and Edward Kessler reflect on their personal experience in interfaith dialogue and themes related to understanding the "other."

In Chapter 14, "Palestinian-Israeli conflict: A contest in word and deed", Donna Divine looks at the study of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the interpretation of the contrasting Palestinian and Israeli narratives of the nation.

In Chapter 15, "Muslim and Jewish women: Historical and cultural contexts", Ibtissam Bouachrine and Judith Goldstein look at Muslim and Jewish women in Al-Andalus and the Middle East in the past and present and their actual and imagined representation.

In Chapter 16, "Arab nationalism: Arabness, Arab Jews, and the Arab Spring", Youssef M. Choueiri looks at issues of Arabness and Arab identity among Mizraḥim or Jews of Middle Eastern origins.

In Chapter 17, "Jewish nationalism: On the (im)possibility of Muslim Jews", Yair Wallach looks at modern Zionism and the Jewish model of identity and the question of whether it was ever possible to integrate non-Jews within such an identity.

In Chapter 18, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Historical and contemporary connections and parallels", Ivan Kalmar and Tariq Ramadan explore the commonalities between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia within modern-day discourse, arguing that although each is distinct and simply cannot be equated with the other, similarities do exist.

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In Chapter 19, "The Holocaust: Narratives of complicity and victimhood", Peter Wien looks at the ways in which the Holocaust plays a pivotal role in Jewish national discourse vis-à-vis the Nakba and how it is misused and abused. He also examines the extent to which Arabs and Muslims were victims of the Nazis.

In Chapter 20, "The Nakba: The Palestinian catastrophe of 1948", Alexander Flores looks at the events of 1948 and the founding of Israel and the Nakba (as it is known by Palestinians) and its implication for the present day.

In Chapter 21, "Cinema: Muslim-Jewish relations on screen", Dinah Stillman and Aomar Boum look at Muslim-Jewish relations as represented on screen in films mainly produced in France and North Africa, focusing on the social and political issues that confront both communities.

In Chapter 22, "Music: Muslim-Jewish sonic encounters", Edwin Seroussi examines select themes in the musical encounter between Jews and Muslims and Arabs, including in its conception, production, and consumption.

In Chapter 23, "Art: Art, aesthetics, and visual culture", Aaron Rosen and Yasser Tabbaa explore various themes and similarities in the production of art, including figuration, biblical tales, Islamic and Jewish art and architecture in medieval Iberia, and parallels in modern works.

In Chapter 24, "Food: Muslim and Jewish food and foodways", David Waines and Sami Zubaida explore the medieval and modern contexts of food culture in the Middle East, the development of various dishes in the medieval context and, in the modern context, the food and foodways of the Jews of Arab lands and present-day politics.

A personal note

As editor of this volume, I am challenged to deal with the perception in the Middle East, from where I write these words, that any Arab or Muslim who is involved in the field of Muslim-Jewish relations is "selling out" to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, that Jews and Muslims are sworn enemies, and that anything that goes against this goes against the norm. Such misunderstanding only proves that much work remains in order to better inform.

This book represents a modest contribution in that regard. In light of violent acts committed against humanity (including by Muslims and Jews) in the Middle East and Europe, it has become all the more imperative to create spaces of mutual trust without allowing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to impose itself on individuals, communities, and landscapes. While the tragic events that have unfolded in the Holy Land have caused greater factionalism and tensions on university campuses, particularly in the United States, universities have a moral imperative to create safe spaces for students while safeguarding freedom of expression. Students should be able to engage in constructive dialogue about contentious issues without outside interference. As Chapter 13 shows, constructive Muslim-Jewish dialogue is dynamic and multifaceted, operating on different levels.

Among the problems that one may encounter in teaching about Muslim-Jewish relations, whether in a historical or a contemporary context, is the assumption of privilege of one narrative over another (i.e., a Jewish, Muslim, or Arab narrative). The basis of this volume is not theological but rather multidisciplinary in seeking to show the connections between Jews and Muslims.

I finish composing these words after the Paris bombings on Friday, 13 November 2015. This tragic and senseless loss of life at the hands of terrorists has given humankind a renewed sense of urgency and purpose to undertake the study of interfaith relations, while the burden

lies with governments to once and for all resolve the outstanding conflicts in the Middle East that have violently shaken Western societies. Above all, we must look with a renewed sense of hope to a future in which faith, reason, and humanistic values exist in harmonious relationship to one another.

Josef (Yousef) Meri
Amman, Jordan
13 December 2015

Notes

1 For a detailed bibliographic survey, see Yousef Meri "Jewish-Muslim Relations," in *Oxford Bibliographies in Islamic Studies*. http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0075.xml (Accessed 1 November 2015). DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780195390155-0075

2 Here one might find useful a number of different perspectives and approaches by Western scholars, Jacob Lassner's discussion of Orientalism and the study of Islam in *Jews, Christians, and the Abode of Islam*, and Martin Kramer's *Jewish Discovery of Islam*, which looks at Jewish scholarship on Islam.

3 Other useful reference resources for Christian-Muslim relations include *Christian-Muslim Relations, a Bibliographical History Online* (Brill), and the *Routledge Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. Mona Siddiqui (London: Routledge, 2012).

4 Concerning the resolution of disputes in Muslim courts, see Chapter 1; Bernard Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, pp. 105–106.

5 The discourse concerning borrowing is fairly extensive. See, for instance, the works of Michael Cook, Patricia Crone, and Gerald Hawting.

6 See, for instance, Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

7 One recent collection concerning various aspects of the Abrahamic faiths is the *Oxford Handbook of Abrahamic Faiths*, eds. Adam J. Silverstein and Guy Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

8 A cache of over 300,000 manuscript fragments dating from the ninth through nineteenth centuries CE "re-discovered" in the storeroom of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo. For an accessible overview, see Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza* (New York: Schocken Books, 2011).

9 The modern part of this work is now superseded by other studies such as Norman Stillman's sourcebook, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* and individual regional studies. See Meri, "Jewish-Muslim Relations."

10 http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

11 http://www.jta.org/2015/10/26/news-opinion/opinion/op-ed-what-nostra-aetate-can-teach-us-about-dialogue-with-muslims?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=jtafeed

12 *Sharing the Well: A Resource Guide for Jewish-Muslim Engagement.* http://learn.jtsa.edu/sites/default/files/Sharing-%20the%20Well.pdf

13 A valuable historical overview of anti-Semitism in the Middle Eastern context can be found in Norman Stillman et al., *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Brill Online, 2015). http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/anti-judaismantisemitismanti-zionism-COM_000492

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