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## Jewish Eschatology and Early Islamic History

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### **JEWISH ESCHATOLOGY AND EARLY ISLAMIC HISTORY**

The arrival of the first Muslims in Palestine had profound effects for the country's Jewish population. The decline of Christian rule, and the appearance of a new religion by a monotheistic prophet from Arabia, initially led to close relations among the country's Jews and first Muslims. Many Jews sought to explain the ministry of Muhammad (ca. 610-632 C.E.) through eschatology and viewed his message as a sign that the end of days was near. Muslims, moreover, initially held a similar theological understanding of the eschaton, which may have been influenced by their contacts with Jews. The Islamic reverence for the biblical Promised Land, and the construction of the Dome of the Rock—a shrine in which Jews played a major role—contributed to development of the eschatological views of both faiths in the early decades of Islam. This study explores some of the early literary and archaeological evidence of Jewish and Muslim eschatological beliefs and contacts, as well as selected Christian accounts that also document this period. These writings include what are likely the earliest literary witnesses to Muhammad and the first Islamic dynasties at a time when the text of the Qur'an was still in flux. During this period, membership in the Muslim community was quite fluid and included those who embraced monotheism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an earlier discussion of some of the sources examined in the present study, see K. Atkinson, "Jewish and Christian Religious Perceptions of Islam from Muhammad to the Fall of the Umayyad Caliphate," *Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 25 (2017): 15-28.

## I. Early Islamic Revelation and the Promised Land

The Qur'an is the Scriptural text of the Islamic faith. Unlike the Jewish Scripture, it is largely a book that is relatively devoid of historical narrative. Consequently, it is of minimal use for reconstructing Muhammad's life (ca. 570-632 C.E.) since it seldom describes historical events but merely refers to them.<sup>2</sup> Readers are presumed to know the missing details and the major events of Muhammad's prophetic career. The same is true of the Qur'an's frequent allusions to Jewish and Christian Scriptures; the reader is expected to recognize biblical citations by a few words or brief extracts.<sup>3</sup> The great amount of biblical material referred to and alluded to throughout the Qur'an suggests that Islam emerged from a sectarian atmosphere in which the Jewish and Christian Scriptures were well-known. For the scholar of antiquity, the problem is that many of the later sources for early Islamic history are largely exegetical rather than historical. Consequently, they do not accurately describe the historical Muhammad and his early followers, particularly their relationships with the Jews of Palestine.

Historians have four major sources to help them uncover the events of Muhammad's life and the early history of Islam: the Qur'an, literary and archaeological evidence, contemporary accounts largely preserved by Jews and Christians, and Arabic literary sources.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, scholarship has demonstrated that the "occasions of revelation" (*asbab al-nuzul*), which document Muhammad's deeds and the historical context in which the Qur'anic verses were revealed, are largely salvation history. They were produced to account for and explain Islam's often obscure foundational text and the life of its prophet.<sup>5</sup> This is especially

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<sup>2</sup> M. Cook, *Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 69-70; A. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010), 223-34; F. E. Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (1991): 291-315.

<sup>3</sup> A. Rippin, "Literary Analysis of Qur'an, Tafsir, and Sira: The Methodologies of John Wansborough," in R. C. Martin, ed. *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 151-63.

<sup>4</sup> See further S. W. Antony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith: The Making of the Prophet of Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), 1-21. See further the various essays in A. Rippin, *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); J. D. McAuliffe, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> A. Rippin, "The Function of *Asbab al-Nuzul* in Koranic Exegesis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51 (1988), 1-20.

true regarding the standard account of Muhammad's career reconstructed from the *Sirat Rasul Allah* of Ibn Ishāq (d. 767 C.E.), which provides the basis for many contemporary biographies of his life. However, we only have an abbreviated version of this book produced by Ibn Hisham (d. 834 C.E.), who informs the reader that "...things which it is disgraceful to discuss; matters which would distress certain people...all these things I have omitted."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, most of our early Islamic historical sources went through a similar redactional process that, with few exceptions, occurred after the ninth century C.E.<sup>7</sup>

An additional problem for reconstructing early Islamic history is that most of our writings date to the Abbasid period and reflect their negative attitudes towards their Umayyad predecessors. Consequently, we have little historical material predating the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate in 750 C.E.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, some materials preserved by Ibn Ishāq's teachers, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 742 C.E.) and 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (d. ca. 711-13 C.E.) and others, that contain earlier Islamic sources for Muhammad's life, allow us to go further back in time, to the late Umayyad period.<sup>9</sup> These writings, however, still reflect Islamic traditions that, like those documenting the founders of the world's other great religions, often turn history into myth.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, this does not mean that we should entirely discount the early Islamic sources, for later historical texts can, and often do, preserve ancient materials. This is not only true of the early Islamic accounts of Muhammad's life, but the Qur'an and early Jewish writings about Islam as well.

Recent historical and textual research suggests that the text of the Qur'an was finalized much later than the presumed version purportedly produced by the third Caliph Uthman (ca. 656 C.E.).<sup>11</sup> The apocryphal correspondence attributed to the Byzantine emperor Leo III (717-40 C.E.) and the Umayyad caliph 'Umar II (717-20 C.E.), and other con-

<sup>6</sup> A. Guillaume, Translator, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sirat Rasūl Allāh* (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1955), 691.

<sup>7</sup> R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 32-49.

<sup>8</sup> R. Paret, "Die Lücke in der Überlieferung über den Urislam," in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen*, ed. F. Meier (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1954), 147-53.

<sup>9</sup> Antony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*, esp. 85-128.

<sup>10</sup> See further, G. Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity*. Trans. U. Vagelpohl (London: Routledge, 2011), 113-16.

<sup>11</sup> See the debates over the date of the Qur'an discussed in McAuliffe, ed., *Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, esp. 140-220.

temporary Christian sources, indicate that al-Ḥajjāl, who worked for the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik and his son al-Walid, first composed the Qur’an.<sup>12</sup> However, the silence prior to this era is remarkable as no extant source shows any awareness that the Qur’an existed. This is surprising since Jews and Christians both, as the Qur’an notes, were “People of the Book,” for whom any Scripture purporting to contain the teachings of a new monotheistic prophet, rooted in their faith traditions, should have been noticed.<sup>13</sup>

Despite our absence of any mention of the Qur’anic text in early sources, this does not mean that we should avoid using it to help document and reconstruct Muhammad’s life and the beginning of Islam. Early Qur’anic texts provide evidence indicating that they were copied from an early exemplar, which preserves some materials that likely goes back to the time of Muhammad and his immediate successors.<sup>14</sup> Early Islamic texts and inscriptions show that the Islamic calendar beginning with Muhammad’s *hijrah* to Yathrib began quite early, likely during the reign of the second Caliph, ‘Umar.<sup>15</sup> As Antony notes, this evidence

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<sup>12</sup> For a defense of this tradition, see S. J. Shoemaker, *A Prophet Has Appeared; The Rise of Islam through Christian and Jewish Eyes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 25-26; *idem*, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad’s Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 136-58. See also, H. Motzki, “Alternative Accounts of the Qur’ān’s Formation,” in *Cambridge Companion to the Qur’ān*, 59-75; H. Lammens, “The Age of Muhammad and the Chronology of the Sira,” *Journal Asiatique* (March-April 1911): 208-50. This, however, does not mean that the Qur’an is totally devoid of historicity since it presupposes the historical development of a new faith that is based on actual events. See further A. Neuwirth, “*Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur’an as a Literary Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 280-81. The citations from the Qur’an in the Dome of the Rock diverge from the standard text, which had been, according to tradition, codified nearly forty years prior under ‘Uthman. This provides convincing evidence that the Qur’an’s text had not been stabilized at this time and that some textual fluidity remained. See further Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, 148-50

<sup>13</sup> Although the Qur’an acknowledges its theological relationship with Jews and Christians, it also accuses them of failing to maintain God’s revelation and denounces them for not accurately preserving their sacred texts. See further A. H. Mathias Zahniser, “Knowing and Thinking,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur’ān*, esp. 292-93.

<sup>14</sup> See further, M. Van Putten, “‘The Grace of God’ as Evidence for a Written Uthmanic Archetype: The Importance of Shared Orthographic Idiosyncrasies,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 82 (2019): 271-88.

<sup>15</sup> The earliest examples of this date are found in the P. Berol 15002 and PERF 558. See A. Grohmann, “*Aperçu de papyrologie arabe*,” *Études de papyrologie* 1 (1932): 40-44. Two inscriptions from near Medina (643-44 C.E.) and Ali Ghabban also use this dating formula. For discussion see Antony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*, 26-28.

predates the traditional date assigned to the compilation of the Qur'an under the third caliph 'Uthman (644-56 C.E.).<sup>16</sup> During that period, Jews and Muslims had a close association. This was partly due to their shared eschatological beliefs and their reverence for the site of the ancient Jewish temple.

The Dome of the Rock contains the longest extant inscriptions from the first century of the Islamic era (692 C.E.), which declares that "Muhammad the Messenger of God" six times. The Qur'anic passages in this shrine proclaim God's unity, Muhammad as the final monotheistic prophet, and espouse an eschatology in which the Prophet is expected to be the intercessor on the "Day of the Resurrection."<sup>17</sup> The Nessana papyri from southern Palestine, dated to the late 680's C.E., also bear witness to the widespread invocation of Muhammad as God's Messenger.<sup>18</sup> Many Jews and Christians in Palestine did not consider the appearance of Muhammad and his followers a threat. Rather, early Islam appeared to many of them to espouse similar beliefs. Jews and Christians even worshipped alongside the Prophet's early followers atop the Temple Mount in the Dome of the Rock that Muslims built there. According to early sources, three hundred ritual attendants, including a staff of Jews and Christians, maintained and cleaned the Dome of the Rock and its sacred rock. The site, moreover, was open for worship on Mondays and Thursdays, with only the attendants allowed inside the remaining days of the week. On worship days, the rock was rubbed with perfume, incense burned around it, and the public was allowed inside to revere the site.<sup>19</sup> These practices, as suggested by Sharon, are related to Jewish traditions about the eschatological restoration of the Temple: a belief also echoed in Islamic eschatological traditions.<sup>20</sup> An

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<sup>16</sup> Antony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*, 28. See also, R. Y. Khan, "Did a Woman Edit the Qur'an? Hafsa and her Famed 'Codex,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82 (2014): 174-216.

<sup>17</sup> C. Kessler, "'Abd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1970): 9; W. Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'an," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (1998): 3-10.

<sup>18</sup> R. G. Hoyland, "The Earliest Attestation of the *Dhimma* of God and His Messenger and the Rediscovery of P. Nessana 77 (60s AH/680 CE)," in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honour of Professor Patricia Crone*, ed. B. Sadeghi, A. Q. Ahmed, A. Silverstein, and R. Hoyland (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 51-70.

<sup>19</sup> M. Sharon, "Praises of Jerusalem as a Source for the Early History of Islam," *Bibliotheca orientalis* 49 (1992): 55-67; Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 11-15.

<sup>20</sup> Sharon, "Praises," 64-65.

early Islamic belief, moreover, indicates that the Jerusalem temple will be reinstated by ‘Abd al-Malik, which will be followed by God’s placing His throne of glory there.<sup>21</sup>

The site of the Jerusalem Temple was important to Muhammad as, for sixteen months, it was the first *qibla* (direction of prayer) for Muslims. It is also associated with the “night journey” (*isra’*) of the Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to the Masjid al-Aqsa, as recorded in the Quran (17:1), as well as his ascension (*mi’raj*) to Heaven. These events, according to Islamic tradition, occurred one year before the *hijra*, Mohammad’s move from Mecca to Medina, in 622 A.D.<sup>22</sup> Jerusalem played an important role in early Islamic history as the Dome of the Rock became a central shrine that the Umayyads used to buttress the legitimacy of their dynasty. Several scholars have emphasized the major role that Jewish tradition played in early Islam, even maintaining that its builder, Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, regarded himself as a Davidic Messiah who was rebuilding Solomon’s temple while Crook proposes that the early Muslims planned to restore the Jewish temple.<sup>23</sup> Other traditions record the role of the Jews in locating the sacred spot and Jewish

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<sup>21</sup> For this belief from the *Faḍā’il bayt al-maqdis wa-al-khalīl wa-faḍā’il al-shām* of Abū al-Ma’ālī al-Musharrāf b. al-Murajjā b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī, see Milka Levy-Rubin, “Why Was the Dome of the Rock Built?: A Perspective on a Long-Discussed Question,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80 (2017): 454-55; A. Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 163. Elad notes that this tradition was later censured with its Jewish background being obscured. See A. Elad, “Why Did ‘Abd al-Malik Build the Dome of the Rock?: A Re-Examination of the Muslim Sources,” in *Bayt al-Maqdis: ‘Abd al-Malik’s Jerusalem*, ed. J. Raby and J. Johns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 38. The literature on the Praises of Jerusalem (*Faḍā’il bayt al-maqdis*) is dated to the first half of the eleventh century C.E. but was in circulation during the seventh and eight centuries C.E. See further, O. Livne-Kafri, “‘Faḍā’il Bayt Al-Maqdis’ (‘The Merits of Jerusalem’) Two Additional Notes,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 19 (2001): 61-70.

<sup>22</sup> See further, Y. Reiter, M. Eordegian, and M. Abu Khalaf, “Jerusalem’s Religious Significance,” *Palestine—Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 8 (2001): 12-19. The remains of an early open-air mosque at Be’er Orah in the southern Negev containing two miḥrābs, one facing east and the other south, the second of which is a later addition, provide archaeological evidence for an eastern *qibla*. See Sharon, “Birth of Islam in the Holy Land,” in *Pillars of Smoke and Fire: The Holy Land in History and Thought*, ed. M. Sharon (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988), 230-32. Two early Iraqi mosques also have deviant miḥrābs while later Islamic reports record an eastward *qibla* in a mosque in the Egyptian city of Fuṣṭāṭ. See Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 207-8.

<sup>23</sup> Eldad Elad, “Why Did ‘Abd al-Malik Build,” 158-63; *idem*, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 158-63; P. Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 10.

hopes that the Muslims would rebuild the Temple.<sup>24</sup>

According to Donner and Hoyland, the early Muslims in Palestine welcomed Jews and Christians and formed a community of Believers in which membership merely required a profession of faith in “God and the last day.” The objective of these Abrahamic Believers, moreover, was to liberate the biblical Holy Land, especially Jerusalem and its Temple Mount: a view reflected in the Qur’an (10:13-14; 21:105-06; 33:27).<sup>25</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik apparently built the Dome of the Rock because of its theological importance to the early Muslim community and not to divert pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as some anti-Umayyad texts later claim. He erected it to commemorate the Jerusalem Temple and to lay claim to the Abrahamic legacy. He was not the first to desire the site. Rather, according to a tradition preserved by the Armenian Christian chronicler Sebos in the 640’s C.E., Muhammad and his followers wrote the Byzantine Emperor claiming the biblical Promised Land belonged to them because they were Abraham’s rightful heirs.<sup>26</sup> As members of the Abrahamic community of faith, the early Muslims expected the final judgment to occur soon. They believed that the actions and the teachings of their prophet paved the way for this event. Many Jews and Christians shared their eschatological orientation.

## II. Jewish Eschatology and Jewish Perceptions of Islam

The early Islamic era witnessed a resurgence of eschatological anticipation among Christians, which undoubtedly led to increased messianic expectations among Jews and Muslims. Prior to the arrival of Muslims in Palestine, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius entered Jerusalem in 630 C.E. with the relic of the True Cross and forced Jews to be baptized. His persecution lasted until the Arabs captured Tiberius (636 C.E.) and Jerusalem (637 C.E.). Christians interpreted the loss of Palestine to the

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<sup>24</sup> Recorded in Levy-Rubin, “Why Was the Dome of the Rock Built?,” 443-44.

<sup>25</sup> See further, F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010) 56-89; S. J. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 132-45. A Greek inscription Mu’āwiya erected at Hammat Gadar in Palestine calls him “the servant of God [...] commander of the Believers.” See D. Whitcomb, “Notes for an Archaeology of Mu’āwiya: Material Culture in the Transitional Period of Believers,” in *Christians and Others*, 11-27.

<sup>26</sup> Text of Sebos (paragraph 42) in Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 65. See further Graber, “Meaning of the Dome,” 149-51; N. Rabbat, “The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock,” *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 12-21.



Persians, and Rome's withdrawal from the region, as a sign that the end of the world was near.<sup>27</sup> This belief is documented in such texts as the *Life of Theodore of Skeon*, the *Life of George of Choziba*, and the *Life of Mihr-Mah-Gushnasp*, all of which espouse the expectation that the end is at hand. These works are undoubtedly a small surviving representative of a much larger body of Christian writings that also espoused this belief.<sup>28</sup> A document written after the events it refers to attributes to the Persian king Khosrow II (590-628 C.E.) a prophecy made following the Roman-Persian war that the end of the world was approaching. It has been noted that this prophecy is reminiscent of the Qur'an (30:2-5), which states that after the Romans have been conquered "the affair belongs to God and the believers will gloat over God's victory."<sup>29</sup> This belief is found throughout the Qur'an, which sometimes portrays the final Hour as near or imminent (16:1, 79; 18:47; 21:1; 40:18; 51:6; 52:7-8; 54:57; 56:1-2).<sup>30</sup> What is largely overlooked in religious studies is the close connection between Jewish eschatological beliefs and early Islam. Not only did the Jews appear to have welcomed the Arab invaders, whom they interpreted in light of Jewish prophecy as their deliverers, but they preserved what are likely the earliest written witnesses to the teachings of Muhammad and the first generations of his followers. What appears to have encouraged such Jewish eschatological expectations were the religious beliefs of early Islam and Muslim building activity on the Temple Mount.

A collection of apocalyptic writings attributed to the Jewish sage Rabbi Šim'on ben Yoḥai, likely contains some of the oldest extant accounts of Muhammad and the early Caliphs. The collection is unique because it documents Jewish messianic and apocalyptic perceptions of

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<sup>27</sup> See further Hoyland, *Seeing*, 311; W. J. Van Bakkum, "Jewish Messianic Expectations in the Age of Heraclius," in Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, ed. *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 95-112. There is no archaeological evidence of destruction or abandonment of villages in Palestine during the changeover from Byzantine to Arab rule. See H. Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests* (Philadelphia: Da Capo, 2007), 66-97.

<sup>28</sup> *Life of Theodore of Skeon* 34; *Life of George of Choziba* 4, the *Life of Mihr-Mah-Gushnasp*. For these passages, see further G. J. Reinink, "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies During the Reign of Heraclius," in *The Reign of Heraclius*, 82-83; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, 774-79.

<sup>29</sup> Reinink, "Heraclius," 87-89; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, 78-79.

<sup>30</sup> For discussions of these and other passages regarding the impending eschatological judgment and destruction of the Hour, see further Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, 126-27; *idem*, *Death of a Prophet*, 158-71.

Islam. These works depict Muhammad as a messianic deliverer whom God had chosen to liberate the Jews and the Promised Land from Rome. Rabbi Šim‘ōn Ben Yoḥai, to whom these writings are attributed, was a prominent religious figure during the Second Jewish Revolt (132-35 C.E.) who was famous for his rejection of Roman rule and culture.<sup>31</sup> Several apocalyptic texts attributed to him feature predictions about the last days. Two works in particular, *The Secrets of R. Šim‘ōn ben Yoḥai* (=Secrets) and *The Prayer of R. Šim‘ōn ben Yoḥai* (=Prayer), contain revelations attributed to Šim‘ōn that document early Islamic history.<sup>32</sup> Heinrich Graetz recognized the historical importance of the *Secrets* when he demonstrated that it describes the end of the Umayyad Caliphate.<sup>33</sup> However, this text has a long transmission history that is not yet fully understood. It was later expanded in the *Prayer*. Another version of the *Secrets* is found in the *Midrash of the Ten Kings*, which contains additional material that may have emanated from an earlier lost work.<sup>34</sup> Yet, among these documents, the *Prayer* is the most important for historical study since it includes some unique material that possibly emanated from an earlier lost *Apocalypse of Šim‘ōn Ben Yoḥai*.<sup>35</sup> All these texts should be regarded as primary sources for the reconstruction of Muhammad’s ministry and the beliefs of his followers.

To understand the portrayal of early Islam in the *Prayer*, it is important first to examine a passage in the earlier *Secrets* that contains a messianic interpretation of the Arab Conquest. This section briefly mentions an Ishmaelite prophet. It begins with a description of two empires: the Arabs (=Kenites, Ishmaelites) and the Byzantines (=Edom).<sup>36</sup> The writer expects the Arabs to play a role in the messianic era by eliminating

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<sup>31</sup> Boyarin calls him the most radical Tannaitic rejecter of Rome, its culture, its legitimacy, and its values. See D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 64.

<sup>32</sup> Texts, A. Jellinek, ed. *Bet ha-Midrash: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der jüdischen Literatur* (Leipzig: Nies, 1855 & 1857), 3.xix, 78-82 (*Secrets*); 4:117-26 (*Prayer*).

<sup>33</sup> H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Leiner, 1871), 5:441-9.

<sup>34</sup> Text, C. M. Horvitz, ed. *Bēt ‘eqed ha-aggadōt* (Frankfort: Slobotzky 1881), 1:16-33.

<sup>35</sup> J. Even-Shmuel, *Midreshē ge‘ullā*, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954), 167-9, 175-77.

<sup>36</sup> For these identifications, see Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 35-7; J. C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2005), 69.

the Byzantines and restoring the land to its former owners.

He began to sit and explain “and he beheld the Kenite” (Num 24:21). When he saw that the kingdom of Ishmael was coming, he began to say: “Is it not sufficient, what the wicked kingdom of Edom did to us, but must we also have the kingdom of Ishmael?” Then Metatron the Prince of the Presence, answered and said: “Do not fear, Son of Man, for the Holy One, blessed be he, only brings the kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness (i.e. Edom). He will raise up over them a prophet in accordance with His will, and he will conquer the land for them and they will come and restore it in grandeur, and there will be great strife between them and the sons of Esau.<sup>37</sup> Rabbi Šim‘ōn answered and said: “How do we know that they are our salvation?” He answered: “Did not the Prophet Isaiah say: “And he saw a troop with a pair of horsemen, one riding an ass, one riding a camel (Isa 21:7).” When did he put the rider of an ass before the rider of the camel?” He should have said “rider of a camel, rider of an ass” (Zech 9:9).<sup>38</sup> But when he goes forth riding a camel the dominion will sprout through the rider on an ass.

The reference to Numbers 24:21 suggests that the original work contained a messianic interpretation of the Arab conquest of Palestine in which the Kenites subdue the oppressive Byzantines. The “rider” appears to be the prophet Muhammad, whose appearance is described in messianic terms. Isaiah 21:5-7, moreover, became a widely cited text as proof that the Hebrew Scriptures predicted Muhammad.<sup>39</sup> The author expects the Arabs to play a role in the messianic period by eliminating the Byzantines and restoring the land to Israel. The use of Isaiah in this

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<sup>37</sup> Later manuscripts change this passage to describe Muhammad as a demented prophet possessed by a spirit, which is clearly a revision of this earlier positive portrayal of the Prophet. See further Reeves, *Trajectories*, 79 n. 20.

<sup>38</sup> The ass is a messianic symbol, as evident in Zechariah and the Christian Scriptures. Some Jews regarded ‘Umar as a messianic-like figure. See further S. Bashear, “The Title “Fāruq” and its Association with ‘Umar I,” *Studia Islamica* 72 (1990): 47-70.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Alī at-Ṭabarī (9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) and other subsequent Muslim writers adopted this interpretation, which was soundly refuted by a variety of Christian authors such as the writer of the pseudepigraphal *Letter of Leo III to ‘Umar II* (ca. 900). See further, G. E. von Grunbaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 1-30; A. Jeffery, “Ghevond’s Text of the Correspondence Between ‘Umar II and Leo III”, *Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944), 269-332. See also the connection between Isaiah 21, Islam, and the messianic era in the *Prayer* in Maimonides, *Letter to Yemen*.

document compares the Arabs' mission with that of the Messiah: the Arabs are not merely his forerunners, but the liberators prophesied by Isaiah.<sup>40</sup>

The author of the *Secrets* regarded the arrival of Muhammad and the Ishmaelites as the culmination of the messianic drama that terminated Byzantine rule in Palestine. The placement of this section of the *Secrets* is problematic since its messianic interpretation of Muhammad's prophetic ministry makes better sense at the end of the text. Because the messiah appears in the middle of the *Secrets*, this suggests that its compiler incorporated an older messianic tradition into its mid-eighth-century apocalyptic narrative.<sup>41</sup> The original document was supplemented with an interpretation of the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty under Marwān II (744-50 C.E.), who is named in the text.<sup>42</sup>

The *Secrets* bears some similarities to the Christian work known as the *Teaching of Jacob* (*Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati*).<sup>43</sup> Although this fictitious treatise purports to record debates among the Jews of North Africa in response to Heraclius's 632 C.E. edict that they be forcibly baptized, the author shows an extensive knowledge about contemporary Jews in Palestinian cities.<sup>44</sup> The work attempts to rebut Jewish claims that Muhammad might be a messianic forerunner as described in the *Secrets*.<sup>45</sup> Although the *Doctrina* may not be entirely factual, it is important as perhaps the earliest witness to Muhammad's new religious movement that is contemporary with the events that it describes. It reveals that many of Muhammad's followers believed they were living in the end-times and that the eschaton, and the Messiah, would soon arrive.<sup>46</sup>

The writer of the *Secrets* was not the only Jewish author to espouse a favorable view of the end of Byzantine rule and the Arab Conquest. The Jewish apocalyptic prophecy known as *On That Day* describes the messianic hopes of its writer following the last war between the Byzantine and the Persian Empires. He believes the Arab Conquest of Palestine

<sup>40</sup> See further Hoyland, *Seeing*, 308-12.

<sup>41</sup> Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> He is also named in the *Ten Kings* and the *Prayer*.

<sup>43</sup> Text, V. Déroche, "Doctrina Iacobi," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 71-219.

<sup>44</sup> See further, P. W. van der Horst, *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 203-08.

<sup>45</sup> See further, Antony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*, 57-58.

<sup>46</sup> Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 43-44. See also Jesus as the Messiah in the Qur'an (e.g., 3:45, 4:157, 171-72; 5:17, 72, 75; 9:30-31; 43:57-61).

signals the imminent coming of the Messiah.<sup>47</sup> The messianic content of the *Midrash of the Ten Kings* is similar to the *Secrets* and the *Prayer*, but its historical content is sometimes different and less specific. The *Ten Kings* includes a quotation from Isaiah 21:13 but mentions that the Arab prophet will harm Israel. This likely refers to Muhammad's Jewish opponents in Medina. The writer also says that "great men of Israel" will join Muhammad and that he will conquer Jerusalem. This passage is based on traditions that Jews were among Muhammad's prominent supporters.<sup>48</sup> As Antony notes, early non-Muslim accounts dating from the early ninth century C.E. and later record that the Prophet acquired his knowledge of the Scriptures from Jews and Christians during his travels while the Syriac chronicler Dionysius of Tell-Mahrē (d. 845 C.E.) specifies that these contacts took place in Palestine.<sup>49</sup> Some of the unique content in the *Ten Kings* likely emanated from an earlier lost work that may be reflected in material incorporated into the *Prayer* that documents relations between Jews and Muslims during the early Islamic era.

The *Prayer* reflects a later period than the *Secrets* and is clearly negative towards Muhammad. Imagery likely taken from a much earlier text is inserted by the *Prayer's* author into a section that predicts the Crusader (=Kenite) capture of Jerusalem and the slaughter of its inhabitants.<sup>50</sup> The relevant passage reads:

At that time the kingdom of the Kenites will come to Jerusalem, conquer it, and kill more than thirty thousand of its inhabitants. Because of their oppression of Israel, the Holy One, Blessed be He,

<sup>47</sup> Text, Even-Shmuel, *Midreshē ge'ullā*, 158-60; J. Yahalom, "על תוקפן של יצירות", *Cathedra* 11 (1979): 125-33. See Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 5 153 n. 16; Hoyland, *Seeing*, 319-20; B. Lewis, "On That Day: A Jewish Apocalyptic Poem on the Arab Conquests", in Pierre Salmon, ed. *Mélanges D'Islamologie* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 198-200.

<sup>48</sup> Cairo Genizah MS. 2541v. Text, J. Leveen, "Mohammed and His Jewish Companions," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 16 (1926): 399-406. See also B. Lewis, "An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 2 (1950): 323-24; I. Lindstedt, "Who Is In, Who Is Out? Early Muslim Identity Through Epigraphy and Theory," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 46 (2019): 180-81.

<sup>49</sup> Antony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*, 75-76. Antony also comments that this is similar to the counter-discourse of Muhammad's enemies mentioned in the Qur'an (16:103; 25:5) that claims he had a teacher.

<sup>50</sup> In this text, unlike the *Secrets*, the Kenites in some sections represent an oppressor who precedes the advent of Islam (=Byzantines). See Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 35; Reeves, *Trajectories*, 93 n. 91 & 96; Lewis, "Apocalyptic," 322-23.

will send the Ishmaelites against them, and they will make war with them in order to save Israel from their hands. Then a crazy man possessed by a spirit will arise and speak lies about the Holy One, Blessed be He, and he will conquer the land, and there will be enmity between them and the children of Esau.

The text continues with an interpretation of the prophecy of Isaiah 21:7 that is similar to the *Secrets*. However, the prior favorable depiction of Muhammad is transformed into a negative description of him that is likely based on Hosea 9:7.<sup>51</sup> Even-Shmuel suggested that the original apocalypse viewed the rise and spread of Islam as preceding the time of redemption.<sup>52</sup> This messianic hope is preserved in the *Secrets*; however, it has been removed from the *Prayer* and the *Ten Kings* to express later disillusionment with Islam. Although the *Secrets* likely preserves a version closer to its source text, its favorable treatment of Muhammad is placed within a larger text that reflects on later Islamic and Christian history and denigrates Islam. It opens with an interpretation by Rabbi Šim‘ōn of Numbers 24:21 to portray the kingdom of Ishmael as merely one of a succession of empires that mistreated and enslaved the Jews. Nevertheless, the *Secrets* preserves some valuable historical information pertaining to Jewish messianic beliefs when relations between Jews and Muslims were favorable.

The *Secrets* and the *Prayer* associate Isaiah’s asses with the messiah. Both texts state that the second Muslim king will befriend Israel, repair the Temple, and make war against the Byzantines. The *Secrets* expands this section to prophesy that he will build a place of prayer atop the “foundation stone” to fulfill Numbers 24:21. This is clearly an allusion to the second Caliph ‘Umar (634-644 C.E.). He treated the Jews favorably and, according to the *Secrets*, erected some structure on the Temple Mount. Although the Dome of the Rock was not built until the reign of the fifth Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705 C.E.), the Christian pilgrim Arculf (670’s C.E.) and others mention an earlier shrine there.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See further, Lewis, “Apocalyptic,” 323; Reeves, *Trajectories*, 94 n. 97. See also T-S A45.3v 15-17. Text, S. Hopkins, *A Miscellany of Literary Pieces from the Cambridge Genizah Collections: A Catalogue and Selection of Texts in the Tayler-Schechter Collection, Old Series, Box A45* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 1978), 7. For similar terms used to describe Muhammad, see Qur’an 15:6; 17:47; 34:8; 38:4; 68:51 cf. Qur’an, 10:5; 16:24; 21:5

<sup>52</sup> Even-Shmuel, *Midreshē ge‘ullā*, 162-74.

<sup>53</sup> An Armenian Chronicle of 661 attributed to Sebos (640’s C.E.) describes Muhammad’s followers as wanting to liberate the Holy Land and describes his message as

This, and other accounts, suggest that Mu'awiya's construction of the Dome of the Rock was part of an ongoing process of development of the site that was preceded by prior buildings over the rock atop the Temple Mount. Although Jerusalem is not named in the Qur'an, it was the seat of the Umayyad Caliphate, the first ruling dynasty in Islamic history, and had a great religious importance to the early Muslims. The was especially true for the Umayyad's since their kingdom included Syria, which was the first territory ruled by the Arabs after Muhammad's death. Early Islamic traditions and interpretations of Sura 50:41 view it as a praise of Jerusalem, which is also supported by a 785 C.E. inscription from the Negev. This shows the centrality of this city for the Umayyad Caliphs and the early Islamic community.<sup>54</sup> Because Jerusalem was the site of the ancient Jewish temple, it is not surprising that the Jews were greatly interested in Muslim activities there.

Although little information about the Umayyad dynasty exists, traditions preserved by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Wasiti record that the family did not build the Dome of the Rock as a place of prayer. Rather, it was to protect the rock of the Temple (*bayt al-maqdis*) from the elements.<sup>55</sup> The rituals he documents that took place there, as previously noted, were conducted by Jewish families, and included ablutions with perfumed ointments by men in special clothing on Mondays and Thursdays. Although these Jews undoubtedly did not consider their activities as taking place within the actual Temple, they likely viewed the Dome of the Rock as a symbol of the Temple, and the Arab conquest as the beginning of the period of redemption. The favoring of Judaism on the Temple Mount, the performance of rituals by Jews at the sacred rock, and the choice of passages that denounce Christian belief in the

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interconfessional. Sebos (#43) also states that Jews built a structure for worship atop the Temple Mount that preceded Muhammad. For the text, see Shoemaker, *A Prophet Has Appeared*, 63-66. For sources on the structures on the Temple Mount, see M. Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634-1099*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 65-74; Hoyland, *Seeing*, 64-5, 221-3; Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 117, 167-68.

<sup>54</sup> M. Sharon, "The 'Praises of Jerusalem' as a Source for the Early History of Islam," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 2 (1992): 56-7.

<sup>55</sup> Text, Muhammad ibn Ahmad Wāsiti, *Faiḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, Isaac Hasson, ed. (Jerusalem: Dār Maghnus lil-Nashr, 1979), esp. nos. 136-45. Cornell writes that the cooperation between Muslims and Jews at this time was quite close, and that the rituals performed at the Dome of the rock on Mondays and Thursdays were perhaps modeled on ancient Temple rites. See V. J. Cornell, "Theologies of Difference and ideologies of Intolerance in Islam," in J. Neusner and B. Chilton ed., *Religious Tolerance in World Religions* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2007), 277.

Trinity to adorn the Dome of the Rock—the earliest extant verses from the Qur’an—suggest that the early Muslims sought to associate themselves with Judaism. If later traditions concerning the Christian desecration of the foundation rock atop the Temple Mount are historical, this would further explain why the Jews preferred the Muslims at this time.<sup>56</sup> It is also likely that the early career of Muhammad facilitated such early Jewish-Muslim cooperation and Jewish eschatological expectations.

### III. Early Jewish and Muslims Relations in Palestine

A few Christian writings shed additional light on the Jewish perceptions of Muhammad, Islam, and the Jewish texts examined in this study. Unlike these Jewish apocalyptic writings that purport to predict Islamic rulers, these Christian works are primarily chronicles that look to the past. What is perhaps most surprising is that they do not portray Muhammad as the prophet of a new religion. Sophronius (d. ca. 639 C.E.), Patriarch of Jerusalem and the first to mention the arrival of the Arabs in Palestine (ca. 634 C.E.), merely describes their appearance as God’s punishment of his community for Christian heresy.<sup>57</sup> We likewise find no mention of a new religion with the arrival of the Arabs in a Syriac chronicle of 637 C.E.<sup>58</sup> A Syriac chronicle of 775 C.E., moreover, describes Muhammad as a Prophet and a Messenger, but only states that he opposed paganism and taught monotheism.<sup>59</sup> The *Book of Main Points* by the Syriac Christian John bar Penkaye (ca. 687 C.E.) was written as a theological response to contemporary events after the 683 C.E. death of caliph Mu’āwīya II that led to the second Arab civil war. John was an eyewitness to the events of this time, which led him to believe that the world’s end was near. In his account, he does not describe Muhammad as a prophet, but as a “guide” and shows no knowl-

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<sup>56</sup> Islamic traditions record that Christians cut stone from the rock to build the Holy Sepulcher and prevented the Jews from protecting it. See further Suliman Bashear, “Qur’an 2:114 and Jerusalem,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 52 (1989), 235-6.

<sup>57</sup> Text, A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ανάλεκτα Ιεροσολυμιτικής σταχυολογίας* 5 (St. Petersburg: Kirsbaum, 1898), 151-68.

<sup>58</sup> BL Add. 14.461. Text, E. W. Brooks, *Chronica Minora, II* (Paris: C. Poussielgue, 1904), 75.

<sup>59</sup> MS 162 (*Chronicle of Zuqnīn*). Text, J. B. Chabot, ed., *Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum I* (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1933), 148-54.



edge of a scared Islamic scripture. However, although he lived through a turbulent era, John mentions that the Muslims only demanded tribute and in exchange allowed freedom of worship. He also mentions large numbers of Christians among the early community of the Believers; the policy he describes applied to other monotheists such as the Jews.<sup>60</sup> John, moreover, also states that Christians whom he considered heretics fought with the Muslims: a passage that suggests there were Jews who also collaborated with the conquering Muslims armies.<sup>61</sup>

A letter from Maximus the Confessor (634-40 C.E.) shows that he also believed that the end time was near. However, in his mention of Islamic invaders, Maximus claims that many Jews were among them.<sup>62</sup> Although the patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, who assumed the position in 634 C.E., would appear to contradict the passages indicating that the early Muslims were tolerant, his account should not be taken at face value. Sophronius lived during the earliest days of Islam. He does not name Muhammad and refers to the Muslims as Saracens, Ishmaelites, and Hagarenes. He prefers to focus on their acts of violence rather than their ecumenical tolerance of other monotheists.<sup>63</sup> Although the arrival of the Muslims profoundly changed life for Palestine's Christian community, especially leaders like Sophronius, the archaeological evidence

<sup>60</sup> For text, see A. Mignana, *Sources syriaques I* (Leipzig: Dominican Press, 1907), 1-171. For the Islamic tolerance of monotheistic religions in this text, see further M. P. Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 85-87; Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 192-201.

<sup>61</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 528. For extensive evidence of non-Arabs in Muslim armies, see Wadād al-Qāḍi, "Non-Muslims in the Muslim Conquest Army in Early Islam," in *Christians and Others*, 83-127.

<sup>62</sup> Text, J.-P. Migne, "S.P.N. Maximi Confessoris, opera omnia," *Patrologia Graece*, 91 (1863): 537C-540B. See further Penn, *When Christians First Met*, 62-6; Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 58-59. For end-time belief in Christian writings from the time of the Muslim conquest, see further E. Grypeou, "'A People Will Emerge from the Desert': Apocalyptic Perceptions of the Early Muslim Conquests in Contemporary Eastern Christian Literature," in H. Amirav et al., ed. *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity: Encounters in the Abrahamic Religions, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 291-309.

<sup>63</sup> Sophronius, "Homily on the Epiphany 10." Text Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ανάλεκτα Ιεροσολυμιτικής σταχυολογίας*, 166-67. Similar accounts of violence by Muslims are mentioned in the chronicles of Thomas the Presbyter and Dionysius of Dionysius of Tell- Maḥrē. Texts, E. W. Brooks and J. B. Chabot, eds., *Chronicle minora, pars secunda, I* (Paris: Harrassowitz, 1903-05), 147-48; A. Palmer and S. Brock, *The Seventh Century in Western Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 150 (#58).

shows no evidence of widespread violence. Although there were certainly some localized incidents, it appears that only the Christian elites chose to depart the country *en masse*. Whereas the coastal town's populations fled at the time of the Muslim arrival in Palestine, those in the interior, particularly the Samaritan community, remained.<sup>64</sup> Many monotheists chose to live among the newly arrived Muslims because they believed Scripture had foretold of Muhammad's ministry.

An enigmatic Christian inscription from a church in Ehnes, Turkey, uses Psalm 44 to explain the recent Christian defeats by the Muslims and identifies Muhammad as the Messiah.<sup>65</sup> Although this inscription may have been intended to appease the Muslims, it has an interesting parallel in the *Doctrini Jacobi*. This Greek anti-Jewish tract recounts a persecution of Jews in Carthage on the order of Heraclius that was likely written within a short time of its purported 634 C.E. date of composition. It describes current events in Palestine and states that Muhammad was still alive.<sup>66</sup> The Jews of the country purportedly welcomed him because he was preaching the advent of the "anointed one who is to come."<sup>67</sup> The *Doctrini Jacobi* not only describes Muhammad as espousing a form of Judaic messianism, but some early traditions identify Caliph Umar as the Messiah and view his entry in Jerusalem as con-

<sup>64</sup> For this evidence, see further M. Levy-Rubin, "Changes in the Settlement Pattern of Palestine Following the Arab Conquest," in K. G. Holum and H. Lapin, ed. *Shaping the Middle East: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in an Age of Transition 400-800 CE* (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2011.155-72; A. Borrut and F. M. Donner, "Christians and Others in the Umayyad State," in *Christians and Others*, 1-10. The treaty 'Umar signed with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, contrary to later testimony, did not prohibit Jews from residing in Jerusalem as some Jewish families remained and served at the Dome of the Rock. For this evidence, see further M. Levy-Rubin, "Were the Jews Prohibited from Settling in Jerusalem?: On the Authenticity of Al-Ṭabarī's Jerusalem Surrender Agreement," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009): 63-81.

<sup>65</sup> See A. Palmer, "The Messiah and the Mahdī: History Presented as the Writing on the Wall" in W. J. Aerts, ed., *Polyphonia Byzantina* (Gröningen: Egbert Forsten, 1993), 45-84.

<sup>66</sup> The author states that Muhammad was alive at the time of the conquest of Palestine—a claim also made in the traditions of the Jacobites, the Nestorians, and the Samaritans. For these traditions, see Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, and 4 n. 9. This belief is incorrect and shows the lack of knowledge early Christians had about Muhammad and early Islam. It is more probable that many Christians merely assumed Muhammad was leading troops into Palestine and were unaware of his death.

<sup>67</sup> 5.16. Text, N. Bonwetsch, ed. *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati* (Berlin: Weidmannsche buchhandlung, 1910). A Syriac chronicle (BL Add. 14.643) of 640 C.E. records Muhammad as alive in 634 C.E. in Palestine. Text, Brooks, *Chronica*, 77-159 (AG 945, pp. 147-8).

firmation of his true identity.<sup>68</sup> This text is not only a valuable witness about early Islam, but it helps us better to understand the favorable relations between the first Muslims and the Jews of Palestine, many of whom believed Muhammad played a divinely-ordained role in their history and redemption. Early Islamic inscriptions show that eschatology played an important role in Muhammad's teachings and, like the author of the pseudepigraphal composition 3 Baruch 11:2, 8, believed he held the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>69</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

This exalted view of Muhammad and Umar in the *Secrets* is indirectly supported by Christian texts and suggests that Muhammad began his career as a messianic prophet espousing a religion similar to Judaism. In light of the Byzantine persecutions, some Jews apparently saw Muhammad's mission, and the Umayyad activities on the Temple Mount, as signs that the messianic era had dawned. The Armenian Bishop Sebos (660's C.E.), who wrote the earliest extant account of Muhammad, claims that Jews played a role in teaching the Arabs about the one God and Abraham. Sebos emphasizes the Palestinian orientation of Muhammad's movement, and his familiarity with Moses, to associate the Arab capture of Palestine with the period of messianic redemption.<sup>70</sup>

The *Secrets* suggest that many Jews supported the Umayyad Caliphate, especially 'Abd al-Malik's (685-705 C.E.) activity on the Temple Mount. The *Secrets* also records that the four sons ("the four arms") of 'Abd al-Malik, all of whom became Caliphs, continued building activities there. A fragment of an apocalyptic Judeo-Arabic work also mentions these four sons and their constructions atop the Temple

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<sup>68</sup> See further Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 5, ns. 18-24; Reeves, *Trajectories*, 81-2.

<sup>69</sup> This is described as the "basin" in several inscriptions and some Jewish pseudepigraphal writings. See 3 Baruch 11:2, 8, 4 Baruch 3:9-5:30 (cf. *Testament of Levi*, 5:1, 6). For Muhammad and the eschatological basin in early Umayyad period Islamic inscriptions, see further Antony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*, 53-54; W. Diem and M. Schöller, *The Living and the Dead in Islam: Studies in Arabic Epitaphs* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 1:168-70. The identity of 3 Baruch's author is debated, and it is uncertain if the composition is a Christian text that incorporated Jewish traditions or a Jewish writing that underwent Christian reworking. See further H. E. Gaylord, Jr., "3 (Greek Apocalypse of) Baruch (First to Third Century A.D.), in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigraph* (New York; Doubleday, 1983), 1:653-79.

<sup>70</sup> For Sebos's texts, see Hoyland, *Seeing*, 124-32.

Mount.<sup>71</sup> Umar apparently built an structure there to connect the nascent Islamic faith with the Jewish Scriptures in part to strengthen his political authority and to win the support of the Jews.<sup>72</sup> Grabar writes that Jewish apocalyptic writings of this time that refer to the revival of the Temple under the Umayyad Caliphs do so to show that the Dome of the Rock was “a monument to Muslim eschatological thought.” They also reveal that the traditions of Muhammad’s sayings and Qur’anic commentaries of this period began to connect Jerusalem with the end of time and the divine judgment.<sup>73</sup>

Jewish messianic interpretations of Islam largely ended with the 750 C.E. fall of the Umayyad Caliphate. The new Abbasid Caliphs transferred the capital to Baghdad and largely erased the Umayyad dynasty from history. As Christians began to replace the Jews as Islam’s main subjects, Islamic scholars increasingly engaged in the Islamization of their history. Muhammad became a prophet who taught the pillars of the religion of Abraham, which began in Arabia.<sup>74</sup> Like Moses, Muhammad led an Exodus of his followers but never reached Palestine.<sup>75</sup> Islam subsequently expunged Jewish messianism from its Scriptures and beliefs to further separate it from its Jewish roots and the land of Palestine. The Jewish writings examined in this study bear witness to a lost form of Judeo-messianism connected with early Islam. The *Secrets* and the *Prayer* show that the Jewish obsession with explaining Islam’s dominance continued up to the Crusades. These texts are valuable historical witnesses to the parting of the ways between Judaism and Islam. They reveal that in its earliest days, the religion of Islam was quite tolerant of Jews, and greatly influenced by their eschatological thought. Some

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<sup>71</sup> Cairo Geniza Ms. 2642 43a-b. Text, Israel Lévi, “Une apocalypse judéo-arabe”, *Revue des études juives* 67 (1914), 178-82.

<sup>72</sup> Sharon, “Praises,” 66-7.

<sup>73</sup> Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 133.

<sup>74</sup> Jacob of Edessa (ca. 684-708 C.E.) records Muslims praying towards the site of the Jerusalem Temple showing that this was the original direction of prayer for Muhammad’s followers. Shoemaker writes: “Only over the course of the first Islamic century, it would seem, did Mecca, Medina, and the Hija replace the biblical Holy Land as a new distinctively Islamic Holy Land, a development that coincided with the broader program of Islamicization and Arabization inaugurated at the end of the seventh century by ‘Abd al-Malik.” See Shoemaker, *A Prophet*, 203-08 (quotation p. 208). See also, Qur’an, 2:142-44.

<sup>75</sup> See R. G. Hoyland, *In God’s Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 36-7, 219-30.

Jews, moreover, saw Islam as a divinely ordained faith that bore witness to their Scriptural messianic aspirations, and that many of them preferred Islamic rule over Christian domination.