

From Torah to Quran

*The Jewish Converts in the
Era of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)*



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From Torah to Quran: Jews Converts in the Prophet's Era

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From Torah to Quran: Jews Converts in the Prophet's Era

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DEDICATION

*To my esteemed teachers of the Department of Study of Religions, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan, whose wisdom and guidance have illuminated my path in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding.
May they live long (Aameen)*

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Transliteration Table¹

TRANSLITERATION TABLE									
ا	a	آ	<u>d</u>	غ	gh	بھ	<u>bh</u>	Long Vowels	
ب	b	ذ	dh	ف	f	پھ	<u>ph</u>		
پ	p	ر	r	ق	q	تھ	<u>th</u>		
ت	t	ڑ	ṛ	ک	k	ٹھ	<u>th</u>		
ٹ	<u>t</u>	ز	z	گ	g	جھ	<u>jh</u>		
ث	th	ژ	<u>z</u>	ل	l	چھ	<u>ch</u>	ا	<u>ā</u>
ج	j	س	s	م	m	دھ	<u>dh</u>	آ	<u>ā</u>
چ	ch	ش	sh	ن	n	ڈھ	<u>dh</u>	ی	<u>i</u>
ح	h	ص	ṣ	و	w	ڑھ	<u>rh</u>	و	<u>ū</u>
خ	kh	ط	ṭ	ہ	h	کھ	<u>kh</u>	و (Urdu)	<u>ō</u>
د	d	ظ	ẓ	ی	y	گھ	<u>gh</u>	و (Urdu)	<u>ē</u>
								Short Vowels	
								ا	<u>a</u>
								ی	<u>i</u>
								و	<u>u</u>
								Diphthongs	
								او	(Arabic) aw
								او	(Persian/Urdu) au
								او	(Turkish) ev
								ای	(Arabic) ay
								ای	(Persian/Urdu) ai
								ای	(Turkish) ey
								Doubled	
								او	(Arabic) uww
								او	(Persian) uvv
								او	(Urdu) uvv
								ای	iiy

ٲ (e), when it appears at the middle or end of a word, is transliterated as elevated comma (') followed by the letter representing the vowel it carries. However, when ٲ appears at the beginning of a word it will be represented only by the letter representing the vowel it carries.

ٲ is transliterated as elevated inverted comma (').

ض as an Arabic letter is transliterated as (d), and as a Persian/Turkish/Urdu letter as (z).

و as an Arabic letter is transliterated as (w), and as a Persian/Turkish/Urdu letter is transliterated as (v).

ٲ is transliterated as (ah) in pause form and as (at) in construct form.

Article ٲ is transliterated as (al-) whether followed by a moon or a sun letter, however, in construct form it will be transliterated as (!).

و as a Persian/Urdu conjunction is transliterated as (-o) whereas as an Arabic conjunction و is transliterated as (wa).

Short vowel (ٲ) in Persian/Urdu possessive or adjectival form is transliterated as (-i).

¹ This table is taken from IRI, IIUI website, and it is followed while transliterating the relevant words in this book.

Preface

The journey of exploring historical narratives often leads us to the intersections of faith, culture, and human relationships. This book represents an endeavor to delve into a pivotal period of history, uncovering the profound spiritual transformations that occurred during Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life. It focuses on the experiences of Jewish converts to Islam in seventh-century Arabia. This subject not only sheds light on the complexities of interfaith interactions but also carries profound lessons for contemporary coexistence and dialogue. The advent of Islam brought transformative changes to the Arabian Peninsula, where diverse communities—Arab pagans, Christians, Jews, and others—interacted in a dynamic socio-political environment. Jewish tribes, in particular, held a significant position in the cultural, economic, and religious landscape of pre-Islamic Medina. These tribes were not merely passive observers of the rise of Islam but were active participants in shaping its early history. The conversion of some Jews to Islam during this time is an often-overlooked yet essential aspect of the broader narrative of Islamic history. By exploring these conversions, we gain insights into the spiritual, intellectual, and socio-political factors that influenced individuals to embrace Islam and how their contributions shaped the nascent Muslim community.

This book aims to fill an important gap in the historiography of early Islam. While much attention has been given to the interactions between Muslims and Jews during the Prophet's era, less focus has been placed on the personal journeys of Jewish individuals who embraced Islam and their subsequent roles in the community. These stories are not merely of historical curiosity but are windows into the nature of faith, the universality of Islam's

message, and the complexities of religious and cultural transformations. The subject matter presented here is deeply rooted in primary Islamic sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith literature, and early Islamic historical texts such as those of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hisham, and Al-Tabari. These classical sources are complemented by contemporary scholarly works that provide fresh perspectives and critical analyses. Where gaps exist in historical documentation, interpretive analysis has been incorporated, guided by Islamic principles and contextual understanding.

One of the central themes of this work is the role of interfaith dialogue and coexistence in the Prophet's era. The Constitution of Medina, a groundbreaking document of its time, serves as a testament to the Prophet's vision for a pluralistic society where communities of different faiths could coexist peacefully. Within this framework, the experiences of Jewish converts are particularly significant, as they navigated the dual identity of being both part of the Jewish tradition and members of the emerging Muslim ummah. Their stories illustrate the Prophet's inclusive approach and highlight the spiritual, ethical, and intellectual dimensions of Islam's engagement with other faiths. Another important focus of this book is the exploration of the challenges and conflicts faced by Jewish converts. By its very nature, conversion is a profound and often tumultuous process involving a shift in religious belief and a redefinition of social and cultural identity. For Jewish converts during the Prophet's era, these challenges were magnified by the political and tribal dynamics of the time. The broader Jewish community's reactions, the Muslim community's responses, and the converts' struggles to reconcile their past with their new faith are themes that resonate deeply with the complexities of human experience.

Equally significant are the contributions of Jewish converts to the early Islamic community. These individuals

brought with them a rich heritage of knowledge, scholarship, and skills that enriched the Muslim community in various ways. Their understanding of the Torah and Jewish traditions often facilitated deeper interfaith dialogue and provided valuable insights that shaped Islamic scholarship. The intellectual legacy of these individuals underscores the importance of diversity within the Muslim ummah and the potential for cross-cultural and interfaith contributions to enrich a community. The contemporary relevance of this study cannot be overstated. In an age where interfaith tensions and misunderstandings often dominate discourse, the historical narratives of Jewish-Muslim relations in the Prophet's era offer valuable lessons. They remind us of a time when faith communities, despite their differences, could find common ground and coexist in mutual respect. These lessons are particularly pertinent in fostering interfaith dialogue today, promoting understanding, and countering prejudice.

This book is the culmination of years of research, reflection, and dialogue. It has been shaped by countless hours of engagement with primary sources, scholarly works, and critical discussions. I am deeply indebted to my mentors, whose guidance has been invaluable in refining my understanding and approach to this subject. Their encouragement and intellectual rigor have been instrumental in the development of this work. I must also acknowledge the role of the Department of Study of Religions at the International Islamic University Islamabad in nurturing my academic pursuits. The department's commitment to promoting critical scholarship and fostering interfaith understanding has been a source of inspiration throughout this journey. The academic environment it provides has been pivotal in shaping the perspectives and methodologies that underpin this book.

Finally, I hope that this book will serve as a bridge between the past and the present, illuminating the rich

history of Jewish-Muslim relations and offering pathways for meaningful interfaith dialogue. It is a humble contribution to the broader discourse on religious coexistence and the universality of Islam's message. While the historical narratives presented here are deeply rooted in the context of seventh-century Arabia, their lessons transcend time and space, speaking to the shared humanity that underpins all faith traditions. I invite readers to approach this work with an open mind and heart, seeking not only to understand the past but also to draw inspiration for the present and the future. May it serve as a source of knowledge, reflection, and inspiration for all who seek to understand the beauty and complexity of faith and human relationships. (Aameen)

Dr. Jamil Akhtar

24-May-2024