PART ONE:

INTRODUCTION

PREFACE

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Several years ago an international conference was held at the University of California at Berkeley to honor Professor William M. Brinner and his work. The purpose of the conference was to explore the manifold dimensions of Jewish and Muslim interaction, both in medieval and in modern times, from several perspectives: historical, literary, linguistic, religious, legal, and philosophical. This book, which consists of the works of many of the conference participants, is the reflection of Professor Brinner’s own work and his contribution to the society in general and the academy in particular.

Part One includes a thorough introduction to the themes of the book, a tribute to Professor Brinner, and a review of his works composed by Barry Ross.

Part Two contains Jacob Lassner’s overview which sketches the broad course of Jewish-Muslim interaction across time and considers how the “historical consciousness” of each community was shaped. Lassner argues that the dissonance in historical consciousness and the unwillingness to open to another’s view are obstacles in Jewish-Muslim relations.

Part Three discusses Jewish-Muslim interaction in the medieval period employing a variety of approaches. Stephen Benin focuses on Italy under the Byzantines, an area where Jews, Muslims, and Christians were in intimate contact. He uses *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz - Megillat Ahimaaz*, to illuminate the nature of this contact by examining key characters and events, with some historic references. Benin
illustrates how this text, and others of its genre, serves as a bridge between three ostensibly different world-views.

Mark Cohen looks at one very practical dimension of Jewish-Muslim and Jewish-Christian interaction—sociability. In the concept of *Galut* he explores the fundamental, structural difference of interfaith sociability between Jews and Muslims in the Islamic Middle Ages as compared to sociability between Jews and Gentiles in the medieval Christian world. Cohen concludes that the Jews of Islam were more embedded into society and, therefore, enjoyed greater freedom from violent persecution, which might explain why they have a collective historical memory that is fundamentally different from the Jews of Christendom.

Daniel Lasker looks at the topic from an opposite perspective, examining polemical treatises which argue the merits and demerits of specific religions. Focusing on how Muslim critiques of Christianity were adapted into Jewish critiques of Christianity, Lasker shows how Jacob ben Reuben, author of *Wars of the Lord* (1170), and Joseph Kimhi, author of *Book of the Covenant* (1170), were cognizant of clear antecedents from the Islamic world when they sat down to compose their pioneering anti-Christian compositions.

David Marmer looks at the problem of patrilocal residence in the Jewish community of medieval Cairo. He examines how the community tried to alleviate problems which occurred when a new wife, as custom dictated, took up residence in her husband’s home, often having to live with the rest of his family. Through a detailed examination of two court cases preserved in the Cairo Genizah, Marmer hypothesizes as to how various social factors influenced the conduct, conclusion, and actual transcription of such cases. Finding similarities with comparable Muslim cases, Marmer contends that Jews and Muslims inhabited a common social world that did not require bridging, in contrast to the chasm that seems to separate the two communities today.

Gordon Newby analyzes a body of stories which were preserved as comments on sacred texts. These stories reflect the significant changes in attitudes that took pace immediately after the death of the Prophet that were to shape the self-images of Jews and Muslims and their perception of each other. By looking at the development of narrative as it arose in both communities, Newby helps us to understand how Jewish-Muslim relations developed into a complex and rich interaction as a reaction to their respective visions of redemption, and to the polemical dynamic that existed between them.
Treating a different topic, but reaching a similar conclusion, Shaul Shaked looks at Jewish magical literature composed in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic during the early Islamic period and compares it with contemporaneous Islamic magical literature, thus furnishing another example of the reciprocal influence of the two traditions on one another.

Part Four takes us from the Middle Ages into the modern era, continuing the discussion of Jewish-Muslim interaction.

Michael Laskier looks at political and journalistic Arab literature published in the Moroccan Arabic and French Press of the 1960s and the 1970s about Jews, Israeli society, and Zionism. His goal is to understand if this literature is anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist, or both, and whether the research it is based on is sound. While he finds there to be a diverse and nuanced portrayal of Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, Laskier believes that the main problem confronting Arab political writers is their neglect of archival material, which calls their methodological positions and practices into question. He challenges Arab scholars and journalists to make better use of Jewish, Israeli and Zionist archives, which, he believes, might encourage them to attempt to bridge the worlds of Islam and Judaism, and, thereby, influence the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Norman Stillman argues that a particularly complex arena of Jewish-Muslim interaction took place in the Maghreb. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the consolidation and expansion of European domination, and the rise of Zionism and Arab nationalism, Maghrebi Jews and Christians found themselves caught in a crise d’identité, which Stillman attributes to three primary forces: European penetration and colonialism, Zionism, and Arab nationalism. These forces, Stillman contends, contributed to undermining the traditional intergroup relationship between Jews and Arabs as dictated by the Islamic social system.

Part Five discusses and compares the sacred texts of Judaism and Islam—the Bible and the Qur’ān.

The interaction between the worlds of Judaism and Islam has taken place on many cultural levels, one of which is art. Eva Baer compares an early tenth-century Pentateuch in Leningrad with contemporaneous Qur’āns, finding similarities as well as the formal and conceptual differences between Jewish and Muslim illuminations. Through an exhaustive look at the geometric shapes, sizes, and forms in these respective works, Baer concludes
that in Islam and in Judaism visual representations of the place of prayer might have existed in their respective holy books.

Marc Bernstein looks at the intersection between Jewish and Islamic cultures reflected in their tales about the figure of Joseph. Using The Story of Master Joseph the Righteous to illustrate the historical interdependence of the Hebraic and Arabic literary traditions, Bernstein emphasizes the ways in which allusion and nuance indicate knowledge of other texts even when they cross denominational lines. He combines the techniques of philological studies with literary analysis, highlighting precisely those aspects that could allow people to better understand the workings of the text and its range of inter-textual passages.

By comparing the story of the Binding of Isaac in Genesis 22 to Sura 37, Reuven Firestone raises the provocative possibility that the Qur'ān, despite its late “redaction,” may contain ancient material which was preserved in a relatively isolated part of the Near East, and which might help to elucidate the biblical narrative. Firestone uses this example to encourage scholarship to reevaluate what he terms the “glib readiness” to read the Qur’ān through the eyes of the Bible.

In a somewhat similar vein, Vera Moreen examines a Judeo-Persian account of the building of the Ka‘ba in order to study what she calls Ishma‘iliyyat, the penetration of Islamic lore into Jewish midrashic and literary texts. She concludes that the compromise of incorporating Muslim lore into a Jewish text made it palatable to audiences of both faiths.

Rather than taking a specific text or narrative as a basis for comparative study, Stephen Ricks focuses on one specific artifact: the garment of Adam, and shows how the motif appears with surprising frequency in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim literature. Approaching the motif in different literary traditions and shattering chronological boundaries, Ricks considers the garment of Adam as a primordial creation, as a locus of power, as a symbol of authority, as a high priestly garb, and, finally, as a heavenly robe. Ricks concludes that the motif of Adam’s vestment symbolizes, in the various literary traditions, the dignity of fallen man and the possibility of restoring him to the glory of God that he had originally enjoyed.

Sasson Somekh attempts to explain why vestiges of Saadia Gaon’s ninth-century translation of the Bible are still present in modern translations of the Bible into Arabic. By placing various examples taken from Arabic translations of the Pentateuch side-by-side with the English translations quoted from the King James version, the American Protestant version and the Jesuit version,
Somekh concludes that Saadiah’s presence in major Arabic versions of the Pentateuch is a testament to the Bible’s influence in the rise of modern Arabic style.

Steven Wasserstrom, on the other hand, examines the Bulūqiyyā episode from al-Tha’labi’s Qīṣāṣ and attempts to prove that al-Tha’labi was aware of a text closely related to, if not identical to, the Apocalypse of Abraham, a Jewish pseudepigraphic text from the Second Temple Period which survives only in Slavic. Wasserstrom argues that an interactive reading of the narrative cycle found both in Isra‘iliyyāt and the Genizah illuminates the relationship between Jewish pseudepigrapha and such Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyyā as Bulūqiyyā. He concludes that al-Tha’labi recognized the attraction of the apocalyptic genre which inspired him to synthesize an available example of the Apocalypse of Abraham with Muslim and Christian apocalyptic tales to create a new and pious Islamic text.

Part Six focuses on points of similarity and difference between Jewish and Islamic legal systems.

Vardit Rispler-Chaim compares the status of Jewish women under Jewish law with that of Muslim women under the Shari’a, finding that of the former to be inferior. Rispler-Chaim concludes that Islamic law is quicker to end women’s suffering and to minimize their pain, and thus, on the whole, it seems more liberal than Jewish law.

Susan Spectorsky approaches the question of intermarriage as a legal problem within the framework of the development of early Muslim jurisprudence. She does this by examining the relevant responsa of Ibn Hanbal, the last of the founders of the four surviving schools of law in Sunni Islam. Spectorsky contends that the realities of intermarriage had little or no significance for early jurisprudence. The question of intermarriage was simply one possible issue for discussion by those early jurists whose central concern was with developing legal theory on the basis of the Qur’ān.

Part Seven brings us into a consideration of philosophical and ethical issues.

Lenn Goodman studies the great Jewish philosopher under Islam—Maimonides. We know that Maimonides saw two great problems as inherent in biblical theology: the problem of a temporal and conditioned world from absolute and timeless Reality; and the problem of theophany, God’s manifestation to finite beings. Goodman focuses on the extent to which
Maimonides drew from Islamic philosophers during the most open and creative phase in the history of Islamic thought in order to confront the second of these two problematics. In particular, Goodman explores the influence of the great Muslim philosophers, from al-Kindi to Ibn Tufayl, on Maimonides, highlighting the Jewish philosopher's brilliant and appreciative adoption and melding of their philosophies—based to a large extent upon Aristotelian thought—with the philosophies of his own Jewish tradition.

The work of the late lamented Hava Lazarus-Yafeh discusses the idea of "self-criticism," both explicit and implicit, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and attempts to understand why it is less prevalent in Islam. By comparing the recent phenomenon of self-criticism in Arabic literature to the history of self-criticism in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, Lazarus-Yafeh finds that, while biblical stories may have helped foster a sense of personal responsibility and of self-criticism in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, the manner in which the Qur'ān presents the same stories is less conducive to these values. Lazarus-Yafeh interprets the new emergence of self-criticism in Arabic literature as encouraging—posing self-criticism as a constructive social phenomenon, vital to the healthy function of every society.

The use of the terms "Muslim culture" and "Islamic culture" masks the obvious fact of the existence of many cultures within each of these civilizations. Part Eight attempts to correct this assumption and to comment on sectarian communities.

Fred Astren counters the argument posited by several modern scholars that Karaism lacks historical sensibility. Accepting that the past was not of primary concern for Karaite writers, he seeks to find an explanation for the Karaite avoidance of history as a means toward self-definition, which he locates in anti-rabbanism and millenarian Messianism. After a detailed examination of the two possibilities, Astren concludes that Karaism is anything but lacking in its own historical identity. Indeed, he argues that it co-opted rabbinic historical strategies and went so far as to construct its own version of the rabbinic historical and literary genre known as the chain of tradition.

Philip Miller examines the Karaite community in the Crimea which was officially recognized by the Tsarist government as a religion separate and apart from Judaism. He specifically examines the various circumstances surrounding the point at which Karaism divorced itself nationally from Judaism—March of 1837 in the Crimea and the province of new Russia—
marking the first true schism within Judaism in nearly two thousand years. Miller concludes that the Karaites’ desire to preserve their wealth and to maintain their ownership of land, as well as the possibility that they owned Christians serfs, may have been external factors which impelled the leaders of the Crimean Karaite community to disassociate itself from its Rabbanite brethren, and ultimately to seek a separate national identity.

Part Nine attempts to treat the immense topic of literature produced by Jewish and Islamic cultures, written in their primary languages, Hebrew and Arabic.

Arnold J. Band argues that in one of his principle works, A. B. Yehoshua found a potent matrix in the Sabbatian vestige still prevalent in the world of eastern Mediterranean Jewry during the first half of the nineteenth century, which enabled him to capture the contrast between the disorganized Sephardi Zionism and the politically successful Ashkenazi Zionism. By indicating the Sabbatian references in the Fifth Sihah (“Conversation”) of Mar Mani, Band concludes that Yehoshua drew upon allusions to Shabbetai Zevi in order to energize and motivate the plot of his novel.

Ariel Bloch’s interpretation of the psychology and symbolism in Ghassan Kanafani’s Return to Haifa brings us briefly into the domain of politics. He argues that Kanafani’s novel is far more complex than if seen merely in terms of its overt political message.

Moving into the domain of poetry, Ross Brann offers an examination of an unusually arresting case of intertextual irony in Judah ha-Levi’s verse. He believes the connection between the texts in question may or may not have been consciously intended by the poet, yet, in either case, its incidence teaches us something about intertextual relationships and the ironic possibilities produced by the transformation of motifs in medieval Hebrew poetry. Brann argues that it also happens to signal the very struggle over religious conviction and cultural identity that came to be closely associated with the figure of Ha-Levi in Jewish history.

The contribution by the late lamented Jonas Greenfield examines the epithet, God as the “Merciful,” which is common throughout the Near East. Surveying the evidence from Aramaic, Hebrew, and Epigraphic South Arabic, Greenfield speculates that the “direct source” of the epithet in Islam may have been the Jews of Yathrib.

In his article, Benjamin Hary examines the intricacies of Egyptian sharḥ (verbatim translation of sacred Jewish texts into Judeo-Arabic) as exemplified
in several eighteenth and nineteenth-century Passover *haggadot* in the Cairo Collection. The study illuminates the literal/interpretive linguistic tension manifested in the *sharṭ*, i.e., the author/translator’s desire to render the Hebrew text word for word and his wish to be understood. According to Hary, the research of the *sharṭ* is not only important to the study of Judeo-Arabic, but it also sheds light on the history of Arabic dialects in general, and, more significantly, it makes a considerable contribution to theories of translation and the connection between translation, religion and cultural identity.

Brining the volume to a conclusion, Shmuel Moreh shows that certain Sephardi Jews can be seen as pioneers of Arabic drama in North Africa, constituting a bridge all the way back to the Greek mimes theatrical heritage in the Hellenized coastal towns of the Levant.

In sum, this volume, which spans the breadth of Jewish-Muslim interaction, communication and boundaries, is a true reflection of Professor Brinner’s scholarship, for which we will always be in his debt.

On a technical note, the diversity of this volume has proven a particular challenge to its editors. We have attempted to grapple with the diversity of writing styles, usage of terminology, spelling and punctuation preferences, styles of translation, and methods of transliteration that accompany any collection of works. The utmost has been done to maintain a high degree of consistency. References appear at the end of each article; when in Hebrew, Arabic or Judeo-Arabic, we have provided, when possible, both the title’s transliteration and its translation into English. For the readers’ benefit, detailed indices of all the essays are provided at the end of the volume, however they do not include the introductory material in Part One.