

God's command to go out and preach to the community. Why not welcome another prophet who is only confirming the monotheism that they already practice? The reason for not admitting the new prophet may be that those representing the establishment religions are arrogant or are jealous and care only for themselves. They are rebelling against God's will by refusing to heed the message of a true prophet. The Qur'an therefore condemns the positions of the People of the Book and accuses them of going so far as to distort their own revelation in order to defame the new prophet. "Woe to those who write Scripture with their own hands and then say it is from God in order to make some profit from it. Woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn" (Q.2:79). "When a messenger of God comes to them affirming what they have, some of those who were given Scripture throw the Book of God behind their backs as if they do not know" (Q.2:101). "O People of Scripture! Why do you deny the revelations [or signs] of God even as you witness?" (Q.3:70).

The problem of working out the relationship between the Qur'an and prior monotheistic scriptures was never resolved. After the success of the Conquests, Jews largely dropped out of the polemical arena, but Christians, under the protection and competition of the Byzantine Empire and later, Christian Europe, continued to challenge the authenticity of Qur'anic revelation. Scriptural differences became symbolic of larger issues when most of the known world was divided between the Christian Byzantine Empire and Europe, on the one hand, and the caliphate and the Muslim world, on the other. The contest for prestige and the political and economic competition between the two worlds were often articulated through religious terminology and polemic, and the polemical literatures in both communities made a deep and lasting impact. The current tensions and antagonism between "the West" and the Muslim World is not new, of course. Part of the difficulty in overcoming it results from the deep-seated prejudices on both sides, perpetuated in the

polemical literatures for many centuries.

However, the complex relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible was not always articulated through heated polemics. Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars were also intrigued by the many similarities in form, content, and style, and this has stimulated much thinking and writing among both Muslims and non-Muslims from medieval times to the present. Today dozens of comparative studies of the Qur'an and the Bible are available in libraries and for purchase, and scholars continue to study the fascinating relationship between them.

But even conscientious contemporary scholars tend to retain a basic religious or cultural affiliation with their own scriptural tradition, and this maintains a certain low-level tension that continues to feed old arguments between the faiths. Jewish and Christian scholars tend to assume that the Qur'an represents a significant "borrowing" of data and style from preexisting literatures. Muslim scholars are inclined to view the differences as errors and attrition among the older scriptures that have been associated with the copying and passing down of ancient texts.

It is not really necessary to bridge the divide. The Qur'an and the Bible are different texts and they represent different revelations. They employ distinct languages and styles to convey similar but somewhat different messages. Both secular and religious scholars would do well to remain modest in response to the tremendous depth and complexity of relationship. It is likely that no solution to the issue will ever be suggested that will satisfy all the parties. As the Qur'an itself articulates: "We have appointed a divine law and custom. If God had wished, He would have made you all one nation but [the intent is] to test you by what He has given you. So compete together in doing good works! You will all return to God and He will then inform you of how you differ" (Q.5:48).

## Books

**Dr. Carole Balin** and **Dr. Wendy Zierler**, eds., *Behikansi Atah (In My Entering Now)* (Resling Press, Tel Aviv, 2008). The collected writings of forgotten Hebrew writer Hava Shapiro, including the first-known Hebrew diary by a woman, fiction, and love letters.

**Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman** and Dr. David Arnow, eds., *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries, Volumes 1 and 2* (Jewish Lights, 2008). A new translation with commentaries by scholars from all denominations of Judaism.

**Dr. Joshua Holo**, John Efron, Steven Weitzman, and Matthias Lehmann, *The Jews: A History* (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008). New research has conspired to unsettle many established ideas about the Jewish past, challenging how historians have thought about and described it.

**Dr. Leonard S. Kravitz** and Kerry M. Olitzky, *Eichab: A Modern Commentary on the Book of Lamentations* (URJ Press, 2008). The Hebrew text is accompanied by English translation, commentary, questions for discussion, and additional resources.

*Festschrift* in Honor of **Dr. Michael A. Meyer** – *Mediating Modernity: Challenges and Trends in the Jewish Encounter with the Modern World, Essays in Honor of Michael A. Meyer*, edited by Lauren B. Strauss and Michael Brenner (Wayne State University Press, 2007). 24 scholars honor Dr. Meyer's 70th birthday with essays highlighting the growing diversity within the discipline of Jewish studies.

## Faculty Articles

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**Prof. Gerald Bubis**, "Jewish Education and Jewish Identity" in *What We NOW Know About Jewish Education*, edited by Roberta Lewis Goodman, Paul Flexner, and Linda Dale Blumberg (Torah Aura, 2008).

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**Dr. Steven M. Cohen**, J. Shawn Landres, Elie Kaunfer, and Michelle Shain, "Emergent Jewish Communities and their Participants," *S3K Synagogue Studies Institute & Mechon Hadar*, 2007.

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**Dr. William Cutter**, "How to Pursue the Obligation to Heal" in *Life, Faith, and Cancer* by Douglas J. Kohn (URJ Press).

**Dr. Susan Einbinder**, "God's Forgotten Sheep: Jewish Poetry and the Expulsion from France (1306)," *Masoret haPiyut 4*, eds. Benjamin Bar Tikva and Ephraim Hazan (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2008), pp. 55-82.

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