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0521827035 - Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition

Yohanan Friedmann

Frontmatter

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Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition

Since the beginning of its history, Islam has encountered other religious communities both in Arabia and in the territories conquered during its expansion. The most distinctive characteristic of these encounters was that Muslims faced other religions from the position of a ruling power. They were, therefore, able to determine the nature of that relationship in accordance with their world-view and beliefs. Yohanan Friedmann's original and erudite study examines questions of religious tolerance and coercion as they appear in the Qur'ān and in the prophetic tradition, and analyses the principle that Islam is exalted above all religions, discussing the ways in which this principle was reflected in various legal pronouncements. The book also considers the various interpretations of the Qur'ānic verse according to which 'No compulsion is there in religion ...', noting that, despite the apparent meaning of this verse, Islamic law allowed religious coercion to be practiced against Manichaeans and Arab idolaters, as well as against women and children in certain circumstances.

YOHANAN FRIEDMANN is Max Schloessinger Professor of Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Member, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. His publications include *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (1971, 2000), and *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Aḥmadī Religious Thought and its Medieval Background* (1989, 2002).

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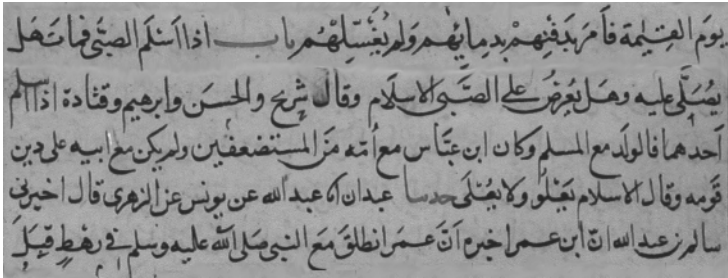
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In memory of my parents
Moshe and Jolana Friedmann

יהי זכרם ברוך



Passage from a manuscript of al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Hebrew University Manuscript Yahuda Ar. 301, calligraphed by Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, also known as al-Shihāb, in 854 A.H. / 1450 A.D.

“If a boy embraces Islam and dies, is the funeral prayer performed for him? Is Islam offered to the boy? Shurayḥ, al-Ḥasan, Ibrāhīm and Qatāda said: ‘If one of his parents embraces Islam, the boy is (from the point of view of religious affiliation) with his Muslim parent. Ibn ‘Abbās was with his (Muslim) mother who was of weak social standing, and not with his father who belonged to the (non-Muslim) religion of his tribe. Islam is exalted and nothing is exalted above it.’”

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011–4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2003

Printed in Singapore by Craft Print International Ltd

Typeface Times (Adobe) 10/12 pt. System QuarkXPress® [PC]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication data

Friedmann, Yohanan.
Tolerance and coercion in Islam: interfaith relationships
in the Muslim tradition.
Bibliography.
Includes index.
ISBN 0 521 82703 5.
1. Religious tolerance – Islam. I. Title.
297.5699

ISBN 0 521 82703 5 hardback

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Preface

The purpose of the present study is to survey and analyze a substantial body of Sunnī Muslim tradition relevant to the notions of religious tolerance and coercion, religious diversity, hierarchy of religions, the boundaries of the Muslim community and the ramifications of all these on several topics in classical Islamic thought and law. I have made wide use of the *ḥadīth* collections and of exegesis on the relevant Qurʾānic verses. An attempt has been made to cover the views of the four *madhāhib* and, at times, of Ibn Ḥazm. I have tried to make wide use of the most representative works of each *madhhab*. It was not possible to refer to all relevant passages in the various sources: this would cause the footnotes to reach unmanageable proportions. It has been my primary goal to represent faithfully the views attributed to the classical traditionists and jurists, and to evoke the atmosphere prevalent in the primary sources. To achieve this objective, I have frequently allowed the sources speak for themselves and have translated the more significant passages in their entirety. Some of the topics that were treated only briefly deserve independent monographs, but attempting this was not possible in the framework of this study. Wherever necessary because of dense print or large page format, I have indicated line numbers to enable the interested readers to locate the references as easily as possible. Qurʾānic translations generally follow Arthur J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted*, though in some cases modifications of his wording were deemed necessary.

I am indebted to the Rockefeller Foundation for granting me a month of undisturbed writing in the serene atmosphere of their Study and Conference Center, Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio, Italy. Most of Chapter Four was written during my residency there in September and October 1997. Most of Chapter Three was written during my residency at the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University in the fall of 1999. I wish to express my gratitude to the authorities of the Institute for granting me this opportunity. Some of the material was collected in the Firestone Library of Princeton University. Most of the book was written in the Asian and African Studies Reading Room of the Jewish National and University Library at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The staff of the Reading Room, headed by Ms. Gail Levin (and including Ms. Shoshana Adelstein, Ms. Naʿama Israeli-David, Ms. Esther Shapira, Ms. Michal Zadok, Ms. Shoshana Zur and

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Ms. Hilla Zemer) deserve my gratitude for their untiring efforts to supply me with the necessary books from the stacks.

A slightly shorter version of Chapter Two was published in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 22(1998), pp. 163–195. Parts of Chapter Three were presented to the research group on “Law and the State in Classical Islam”, which was active at the Institute of Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University during the fall term of 1999–2000. Chapter One, section VI, was presented on December 7, 1999 (in Hebrew) to the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities under the title “Equality and inequality in the *sharīʿa*: the law of retaliation as a case-study.”

It is finally my pleasant duty to thank friends and colleagues who assisted me in various ways. Frank Stewart, Aharon Layish and David Wasserstein read various chapters of the draft and offered most useful comments. I am also indebted to Ella Almagor, Albert Arazi, Etan Kohlberg, Ella Landau-Tasseron, Milka Levy-Rubin and Nurit Tsafrir for sharing with me their insights. My numerous discussions with Professor M.J. Kister, my life-long mentor and the real dean of *ḥadīth* studies, were as invaluable as always. My wife Zafira was sympathetic and supportive all along. The two anonymous readers of Cambridge University Press also deserve my gratitude for their comments. I also thank Marigold Acland for seeing the book expeditiously through the review process and to Dr. Valina Rainer for her professional copy-editing. It goes without saying that all imperfections and infelicities of style are mine alone.

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