

Ze'ev Maghen
After Hardship Cometh Ease



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Ze'ev Maghen

After Hardship Cometh Ease

The Jews as Backdrop for Muslim Moderation

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*For Yael and Yoav
May they have it easy*

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Introduction

The texts and genres of Islam's sacred canon – especially Qur'ān, *tafsīr* (scriptural commentary), *ḥadīth* (prophetic tradition), *sharḥ* (*ḥadīth* commentary), *sīra* (prophetic biography), *maghāzī* (chronicles of military campaigns), *ṭabaqāt al-ṣaḥāba* (biographies of Companions), *ta'rīkh* (historiography) and *milal wa-niḥal* (heresiography) – evince an intense fascination with matters Jewish. Modern scholarship has, in turn, displayed considerable interest in this fascination, elucidating many of the themes that have percolated from the Judaic into the Islamic tradition (or, as current academic fashion would have it, that are *held in common* by the two traditions). Even before Abraham Geiger's pathbreaking *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (1833),¹ students of Islam had noticed and expounded upon the numerous elements in Muḥammad's message both avowedly and unavowedly derived from Jewish sources (a full century earlier, George

1 Originally penned in Latin by the twenty-two year-old Geiger in response to an essay contest posted by his teacher Wilhelm Freytag, and soon after rendered into German by the author himself (who then moved on to other fields of inquiry), this eloquent and stimulating work – researched without the benefit of some ninety percent of the Muslim primary sources which later became available to scholars – has never been surpassed (though some of its inevitable shortcomings have been exposed). It was translated into English by F. M. Young in 1896 and is now available, with a prolegomenon by Moshe Pearlman, under the title *Judaism and Islam* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970). On Geiger's contribution to the field see Jacob Lassner, "Abraham Geiger: A Nineteenth Century Jewish Reformer on the Origins of Islam" in Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1999); and Reuven Firestone, "The Qur'ān and the Bible: Some Modern Studies of Their Relationship" in John Reeves, *Bible and Qur'ān* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). For his considerable influence on the doyen of Western Islamic studies, Ignaz Goldziher, see Lawrence Conrad, "The Pilgrim from Pest: Goldziher's Study Tour to the Near East (1873–1874)," in Ian Richard Netton (ed.), *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam* (Richmond, Surrey, 1993); and idem., "The Dervish's Disciple: On the Personality and Intellectual Milieu of the Young Ignaz Goldziher," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2 (1990).

Sale had offered a goodly number of perspicacious comments on this subject in the “Preliminary Discourse” to his translation of the Qur’ān, as well as throughout the notes to the translation itself). By the early years of the twentieth century some of the most prominent names in Western Islamic studies – Weil, Dozy, Hirschfeld, Wensinck, Wellhausen, Friedlander, Margoliouth, Goldziher – had rendered significant contributions to this discussion, and in ensuing decades Horowitz, Hirschberg, Le Strange, Torrey, Snouck Hurgronje, Vajda, Goitein, Watt, Abbott, Jeffery, Bousquet and Speyer deepened our understanding of the Judaic—Islamic relationship. Spearheading such research in the third and fourth academic generations have been scholars such as Kister, Rosenthal, Stillman, Katsch, Wansbrough, Cook, Crone, Lewis, Hawting, Lazarus-Yafeh, Brinner, Pearlman, Lecker, Newby, Adang, Nettler, Cohen, Firestone, Wheeler, Tottoli, Lassner, Wasserstrom, Bouman, Ben-Shammai, Rubin, Libson and others. Despite all this effort, however, much work remains to be done. The primary sources are brimming with relevant material as yet unexplored or unexploited by scholars, and certain sub-fields have received almost no attention. One of these last forms the subject of the present study: early Muslim conceptions of Jewish law and practice.

The treatments of the authors enumerated above may be divided into three main categories: (1) historical, dealing with the political, social and economic interaction between communities of Muslims and communities of Jews from seventh-century Arabia onward; (2) literary-cultural-theological-hagiological, concerning the stories, structures, paradigms and ideas shared in varying degrees by the two religious traditions; and (3) legal-ritual, examining the prescriptions, proscriptions, rites, customs and jurisprudence of Judaism in terms of their relationship to the early and evolving religio-legal system of Islam. This last category is the most underrepresented. The preponderance of research devoted to the intertexture of Judaism and Islam has focused on lore (*haggada*) not law (*halakha*). While a number of prominent orientalists, including Goldziher, Vajda, Schacht, Wansbrough, Cook, Crone and Burton, have pointed to the existence of analogous features in the methodology and content of the Jewish and Islamic behavioral codes, only a relatively small group – Wensinck, Kister, Goitein, Graf, Wegner, Hawting, Sohn, Astren, Lazarus-Yafeh, Libson and Crone herself – have actually attempted the comparison of particular provisions or principles in the two religious systems, or examined possible routes of transmission. Among these, Kister and Goitein alone have de-

voted a modicum of serious attention to Islamic *perceptions* of *halakha* and its specific ordinances, and their prolusory contributions have since been augmented by Adang (*Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 1996) and most recently by Wheeler (“Israel and the Torah of Muḥammad,” 2003). This question is not central to the work of any of these scholars, however, and none has pursued it comprehensively.²

Like the legendary or “mythomorphic” material emerging out of the Rabbinic and entering into the Islamic milieu, Judaic legal norms and communal customs also impacted on their Muslim counterparts in a variety of ways: directly and indirectly, overtly and covertly, consciously and unconsciously, positively and antithetically. One method of learning about the interaction between the two faith communities, and specifically about the effect of Jewish praxis on Islamic observance as well as the outlook of early Muslim authorities on Torah (and Talmudic) law, is by comparing and contrasting similar precepts in *halakha* and *shari‘a*. But such parallels are often elusive and deceptive, nor is it a simple matter to decide what specific conclusions should be drawn – in cases where genuine correspondence *can be* satisfactorily established – from evidence of adjustments made by the *shari‘a* to this or that *halakhic* provision.

Fortunately, Muslim texts offer us a less tenuous and more straightforward method of discovering how Islamic tradition viewed Jewish law, and how it employed this view in order to assist in (or at least explain *post facto*) the construction of Islam’s own legal system. Hundreds of direct statements and detailed discussions regarding what the Jews had been commanded (or *claimed* they had been commanded) combine in early Muslim sources to provide the nascent Arabian creed with the optimal religious anti-ideal, a negative launch-pad whence to embark upon the creation of the ultimate spiritual—practical corrective to humanity’s errors and excesses. Curiosity about *halakha*, and inquiry into its ordinances and algorithms, thus played a major role in the formation and evolution (as well as elucidation and justification) of *shari‘a*, and early Muslim authorities cited in *tafsīr* and other genres often demonstrate a level of familiarity with Jewish law that does not stop short of sophisticated rehearsals of complex Talmudic *sugyot*. (Even if this represents, ultimately, information provided by converts,

2 For a selective list of scholarly works bearing on the Jewish-Muslim and Judaic-Islamic relationship, see the bibliography.

it still says a great deal about the extent of Muslim interest in Judaism, as well as about the intellectual caliber of those converts themselves: the stories punctuating Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* about "learned rabbis" going over to Islam – even if they ultimately reflect more of an Iraqi than an Arabian reality – cannot have been far from the truth!).³

Side-by-side with such impressive accuracy regarding Jewish law, however, we also find a great deal of fantasy. At the same time that Islam was portrayed in Muslim classical literature as coalescing (at least partially) in antithetical response to Judaism, Judaism was retroactively re-created by those same texts in Islam's mirror image, to become the "anti-religion" *par excellence*. The exaggerated and even imaginary *halakha* that often resulted functioned as an epitome of the aberrance that had crept into the cultures and dispensations preceding God's revelations to Muḥammad. Although Muslim sources dwell upon numerous aspects of the process of spiritual decline that plagued the pre-Islamic period, none receives more coverage – with the possible exception of mankind's recurrent lapses into polytheism – than the deterioration of the pristine, easygoing relationship between God and His creatures (sometimes characterized in the sources by the term *fiṭra*) into a series of abstruse and arduous legal systems. The paramount example of such an oppressive code is that of the Jews, the more so as Allāh is often shown punishing the Israelite community for adopting unnatural rites and restrictions (as well as for a host of other transgressions) by heaping upon them *more* unnatural rites and restrictions. The net result of this combination of self-oppression and divine augmentation is Judaism: the most difficult religion on earth.

This book investigates the way in which the Muslim juristic tendency of extenuation (*rukhsa*) enlisted the Muslim legal instrument of abrogation (*naskh*) to mediate the relationship between the idealized Torah of the Banū Isrā'īl/Yahūd and the nascent community and code of Islam. Drawing primarily on the influential Qur'ān commentaries of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE) and Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī (d. 1272 CE),⁴ it be-

3 See Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's "Sirat Rasūl Allāh"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 240ff. One could also, of course, construe such phenomena as supporting the Cook—Crone *Hagarism* thesis according to which (to put it simplistically) early Islam *was* Judaism. This theory and its many detractors are, however, beyond the scope of the present study.

4 The choice of al-Ṭabarī needs no justification: he was and remains the univer-

gins by discussing the pattern of increasing leniency already discernable in the embryonic stages of Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudential) development. The study then posits parallels to this “domestic” Muslim phenomenon on the “international” plane of human religious history, as this last is depicted by the same scriptural exegetes: here, too, things get progressively easier. Because Islam’s emblematic counterweight in this regard is Judaism, the better part of this work analyzes Muslim conceptions of the provenance, evolution and specific statutes of *halakha*. Here, more than in any other area, Islam describes its mission – and even, to a certain extent, defines its identity – in lively response to Biblical and Rabbinic tradition.

sally acknowledged master of Qur’ān interpretation whose encyclopedic commentary (*Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān*) incorporated, summarized, organized and built upon the lion’s share of important exegetical work carried out until his day. Jane Dammen McAuliffe calls al-Ṭabarī “the undisputed foundation upon which the edifice of classical *tafsīr* was erected,” and quotes John Burton’s description of his *Jāmi’ al-Bayān* as having “abruptly scaled heights not previously glimpsed and never subsequently approached” (McAuliffe, “Christians in the Qur’ān and Tafsīr” in Jacques Waardenburg [ed.], *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 107). The commentary of al-Qurṭubī (*Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*) has also been held in particularly high regard throughout the Muslim world since the medieval period, and it has two additional advantages for the present research: (1) as its title implies, al-Qurṭubī’s *Tafsīr* places a strong emphasis on the legal side of things, and (2) al-Qurṭubī is a reservoir of (mostly *ḥadīth*ic) material that managed to escape inclusion in the commentary of al-Ṭabarī (see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition [henceforward *EP*], s. v. “Qurṭubī” [R. Arnaldez]). These two *mufasssīrūn*, therefore, complement each other well and are excellent representatives of their genre. They reflect the “state of the field” up to their respective times and serve to define that field subsequently. (It is noteworthy, for instance, that the Islamist theoretician and creator of the conservative—revivalist *Ḥizb al-Tahrīr*, Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī [d. 1978], after enumerating various types and examples of what he sees as problematic *tafsīr*—including, significantly for our purposes, those that “imbibe excessively from the *Isrā’īliyyāt* [Jewish lore]”—concludes his survey by singling out the commentaries of al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī [together with that of ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī] as works that are innocent of such unorthodox biases or deviant inclinations, and that are “considered the founding texts of Qur’ān interpretation” [*tu’atabaru min ummuhāt kutub al-tafsīr*] whose authors were “the guides and masters” [*al-a’imma*] of the exegetical enterprise – Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī, *al-Shakhṣiyya al-Islāmiyya* [Beirut: Dār al-Umma, 1994], vol. 1, pp. 297–8). Innumerable other classical Muslim sources of varying genres could be – and, in many instances throughout this study, have been – usefully consulted in connection with our subject, but limits must be set, and for the most part I have preferred to drop my line deep rather than cast my net wide.

The importance of studying the Islamic understanding and evaluation of the Pentateuchal and Talmudic legal systems should be self evident. Islam and Judaism are both systems that place an extremely heavy emphasis on law.⁵ This means that the Muslim assessment of *halakha* is tantamount to the Muslim assessment of Judaism. It means, too, that the recorded Muslim reactions to *halakha* speak volumes about early Islamic *self*-perception. The investigation of classical Islamic statements and discussions regarding Jewish rules and regulations can also shed further light on the extent, context and quality of medieval Muslim—Jewish intellectual communication. Needless to say, all of this additionally harbours much significance for the Muslim world's present day attitudes to Jews and their religion.⁶

The best intentions do not always lead to the best results. A quest for thoroughness and a desire to share with the reader interesting material bearing directly and indirectly on the book's subject, have led to a situation in which many of the footnotes in this volume have burgeoned to the size of mini-excursuses. Those who take all or even most of these "detours" risk losing the thread of the argument in the main text. Readers are therefore urged to consult the notes only at convenient rest-stops – at the conclusion of discussions, or even of chapters – or whenever their curiosity gets the better of them.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my colleague and friend Professor David Powers of Cornell University, who read large parts of this manuscript and offered numerous suggestions that have improved it considerably. I am likewise beholden to Professor Etan Kohlberg of the Hebrew University, who braved much of what follows and whose vast erudition saved me from many an error. Profound thanks are due, as well, to Professor Dr. Lawrence Conrad, whose kindness, encouragement, pro-

5 Hava Lazarus-Yafeh calls Judaism and Islam "the only Halakhic religions in the world" (Lazarus-Yafeh, "Judaism and Islam," in *Some Religious Aspects of Islam* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981], 85; see also *idem.*, "The 'Ulamā of al-Azhar," in *ibid.*, 93, where she describes Judaism as "the only other religion [besides Islam] in which religious law takes such a central place").

6 One hopes to be spared the knee-jerk accusations of "essentialism" that so often greet statements of this sort nowadays. Anyone even vaguely familiar with the workings of the Muslim world in our times – whatever his or her ideological or philosophical bent – will vouch without hesitation for how extensively (though not uniformly) that world's cultures, politics and general ethos are colored by their dynamic interaction with the classical heritage of Islam (see also, in this connection, Conclusion, n. 15).

found grasp of the field and vigilant attention to detail helped bring this book to completion. Dr. Sabine Vogt of De Gruyter has been the picture of patience and professionalism.

As for my wife – my life – Anita: there are no words. I can only refer her to the title of this volume, in the hope that it is true.

1. The Shadow of Turning

Revelation and Abrogation in Medieval Muslim Theology

“God is not a man to be capricious,” Balaam chides Balak on the Plain of Moab, “or the son of a man, to tergiversate” (Numbers, 23:19). “The Eternal of Israel neither lies nor repents,” Samuel scolds Saul some centuries later, “for He is not human that He should repent” (I Samuel, 15: 29). Such unambiguous pronouncements coexist uneasily in the Bible with the numerous instances in which the Deity does indeed appear to have reversed Himself: “The Lord *regretted* that He had made man upon the Earth, and His heart was saddened. He said: I will blot out from the earth the men whom I created” (Genesis, 6:6). After an emotional entreaty by Moses (we read on another occasion) “God *repented* of the evil that He had purposed to do unto His people” (Exodus, 32: 14). Jonah was sorely disappointed when the inhabitants of Nineveh turned from their wicked ways and the Almighty in consequence “*renounced* the punishment He had planned to bring upon them, and did not carry it out” (Jonah, 3:10). Not twenty verses before Samuel admonished Saul that “[t]he Eternal of Israel neither lies nor repents (*lo yinahem*),” the Lord Himself had informed Samuel that “I repent (*nihamti*) having made Saul king ...” (I Samuel, 15: 11). The discord between these opposing Biblical attitudes to the question of divine equivocality – a contradiction about contradiction – supplied grist for the mill of many a medieval Jewish commentator, most of whom (especially those under the spell of Platonic—Aristotelian theories of divine immutability) argued that the Supreme Being’s *volte face* are an illusion.¹

¹ See, e.g., the commentary of RaDaQ (R. David Qimhi, d. circa 1235 CE) to Genesis 6: 6: “Regarding the fact that it says ‘And He repented,’ [it must be realized that] the Torah spoke in language understandable to human beings, for in truth ‘He is not a man that He should repent,’ for there is with Him, may He be Praised and Exalted, no change of will” (*ma she’amar vayinahem, dibrah*

Not so in the case of Islamic tradition. Here the idea of God changing His mind – or, at least, regularly overturning His decrees – is widely established and deeply entrenched; indeed, it is perceived to be an indispensable catalyst in the formation of the last and best religion. This fundamental tenet derives, *inter alia*, from the problem posed by the considerable quantity of apparently conflicting statements found in Muslim sacred writ. Such ostensible inconstancy is tackled by the classical commentaries in two primary ways.

The first of these, known as *jam'* or synthesis, is in fact specifically designed to circumvent the notion of intra-scriptural contradiction. In his discussion of Q. 4: 82 – “Will they not ponder the Qur'ān? Had it been from other than Allāh, they would have discovered in it much incongruity” – the foremost exegete of the 'Abbāsid period and perennial touchstone of *tafsīr*, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE), buttresses his own gloss with a statement of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam: “It is incumbent upon the believer to say: ‘All of [the Qur'ān] is from God.’ He must believe in the ambiguous passages, and not set some against others (*yu'minu bi'l-mutashābih wa-lā yadribu ba'dan bi-ba'din*) ... and he must know that God the Exalted did not say a thing and then confute it (*lam yaqul qawlan wa-yanquduhu*).”² From what was originally an affirmation – meditating upon the miraculous uniformity of the Qur'ān will oblige one to believe – al-Ṭabarī (backed by Ibn Zayd) has turned this verse into an exhortation: one is

Torah kilshon b'nei adam, ki 'al derekh ha'emet lo adam [hu] lebinahem, ki ayn bo shinui hefetz yitbarakh veyit'aleh). See also R. Abraham b. Ezra (d. 1164 CE), RaSHI (R. Shlomo Yitzḥaqi, d. 1105 CE) and RaMBaN (R. Moshe b. Nahman or Nahmanides, d. 1270 CE) to the same verse (and RaDaQ to I Samuel 15: 29, as well as RaSHBaM [R. Samuel b. Meir, d. circa 1174] to Numbers 23: 19). Cf., however, Hizquni (R. Hizqiya b. Manoah, d. 13th century CE) to Genesis 6: 6, who does seem to admit the possibility of divine rethinking, and also Deuteronomy Rabbah, 2: 8, where Moses – seeking to convince his Maker to rescind the divine decree barring him from entering the Promised Land – accuses God of going back on His word, but only when it is convenient for Him: “When You so desired, did You not violate Your oath? Did you not swear that You would eradicate Your children after they worshipped the calf, and then reverse Yourself? (*keshe-bikashta lo hilalta hashvu'a? Lo nishba'ta she'ata mekhaleh et banekha ba'egel vehazarta bakh?*).” See, in addition, Genesis Rabbah, 13: 9, where God is said to have “changed His mind” (*vehazar bo haQadosh Barukh Hu*) regarding the arrangement of certain ecological matters.

- 2 Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995 – henceforward: “Ṭabarī”), 5: 246.

obliged to believe in the miraculous uniformity of the Qur'ān. This mandatory conviction both motivated and was buttressed by *jam'*, the effort to reconcile scriptural passages that do not tally with one another *prima facie*.

But al-Ṭabarī's interpretation of Q. 4: 82 was by no means intended to undermine the premise of divinely ordained modification. While the great commentator rejected the possibility that God should be caught in a *factual* contradiction – the omniscient Creator who taught men by the pen would never be guilty of error or deliberate deception, and therefore no mutually exclusive descriptions of reality can possibly co-exist in the Qur'ān – at the same time there was no doubt in al-Ṭabarī's mind that the Deity certainly could, and regularly did, make adjustments in matters of *guidance* for humankind, promulgating particular laws at a certain time and then canceling them in favor of new laws at a later stage. This claim represents the second method of confronting internal inconsistency in the Qur'ān, the well-known principle of *naskh* or abrogation: "Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring in their place better or similar ones. Do you not know that Allāh is capable of all things?" (Q. 2: 106).³

3 The reputed centrality of *naskh* – also known as *al-nāsikh wa'l-mansūkh* – to the growth of Islam in its formative period has spawned a great many books by Muslim scholars, the earliest of which is Abū 'Ubayd b. Qāsim al-Sallām (d. 838 CE), *Kitāb al-Nāsikh wa'l-Mansūkh*, ed. John Burton (Cambridge: The Trustees of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Foundation, 1987). Burton has also penned the preeminent study on the subject: *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990). This work must be read in tandem with the same author's *The Collection of the Qur'ān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) – as well as his "The Exegesis of Q. 2: 106 and the Islamic Theories of *Naskh*," *BSOAS* 48/3 (1985) – in order to understand Burton's ideas about *naskh* (for which see the appendix). In the introduction to *Sources* Burton avers that "Western scholars have hitherto shown an incomprehensible indifference to the Muslim discussions on abrogation" (p. ix). Nevertheless, see also K. I. Semaan, "Al-Nāsikh wa'l-Mansūkh: Abrogation and its Application in Islam," *Islamic Quarterly* 6 (1961); Ahmad Hasan "The Theory of *Naskh*," *Islamic Studies* 14 (1965); John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Andrew Rippin, "Al-Zuhri, *Naskh al-Qur'ān* and the Problem of Early *Tafsir* Texts," in *BSOAS* 47 (1984); David Powers, "The Exegetical Genre of *Nāsikh al-Qur'ān wa-Mansūkhuhu*" in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); and Christopher Melchert, "Qur'ānic Abrogation across the Ninth Century: Shāfi'i, Abū 'Ubayd, Muḥāsibī and Ibn Qutaybah" in Bernard G. Weiss (ed.), *Studies in Islamic Legal*

The distinction between God's strict immovability in matters of fact and His willingness to adapt in matters of legislation is made explicit at the outset of al-Ṭabarī's discussion of the latter verse:

Theory (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002). The issue of *naskh* in Qur'ānic exegesis and Islamic jurisprudence is vast and complicated, and the following précis is only useful if accompanied by the awareness that each statement in it is subject to debate and each category to further breakdown.

Qur'ān can be abrogated by Qur'ān, but also *ḥadīth* by *ḥadīth* ("kāna rasūl Allāhi yansakhu ḥadīthuhu ba'duhu ba'dan kamā yansakhu al-Qur'ānu ba'duhu ba'dan" – Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* [Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqiya, n.d. – henceforward: "Qurṭubī"], 5: 178; "Urwa alleged that his father told him that the Prophet would regulate some matter, then, after some time, replace his first ruling with a second regulation – just as the Qur'ān did" [Burton, *Collection*, 60]). Additionally, *ḥadīth* can be abrogated by Qur'ān (as some claim was the case with the change of *qibla*, because while the original direction of prayer is not mentioned in scripture – and thus must have been derived from Prophetic *sunna* – the later reorientation is [Q. 2: 142 – see, however, Burton, *Sources*, 179–83. Several commentators maintain that this verse alludes to the even earlier *qibla*-switch from the Ka'ba to Jerusalem, an alteration which some consider to have taken place *after* the *hijra*!]). According to most authorities, Qur'ān can even be abrogated by *ḥadīth* (as when the punishment for adultery expressly stipulated in the Qur'ān – one hundred stripes [Q. 24: 2] or indefinite confinement to the home [Q. 4: 15] – was replaced by stoning [see Muslim, *Kitāb al-Hudūd*, 29: 1692–1695; Melchert, "Qur'ānic Abrogation," 85–7; and Burton, *Sources*, 144–58 (many believed, however, that a verse enjoining the stoning of adulterers – and supplanting the verses prescribing flogging or sequestration – had originally formed part of the Qur'ān, and that while its text had subsequently been abrogated, the norm it introduced still held). Burton seems to feel that this final form of *naskh* – the abrogation of scripture by tradition – was the most significant and widespread of all (*Sources*, 4–5 and *passim*; idem., *Collection*, chapters 2–3)). Al-Shāfi'ī vehemently denied these last two possibilities, asserting (though perhaps disingenuously) that each sacred genre could only be modified by its own kind (Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Risāla* [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.], 106ff; his school disagreed with him [Christopher Melchert, "The Meaning of *Qāla al-Shāfi'ī* in Ninth Century Sources," *Occasional Papers of the School of 'Abbasid Studies at Cambridge*, 135 (2004), 289; Burton, "The Exegesis of Q. 2: 106," 467]; and see, for yet another nuance, the Prophet's declaration that "my word does not cancel out God's Word, but God's Word cancels out my word" (*kalāmī lā yansakhu kalām Allāhi, wa-kalām Allāhi yansakhu kalāmī* – Mawlāna Faḍl al-Karīm's modern arrangement of Walī al-Dīn Tibrizī's *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ* [Lahore, Mālik Sirāj al-Dīn, n.d. – itself a later medieval revision of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī's (d. 1122) *Maṣābiḥ al-Sunna*, 1: 121]. This work will henceforward be referred to as "Baghawī").

One may also distinguish between at least three different types of intra-Qur'ānic abrogation: (1) *naskh al-ḥukm wa'l-tilāwa*, in which both the letter

This refers to God's transformation of the lawful into the prohibited and the prohibited into the lawful, of the permitted into the forbidden and the forbidden into the permitted (*wa-dhālika an yuhawwila al-ḥalāl ḥarāman wa'l-ḥarām ḥalālan wa'l-mubāh maḥzūran wa'l-maḥzūr mubāhan*). This transformation occurs, however, only in the context of prescription and proscription, restraint and release, interdiction and authorization. But as for informative statements, there is in this area neither abrogating nor abrogated (*fa-ammā al-akhbār fa-lā yakūnu fihā nāsikh wa-lā mansūkh*).⁴

God never corrects Himself regarding the "is," but He constantly updates Himself regarding the "ought." Truth is essential; law is existential.⁵

(i.e. text) and spirit (i.e. force) of a law are removed (the passage thus obliterated remaining only in the recollection of certain Companions); (2) *naskh al-tilāwa dūna al-ḥukm*, in which the text is removed but the regulation remains (as with the supposed "stoning verse" aforementioned); (3) *naskh al-ḥukm dūna al-tilāwa*, in which the regulation is abrogated but the text remains. In what follows, we will be primarily concerned with this latter type, which al-Ḥāzīmī called "the 'classic' mode of abrogation": the suppression of one scriptural provision by another scriptural provision (or by a prophetic exemplum) without the excision of the first from the Qur'ānic text (see Burton, *Sources*, chapter 5, and idem., *Collection*, chapter 3). Most of the examples we will adduce of this phenomenon are not mentioned by Burton (or in the list of al-Suyūṭī, cited in *Sources*, 184–5). Burton's own take on the verse to which the present note is appended requires a different translation than the one that we – together with almost all renderings of the Qur'ān into English – have offered. For a critique of his outlook on *naskh*, see the appendix.

- 4 Ṭabarī, 1: 665. Some early exegetes do not seem to have made this distinction, finding contradiction – and applying *naskh* – in cases of exposition no less than in cases of exhortation (see Burton, *Sources*, 2–3).
- 5 The notion that "law is existential" must itself be qualified. See the exchange between the Mu'tazilite Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām and the Jew Yassā b. Šālīḥ excerpted in John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 110–12, where in order to defend *naskh*, the Muslim sets up a dichotomy between non-contingent values (*lā li-'illa*) – such as charity, honesty, justice or faith – which are good in themselves (*li-a'yāniḥā*), and norms contingent upon divine commandment (*li-'illat al-'amr biḥā*) – like prayer and fasting – which are good because God declared them to be so (at the time). These latter, which together constitute the revealed law, can be abrogated, asserts al-Nazzām, whereas the former, which are tantamount to natural law, cannot. This smacks somewhat of the distinction made in medieval Judaic hermeneutics between *mishpaṭim* or *mitzvot bayn adam le-ḥavero* (rational precepts that man would have enacted without divine inspiration and which govern the dynamics of human interaction: the prohibition against murder, the requirement of probity in business, etc.), and *ḥukim* or *mitzvot bayn adam la-maqom* (non-rational precepts that could only have come about through heavenly intervention and which govern the human relationship with God: in a

Even before the intervention of Hellenistic rationalism with its static vision of the Godhead as *Intellectus Intelligens Intellectum* (Thought Thinking Itself), the idea of such a “progressive” Deity, moving and changing with the times, was not palatable to everyone. “And when we exchange one revelation for another – and Allāh knows best what He reveals – they say [to you, O Muḥammad]: ‘Lo! Thou art but a forger.’ But most of them understand not” (Q. 16: 102).⁶ The renowned thirteenth century traditionist and commentator, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī (d. 1272 CE), describes the circumstances in which this verse, as well as the previously cited Q. 2: 106, were revealed:

The Jews resented the Muslims’ realignment [of the *qibla* or prayer direction from Jerusalem] to the Ka’ba (after the Battle of Badr in 624 CE), and they sought to discredit Islam in this regard, saying: “See how Muḥammad commands his followers to do something, and then afterwards forbids them to do that thing. This Qur’ān is nothing but his own invention, and that is why parts of it contradict other parts (*wa-li-hādihā yunāqidu ba’duhu ba’dan*).” In response to this, Allāh revealed the verses: “When we exchange one revelation for another ...” and “Such of Our revelations as We abrogate ...”⁷

word, ritual), although in Judaism, of course, neither type can be abrogated (nor are all *mitzvot bayn adam la-maqom* considered *ḥuqim*). It has in fact been speculated that this Jewish breakdown was influenced by Mu’tazilism – see Goldziher’s introduction to *Das Buch vom Wesen der Seele* (Berlin, 1907), 21–24. The similar Islamic bifurcation between *mu’āmalāt* and *‘ibādāt* (or *ḥuqūq al-nās* and *ḥuqūq Allāh*, the latter sometimes styled *ta’abbud*, a logically inexplicable manner of worship) is also comparable to al-Nazzām’s classification, but the comparison breaks down when we remember that many of the *mu’āmalāt* were abrogated as well.

- 6 For the role of this and other key verses in the construction of, and polemics surrounding, *naskh* theory, see Burton, *Sources*, esp. chapter 6, and idem., *Collection*, *passim*.
- 7 Qurṭubī, 2: 55. This explanation is found in al-Qurṭubī’s discussion of Q. 2: 106. In his gloss to Q. 16: 102, however, he – like many other *mufasssirrūn* – identifies Muḥammad’s challengers as Meccan polytheists (*kuffār Quraysh*; some even connect Q. 16: 102 to the incident of the Satanic Verses). The “*qiblatayn*” passage itself (Q. 2: 142–5) focuses on the fire drawn by Muḥammad as a result of this about-face: “The foolish among the people will say, ‘What has turned them from the *qibla* which they formerly observed?’ Say: ‘Unto Allāh belong the East and the West. He guides those He will to a straight path’... And We appointed the *qibla* that you formerly observed only that We might distinguish him who truly follows the Messenger from him who turns on his heels. In truth, it was a hard test, save for those whom Allāh guided ... And now verily We shall make you turn toward a *qibla* which is dear to you. So turn your face

For the Jews as depicted by al-Qurṭubī and al-Ṭabarī, not only was the appearance of divine self-contradiction appalling, but the very idea of the Deity communicating His message piecemeal over time was absurd. “We have revealed the Qur’ān to you in stages,” Allāh affirms (Q. 76: 23),⁸ but “those who disbelieve say: Why is the Qur’ān not re-

toward the inviolable place of worship (*al-masjid al-haram*) ... Lo! Those who have received the Scripture before you know that this is the truth from their Lord. And Allāh is not unaware of what they do. Even if you brought unto those who have received the Scripture all kinds of portents, they would not follow your *qibla*, nor can you be a follower of their *qibla* ...” (see also Ibn Ishāq — Guillaume, 258–9, and Qurṭubī, 2: 131 ff). Jewish authors, including R. Sa’adya Gaon, Ibn Kammūna, the Karaite al-Qirṣānī and others, did in fact attack the Islamic notion of *naskh* (see Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996], 198–210 and *passim*; Moshe Perlmann (ed.), *Ibn Kammūna: Tanqīh al-Abhāth li’l-Milal al-Thalāth* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967]; Wansbrough, *Sectarian Milieu*, 112–14; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], esp. 149). What may well be genuine reflections of such Jewish criticism in Islamic *naskh* literature credit its purveyors with elaborate philosophical arguments (see the examples adduced by Muṣṭafā Zayd, *Al-Naskh fi’l-Qur’ān al-Karīm* [Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, n.d.], 81–2). For the issue of *qibla* change and its role in *naskh* debates, see Burton, *Sources*, 174–183 and Melchert, “Qur’anic Abrogation,” 84; for the same question as it impacted on the nature of early Muslim — Jewish relations, see Uri Rubin, “Kivvun ha-Tefilla be-Islam: le-Toldotav shel Ma’avak bayn Pulhani,” *Historiya* 6 (5460). While the Jews are portrayed as denying *naskh*, the Shi’ites are often accused of going to the opposite extreme in positing that God abrogates and replaces (“erases and rewrites”) scriptural injunctions through sheer caprice (see, e.g., Muḥammad al-‘Atā’iqī, *al-Nāsikh wa’l-Mansūkh* [Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2000], 9–12).

- 8 Cp. Q. 25: 32: “*wa-ratalnāhu tartīlan*.” Although the “*nazzalnā ‘alayka al-Qur’āna tanzīlan*” of Q. 76: 23 might be interpreted otherwise, Ibn ‘Abbās, for one, explains this verse to mean: “He revealed the Qur’ān discontinuously, verse after verse; it did not come down in one bunch” (*anzala al-Qur’āna mutafarriqan, āya ba’da āya, wa-lam yanzil jumla wāhida* – Qurṭubī, 19: 112). Al-Ṭabarī quotes Ibn ‘Abbās elsewhere to the opposite effect, however, unless the following should be read as a more detailed formulation (or apologetic rewrite) of the above statement: “God sent down the Qur’ān in one bunch on the Night of Destiny from the upper heaven to the lower heaven [the sky of our world], and it lingered at the level of the stars, and God dispensed it to His Messenger one passage after another ...” (*anzala al-Qur’āna jumlatan wāhidatan fī laylat al-qadr min al-samā’ al-‘ulyā ilā’l-samā’ al-dunyā fa-kāna bi-marwqi’ al-nujūm, fa-kāna Allāhu yunziluhu ‘alā rasūlibi ba’duhu fī ithra ba’din* ... – Ṭabarī, 30: 328). If this latter description is merely an elaborate version of the preceding one – and if it should not be viewed as deliberate “spin” – then Ibn ‘Abbās does *not* believe in divine mind changing. If it is *antithetical* to the

vealed to him all at once?” (Q. 25: 32). Elaborates al-Qurṭubī: “When the Jews saw how the Qur’ān came down bit by bit, they asked: ‘Why did God not vouchsafe it to [Muḥammad] in one fell swoop (*jumla wāḥida*), as He did the Torah to Moses, the Evangel to Jesus and the Psalms to David?’”⁹ Still worse in Jewish eyes, Allāh appeared to be as much a *reactive* as an initiative-taking Divinity, “sometimes revealing a single verse, sometimes two or more, in order to answer [the believers or others]: when they would inquire about something, God would send down verses in response (*idhā sa’alū ‘an shay’ in anzalahu Allāhu jawāban lahum*).”¹⁰ Indeed, if we are to believe Muḥammad’s earliest surviving biography, the Jews themselves were responsible for the lion’s share of the instigative questions that provoked the divine revelations eventually integrated into Muslim scripture:

It was the Jewish rabbis who used to annoy the Apostle with questions and introduce confusion, so as to confound the truth with falsity. The Qur’ān used to come down in reference to these questions of theirs, though some of the questions about what was allowed and forbidden came from the Muslims themselves.¹¹

former statement, then we are back to our polemic (for which see below, notes 25 and 27; chap. 3, n. 8; chap. 7, notes 47 and 51).

- 9 Qurṭubī, 13: 25. Similarly, Ibn Ishāq portrays the Jews as dissatisfied by what they saw as the disorder in the revelations received by Muḥammad (*lā narāhu muttasiqan kamā tattasiq al-Tawrāt* – Wansbrough, *Sectarian Milieu*, 21). See also Ibn Ishāq — Guillaume, 269, where the Jews ask, “Is it true, Muḥammad, that what you have brought is the truth from God? For our part, we cannot see that it is arranged as the Torah is.” On modes of revelation of the Qur’ān, see Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, esp. 30 ff. Not only the structure, but also the style of Muslim scripture evoked Jewish jeering: “*dahikat al-Yahūd wa-qālū: mā yashbahu hādihā kalām Allāh!*” – Qurṭubī, 1: 239.
- 10 Ṭabarī, 19: 15. As we shall see, al-Qurṭubī is more gingerly in his description of this archetypal *istiftā’-fatwā* process. That the forging of the Islamic religion was a process – at least from the vantage point of the believers – is suggested, *inter alia*, by the wording of what is considered by Muslim tradition to be the final revelation, vouchsafed unto Muḥammad eighty-two days before his death: “Today I have completed (*akmaltu*) your religion for you and finished (*atmamtu*) dispensing My favor upon you...” (Q. 5: 3).
- 11 Ibn Ishāq — Guillaume, 239. The original reads: “*kānat aḥbār Yahūd humu lladhīna yas’alūna rasūl Allāhi, ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam, wa-yata’anna-tūnahu wa-ya’tūnahu bi’l-labs li-yalbisū’l-haqqa bi’l-bāṭili* (see Q. 2: 42) *fakāna al-Qur’ānu yanzilu fihim fīmā yas’alūna ‘anhu illā qalīlan min al-masā’il fi’l-halāl wa’l-harām kāna al-Muslimūna yas’alūna ‘anhā*” (Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mālik b. Hishām al-Ma’āfirī, *Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya* [Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyya, n.d.], 2: 115). The qualification at the end – “though

It was such unwelcome (though ultimately fruitful) pestering that earned the Jews the pithy sobriquet, *aṣḥāb al-mas'ala* – “the people who ask questions.”¹² Regardless, however, of which party can take credit for

some few of the questions ... came from the Muslims themselves” – implies that the Jews posed the majority of queries that led to the reactive revelations that currently comprise the better part of the Qur’ān. Interesting in this vein is the resemblance between the Israelites’ persistent questioning of Moses concerning the sacrificial heifer (Q. 2: 67–71 – see below, chapter 7) and ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s repeated requests for further divine elucidation of the policy on wine (Qurtubī, 5: 174). The two interrogations employ suggestively similar terminology (*ud’u lanā Rabbaka yubayyin lanā mā hiya ... Allāhumma bayyin lanā fi’l-khamri bayānan shāfiyan*); both involve exactly three demands for increasing clarification of a heavenly prescription (or *takḥṣīs*, as certain exegetes would call it), after which the inquirers are avowedly satisfied (*qālū: al’āna ji’ta bi’l-ḥaqqi fa-dhabaḥūhā ... qāla ‘Umar: intahaynā*); and both are the proximate cause of celestial communications eventually included in the *muṣḥaf* or Qur’ānic codex. Like the Jews – although to a far lesser extent – ‘Umar is what we might call a *muhbiṭ al-wahy*, an “instigator of divine revelation” (see below, chap. 2, n. 33 and chap. 7, notes 51 and 55).

- 12 Ibn Ishāq — Guillaume, 240; Ibn Hishām, 2: 117 (this essential characteristic of the Jews in early Islamic literature is taken up at length below, in chapter 7). David Powers reminds me that in Sūrat al-Kahf, Moses himself is portrayed as singularly incapable of *not* asking questions (of “one of our servants whom We had granted mercy and knowledge,” generally construed as Khidr [Q. 18: 66–82], in a story that itself has Jewish parallels. On Moses and Khidr see Gordon Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989], 182 ff; Bernhard Heller, “Chadhir und der Prophet Elijah als wunder-tätige Baumeister,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 81 [1937]; Mark Lidzbarski, “Wer ist Chadhir?” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 8 [1893]; Karl Vollers, “Chidher,” *Archiv für Religionwissenschaft* 12 [1909]; Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 243, n. 75; Brannon Wheeler, “Moses or Alexander: Early Islamic Exegesis of Qur’ān 18: 60–65,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57 no. 3 [1998], and now the same author’s *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis* [London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002], chapter one). As they did in the New Testament and Christian tradition, the Jews of Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* play the role of irritating gadfly, relentlessly bombarding Muḥammad with picaresque questions designed to trip him up (one Jew even challenged the descriptions of culinary paradisiacal recompense found in Q. 55 and 56 by raising the objection that “so much eating and drinking must necessarily require proper evacuations, an act unworthy of the holiness of heaven.” Muḥammad responded that in the World to Come all human waste-products will exit the body as perspiration, “a sweat as odoriferous as musk” – (George Sale, *The Koran* [London: Frederick Warne & Co., n.d.], *Preliminary Discourse*, 77). For

eliciting the greatest number of heavenly *fatāwā* (responsa), it is al-Qurṭubī's justification of this "continuous revelation" in the face of reputed Jewish criticism that is of interest to us. That justification includes, albeit, the claim that Muḥammad, unlike the previous *rusul* or recipients of scriptures, was illiterate (*ummī*), and could therefore absorb the Creator's message only in small, periodic doses; but the commentator's premier rejoinder to this challenge is that only if revelation is a prolonged process can there be sufficient room for *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*.¹³

Al-Qurṭubī waxes fervid about the significance of the institution of abrogation for Islamic law and life:

Knowledge of this discipline is imperative, and its utility enormous. No religious scholar may dispense with it, and only ignorant persons and fools contest it. An abundance of regulations arise from it, and without it one cannot distinguish the permitted from the forbidden.¹⁴

a selective list of scholarly works illuminating aspects of the Jewish-Muslim and Judaic-Islamic relationship, see the bibliography of the present work.

13 Qurṭubī, 13:25.

14 Qurṭubī, 2:55. The "ignorant persons and fools," we find out further along in al-Qurṭubī's discussion, are "certain latter-day groups affiliated with Islam that deny the legitimacy [of *naskh*], and they are refuted by the consensus of the earlier generations of scholars regarding its occurrence and significance in the framework of the law (*ankarat ṭawā'if min al-muntamīn li'l-Islām al-muta'akhhirīn jawāzahu wa-hum mahjūjūn bi-ijmā' al-salaf al-sābiq 'alā wuqū'ihī fi'l-sharī'a* – Ibid., 2:56). Muslim opponents of *naskh* are still encountered in modern times, from Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khan and Muḥammad 'Abduh onward. See, as one instance among many, Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary* (Lahore: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1995 [first published 1917]), *passim*, in which the well known Aḥmadī translator-commentator engages in a veritable crusade against the concept of abrogation. The earliest opponent of *naskh* was evidently the famed Qur'ān reader (*sayyid al-qurrā*) and secretary to the Prophet, Ubayy b. Ka'b, of whom 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb reputedly said: "We abandon some of the statements of Ubayy, because he is unwilling to abandon any of the statements of Allāh" (Bukhārī, 6:60 [8]; cf. Burton, *Collection*, 165 and 179–80).

One is tempted to speculate on the possible connection between criticism by the *aṣḥāb al-hadīth* (conservative, precedent-touting "traditionalists") of the fickleness of the *aṣḥāb al-ra'y* (early purveyors of an independent rationalist methodology in jurisprudence) and the historical development of the opposition to *naskh*. The Khurāsānī *muḥaddith* Abū Ḥamza al-Sukkarī told of having asked Abū Ḥanīfa, the pivotal figure of early *ra'y*, a series of legal questions. "I went away for some twenty years, then returned to him, and lo, he had gone back on those questions! [In the meantime] I had given [his original answers] to people as juridical opinions (*aftaytu bihā al-nās*), and I informed Abū Ḥanīfa

He relates an anecdote in which ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib entered the mosque to find an unfamiliar man haranguing the crowd (*raḡul yudhakkiru wa-yukhawwifu al-nās*). Angered, the Commander of the Faithful sent to the preacher: “Do you know *nāsikh* from *mansūkh*?” The man admitted that he did not. “Then,” said ‘Alī, “you have ruined yourself and others” (*halakta wa-ahlakta*).¹⁵ Al-Qurṭubī’s enthusiasm for *naskh* – a term he defines as “the annulment and elimination of a thing and the substitution of another thing for it, as when the sun replaces (*nasakhat*) the shade or old age replaces youth” – leads him to take up the aforementioned gauntlet purportedly thrown down by the Jews, and offer a more elaborate refutation of their critique than the terse dismissal of Q. 16: 102 (“But most of them understand not”):

Certain parties among the Jews rejected the validity [of *naskh*], but they are refuted by what is found in their own scriptures. For it is there asserted that God the Exalted declared to Noah upon his egress from the ark: “Behold, I have made all beasts food for you and for your descendents (*innī qad ja’altu*

of this. He said, ‘We see one view (*narā al-ra’y*) one day, then the next day we see another view and take the first one back.’ Similarly, the qāḍī Ḥafṣ b. Ghiyāth reported seeing Abū Ḥanīfa “state ten positions, then go back on all of them.” (Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, 9th–10th Centuries CE [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997], 11–12). ‘Abd Allāh b. Dāwūd al-Khuraibī justified this tendency of Abū Ḥanīfa, saying that it “indicates the breadth of his learning: if his learning had been narrow, his answer would have been one; however, his affair was broad, so he would treat it however he liked.” (ibid., 52). The resolute search for stability on the part of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* may have led some of them to recoil from descriptions of Allāh that made Him sound as wishy-washy as Abū Ḥanīfa. In the event, however, the majority of traditionalists seem to have been strong supporters of *naskh*, and the resistance to (what I would claim was) the pristine Islamic notion of an open-minded, swayable Deity seems to have emerged primarily within the *opposing* camp: among the circles of the *mutakallimūn/mu’tazilūn* who were associated with the *aṣḥāb al-ra’y* (see below, note 27, and the appendix).

- 15 Qurṭubī, 2: 55. For other recensions of this report, involving various protagonists in place of ‘Alī, see Burton, *Sources*, 22–3. “*Halakta wa-ahlakta*” is reminiscent of the *khoṭe u makḥṭi et ha-rabim* (the one who sins and causes others to sin) of Jewish tradition, as well as of the *yudallūn wa-yadullūn* of the *ḥadīth*. The version of this anecdote in Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ma’āfirī b. al-‘Arabī, *Al-Nāsikh wa’l-Mansūkh fī’l-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, n.d.), 1: 14, lays even more stress on the hellfire and brimstone character of the unidentified man’s preaching and thus on the lenient orientation of ‘Alī’s response.
- 16 Genesis, 9: 3–4: “Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it.” Al-Qurṭubī’s rendering is quite close to the Hebrew original.