APPENDIX ONE: POSSIBLE REASONS FOR PRESENTING EARLY ISLAM AS AN ANTI-RABBINIC MOVEMENT

Whether the customs and beliefs attributed to the Jews of Medina in Islamic literature are historically authentic or projected onto the past by later Muslim authors, they reflect a confrontation between early Islam and Talmudic Judaism. This study finds that the Medinan Jews were Talmudic Jews. We have seen further that the first Muslims criticized the Jews of Medina for not adhering to the literal meaning of the Torah. Here, I wish to offer several possible explanations for the presentation of the first Muslims as anti-Rabbinic in Islamic sources.

A. Influence of the Apocryphal Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls on Muslim Authors

Several scholars have demonstrated that some Muslim authors were familiar with Apocryphal literature and borrowed various literary motifs from it. For example, Uri Rubin has demonstrated that Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 767 CE) was familiar with the writings of Josephus as well as some Apocryphal literature, especially the book of Jubilees.1 Yoram Erder has demonstrated that Ibn Ishāq also had knowledge of the Genesis Apocryphon that was discovered at Qumran. A study of Shiʿite sources reveals that much Apocryphal literature, such as the books of Enoch and Jubilees, was widely known among the Muslims of eighth-century Iraq.2

It is possible that there was another source of inspiration for the Muslim authors who wrote the narrative of the early Muslim community. The Dead Sea Scrolls include a series of commentaries on the Holy Scriptures called pesharīm (sg. pesher). The writers of the pesharīm interpreted Biblical verses in a typological fashion, in reference to the history of the

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2 Yoram Erder, "When Did the Karaites First Encounter Apocryphal Literature Akin to the Dead Sea Scrolls?" Cathedra 42 (1987), 54–68, at 63 [in Hebrew].
Qumran sect; that is to say, the pesharīm are not theological but historical in nature.\(^3\)

The pesharīm do not deal solely with the Qumran sect. They also contain polemics against the Pharisees and against Pharisaic law. Negative descriptions of the Pharisees are found in the commentary on the Book of Hosea (\textit{Pesher Ḥōshe’a}), the Damascus Document, the Hodayot Manuscript and the commentary on the Book of Nahum (\textit{Pesher Naḥūm}). All these scrolls state that the Pharisees were liars and caused people to go astray.

A study of the pesharīm demonstrates that their arguments against the Pharisees are very reminiscent of the arguments against the Jews of Medina that appear in Islamic tradition. Here are several points in which there is a similarity between what is written in the pesharīm and in the Islamic texts that discuss Jewish-Muslim relations in Muḥammad’s lifetime.

1. One of the epithets used to describe the Pharisees in the pesharīm is “interpreters of the smooth things” (dōrshey ha-ḥalaqōt).\(^4\) This epithet is used to imply that the Pharisees misinterpreted the Holy Scriptures. The authors of the pesharīm refer to the Pharisaic method as “their false learning” (talmūd shiqram).\(^5\) The dōrshey ha-ḥalaqōt are accused of straying from the true divine law and causing the people to go astray due to their incorrect method of interpreting the Pentateuch.\(^6\)

The leader of the Pharisees is referred to in the scrolls as “the man of the lie” (īsh ha-kazav), “the preacher of the lie” (metīf ha-kazav) and “the man of clowning” (iš ha-laṣōn). As we have seen, Islamic tradition also accuses the Jews of straying from the Scriptures’ true meaning.\(^7\)

2. The scrolls speak about a man who confronted the Pharisees, referred to as the “Teacher of Righteousness” (mōre ha-ṣedeq), apparently the leader of the Qumran sect. The mōre ha-ṣedeq is described in the pesharīm as someone who was sent by God in order to guide the sect toward the correct path.\(^8\) This description is reminiscent of the Islamic

\(^3\) David Flusser, \textit{The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Essenes} (Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1985), 59 [in Hebrew].


\(^7\) See e.g., Q. 9:36–37.

\(^8\) The Damascus Document, 1:5–11; Commentary on the Book of Psalms (\textit{Pesher Tehillīm}), 3:14–17. According to the Dead Sea Scrolls, the sworn enemy of mōre ha-ṣedeq was “the wicked priest.” Flusser assumes that this was one of the Hasmonean priests,