

1. Talmud, Shabbat 89a

What is the meaning of "Mount Sinai"? For hatred [*sinah*] descended to the nations of the world there.

The Almohad Invasion

2. Amira Bennison, Maria Gallego, *Jewish Trading in Fes on the Eve of the Almohad Conquest* (2007)

Al-Baydhaq's eye-witness account of this part of Ibn Tūmart's life suggests that he began this journey as a reformist preacher and only gradually developed his religio-political mission to overthrow the Almoravids. He also used his time in Algeria to create a small cohort of followers who then accompanied him west, the most important of whom was 'Abd al-Mu'min, a Kumiya Berber tribesman from the Tlemsen area, who ultimately succeeded Ibn Tūmart as head of the Almohad movement and constructed the Almohad empire. During the journey to Marrakesh, Ibn Tūmart gained stature as a gifted preacher with an uncompromising message that Gd's uniqueness was the central tenet of the faith and that true adherence to Him required total submission to the way of life detailed in the Qur'ān and the Sunna.

He was highly critical of customary practices not rooted in these sources, of jurists' lack of knowledge of them, and the emulative rather than rational-critical tendency predominant among Maghribi scholars. He had a puritanical strand and reacted strongly, sometimes violently, to men and women mixing in public, to wine-drinking, and to music and dancing but, aside from this, his extant works show that he was also an erudite scholar able to use philosophical and logical arguments to press his point home and impress and silence the Maghribi jurists and students with whom he debated.

3. Amira Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, pp. 64-65

Ibn Tūmart's mission to reform Islamic praxis brought him into conflict not only with jurists and the general population, but also with the political authorities of his time, whom he publicly chastised for failing in their duty to uphold the Shar'ia and thus neglecting the religious responsibilities that came with political power. From the Islamic perspective, the ultimate purpose of political life was to merely to maintain earthly justice and prosperity, but to prepare people for the afterlife and rulers had a heavy responsibility to put their subjects on the path to eternal salvation rather than damnation. When he reached Marrakesh, the charge that Ibn Tūmart made against the Almoravids was precisely that they were too ignorant and dependent on Maliki jurists to provide adequate religious leadership for their subjects. The confrontation between Ibn Tūmart and the Almoravids began in the great mosque of Marrakesh where he publicly criticize the Almoravid ruler 'Ali b. Yusuf for wearing the traditional male face veil of the Sanhaja and for sitting on a rich silk cloak in the mosque... While these criticisms may seem obscure to us, they were gauged to highlight Almoravid customs which other Muslims found strange and also suggest 'Ali's ignorance of Islamic religious norms...

4. Amira Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, pg. 66

Central to this shift was Ibn Tūmart's recognition as the *mahdi*, a messianic figure sent to restore true Islam and an era of peace and justice for its adherents. It was a fortuitous moment to make such a claim due to the eschatological expectations generated by the passing of the Islamic year 500 in 1106-7. Ibn Tūmart heightened those expectations by asserting that the Almoravids were the decadent people alluded to in Hadith who would appear at the end of days and show their deviance by allowing their women to appear unveiled and thus parade what should be hidden. He also encouraged people to think that he might indeed be the *mahdi* by constantly alluding to Hadith about his own possession of the attributes of this messianic figure in conjunction with the 'signs' that his appearance was imminent.

5. Chris Anderton, *Almohad ideology and the rihla of ibn Jubayr: the worldview of tawhīd*

[T]he *rihla* of ibn Jubayr achieved its popularity because it represented a vision of Islamic society where the worldly and otherworldly spheres, increasingly separated in reality since the decline of the Abbasid caliphate, were again united by the agency of pious Muslim leaders after the model of the Almohads and, through them, by Gd. This was the sociological embodiment of *tawhīd*, which said that nothing exists outside of Gd (as in the Qur'anic verse "wherever you turn, there is the face of Gd"), and that "all the power in the universe and all the physical and moral laws by which it is regulated reflect the same ultimate reality, Gd"...

Ibn Tumart's interpretation of *tawhīd*, the most fundamental feature of monotheistic Islam, must largely be gleaned from a collection of texts written down in 1183 CE during the reign of the second Almohad Caliph Yusuf ibn 'Abd al-Mu'min, one year after ibn Jubayr set out for Mecca. What is revealed is that ibn Tumart took the radical approach of claiming that knowledge of God and His Oneness can be known by reason or logic, "through the wide testimony of His acts from the aspect of the necessity of created things for a Creator, and the necessity of the existence of a Creator."...

Of course, this was by no means a rejection of revelation as a source of truth. Rather, it was the explication of a system whereby "true and certain knowledge" could be obtained by starting with the reliable prophetic authorities of the Qu'ran and hadith and applying the worldly science of logical inference to reach agreement between religious scholars (*ijma*).... Significantly, this placed the Almohad approach to *fiqh* in direct contrast to the Mālikī school, heavily favoured by the Almoravids and thus the most prevalent among Andalus, who preferred following the tradition (*taqlid*) of earlier interpretations of the law (*ijtihād*); ibn Tumart rejected this in exchange for a return to the sources (*usus*) of jurisdiction.

6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhimmi>

A *dhimmī* is a historical term referring to non-Muslims living in an Islamic state with legal protection. The word literally means "protected person", referring to the state's obligation under sharia to protect the individual's life, property, and freedom of religion, in exchange for loyalty to the state and payment of the *jizya* tax, which complemented the *zakat*, or obligatory alms, paid by the Muslim subjects. *Dhimmi*s were exempt from certain duties assigned specifically to Muslims, and did not enjoy certain privileges and freedoms reserved for Muslims, but were otherwise equal under the laws of property, contract, and obligation.

7. Alejandro Garcia-Sanjuan, *Jews and Christians in Almoravid Seville as Portrayed by the Islamic Jurist Ibn 'Abdūn*, Medieval Encounters 14 (2008)

Some of the rules traditionally applied to the *dhimma* were intended to underline their inferiority. This is particularly obvious in the case of rules concerning dress and greeting customs. As many other Muslim jurists before him, Ibn 'Abdūn insists on these traditions, stressing the need to prevent Christians and Jews—as well as tax collectors and policemen—from dressing in clothes that are suitable only for honorable people. He even stipulates an obligation for them to wear an external symbol or distinction (*'alāma*) to make them more immediately recognizable, with the obvious intention of humiliating them (*'alā sabīl al-khizy la-hum*). Similarly, he forbids that they be greeted with the typical Islamic formula "Peace rest upon you," justifying this prohibition by referring to Qur'ān 58:19, which implies their inclusion within "Satan's party" (*ḥizb Shayṭān*). However, Ibn 'Abdūn was by no means the first to identify the *dhimmīs* with the "party of Satan," as similar precedents can be found in Islamic legal literature.

One of the clearest examples of Ibn 'Abdūn's contempt toward the "protected people" can be found in his identification of Jews and Christians with two undesirable and marginal groups: the "sick" (*marīḍ*), perhaps in reference to lepers, and the "libertines" (*khafī*). Ibn 'Abdūn held that their used clothing should not be sold without a warning to the purchaser. In keeping with this derogatory attitude, Ibn 'Abdūn displays a keen distrust of the *dhimmīs*, forbidding the sale of Arabic scientific texts to Christians and Jews, with the exception of their religious authorities (*illā man kāna min shar'ati-him*), stating that "they translate them and claim the credit for themselves and their bishops for having written them." Ibn 'Abdūn also argues for the need to prevent Jewish or Christian physicians from treating Muslims, "as they do not harbour good feelings toward them."

8. David Corcos, *The Attitude of Almohad Leaders Toward the Jews*, Studies in the History of the Jews of Morocco
Ibn Tumart's heir, Abd al-Mu'min, executed his political-social vision, and was faithful to all of his ideas. During his conquests, acts of intimidation, exile, injustice, etc. were common. The wild soldiers who descended from the Atlas Mountains were more interested in despoiling the towns of the plains than in spreading a religious ideology they did not much understand. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims from North Africa and Spain lost their lives in these travels, and many Jews certainly shared their bitter fate...

9. Amira Bennison, Maria Gallego, *Jewish Trading in Fes on the Eve of the Almohad Conquest* (2007)

The attitude of Ibn Tumart and his immediate circle towards non-Almohads became clear during their establishment of their community in the High Atlas mountain town of Tinmall or Tinmalal around 1124. After the Almohads occupied the

town, the inhabitants enjoyed a grace period of about four years after which those who refused to accept Ibn Tūmart and his message were brutally driven out and massacred...

Finally, several letters from the Cairo Genizah dated to this period have proved to be especially rich material for the reconstruction of this chapter of Jewish history, for they usually convey first hand information, without any goal beyond private communication between individuals, in contradistinction to chronicles or literary works. The most extensive account of the Jewish plight under the Almohads has been recorded in Shelomo ha-Kohen al-Siljīmasi's missive from Fustat to his father coming back from India in 1148. Shelomo ha-Kohen reports to his father the news from the Maghrib that he has learnt from a group of Muslim and Jewish travellers who have arrived in Egypt from the Maghrib, where they witnessed the course of events. According to their account, when Sijilmasa surrendered to the Almohads, the new rulers tried to convert the Jews to Islam by debate and persuasion for over seven months (an episode mentioned as well in a Genizah copy of Abraham ibn Ezra's *Lament*). From a doctrinal perspective, this correlated with the Almohad mission to convert all Abrahamic monotheists to the true faith. It also matches with Ibn al-Qift's reference to the grace period offered to non-Muslims by 'Abd al-Mu'min. The letter adds that after this period a new governor arrived in the city and killed a hundred and fifty Jews, whereas the others apostasised, including the *dayyan* (judge) of Sijilmasa. The letter continues by giving a record of the cities conquered in the West and the fate of the Jews, concluding that they have all been killed or converted to Islam.

10. Delfina Serrano Ruano, *Explicit cruelty, implicit compassion: Judaism, forced conversions and the genealogy of the Banū Rūshd*, *J of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2:2 (2010)

It is generally assumed that the Almohad conquest was very detrimental for the Jews, and this is not without sound reason. A mass killing of Christians and Jews is said to have taken place during the Almohad conquest of Seville in 541/1147. In spite of the fact that the invaders' violence extended to the Muslim population of the city as well, the fact that both Christian and Muslim historians stress the targeting of *dhimmīs* is significant. J.P. Molénat has shown that a report transmitted by the Damascene historian and *Hadith* expert al-Dhahabi (d. 1348 CE) from Ibn Hamuya/Hamaway (d. 1220 CE), can be considered trustworthy, in contradistinction to the opinion of other modern scholars. According to this source, after having seized Marrakesh, Abd al-Mu'min, the first Almohad caliph, expressed his will to put an end to the religions of the book in his domains, to demolish churches and synagogues and to oblige Christians and Jews to convert to Islam. Furthermore, as Molénat points out, some Jewish and Muslim sources confirm the veracity of these intentions. Among the former, one of the most often quoted is a poem composed by Abraham ibn Ezra (d. c. 1167 CE) in which he lamented the destruction of Jewish communities in al-Andalus and the Maghrib, including Lucena, Seville, Cordoba, Jaen, Malaga, Mallorca, Sijilmasa, Fes, Tlemcen, Ceuta and Meknes...

As regards Muslim authors, both Eastern and Western historians can be mentioned, e.g. Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233 CE), al-Nuwayri (d. 1332 CE) Ibn al-Qifti (d. c. 1248 CE) Ibn Shaddad (d. after 1186 CE) and Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi (d. after 1224 CE). According to Ibn al-Athir, when Abd al-Mu'min took Tunis, in 1159 CE, he obliged its Christian and Jewish dwellers to choose between conversion to Islam and death, executing those who refused to convert. In the account of al-Nuwayri, Abd al-Mu'min's aforementioned course of action towards *dhimmīs* is not limited to a given locality but made extensive to all his conquests, and the *dhimmīs* who were unwilling to become Muslims were given a third alternative, namely, that of abandoning the Almohad empire. Al-Qifti added that those who refused to convert or to emigrate faced death and confiscation of their properties. These reports are confirmed by Ibn Shaddad, whose local and temporal context is much closer to the Almohad scenario than that of the Oriental historians mentioned above. Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi for his part, writing in 621/1224–25, states that the arrival of the Almohads had put an end to the legal status enjoyed thus far by Christians and Jews in their possessions [*dhimma*], adding that churches and synagogues had been demolished and that Jews adhered to Islam only externally.

11. Rabbi Maimon, Letter of Consolation (Hebrew available at <http://benyehuda.org/gluckson/maimonides.html>)
Our brethren, the Jews who are placed into trouble, may Gd soon have mercy upon you... The troubles which come from Gd upon His creations are for a good purpose... Gd will not exchange and will not trade in the Jewish nation, which He chose among all of the first nations, for another nation... The essence is that one should not cease praying. Even if, due to the anger of the oppressor and due to the compulsion, one cannot pray the established prayer at its

proper time, evening, morning and noon, one should still pray an abbreviated prayer. At least, they should recite daily that they are members of the Jewish nation, holding their Torah in their hearts.

12. Delfina Serrano Ruano, *Explicit cruelty, implicit compassion: Judaism, forced conversions and the genealogy of the Banū Rushd*, *J of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2:2 (2010)

The reasons why the Almohads saw fit to proceed against the *dhimmis* in this manner are not clear.⁸ In the case of the Christians, it might be a response to the military and economic pressure exerted by their co-religionists in the North of the Iberian Peninsula and in the Mediterranean, whereas the persecution of Jews remains without a proper explanation. Furthermore, as Olivia Remie Constable has pointed out, "at the same time that Almohad rulers made life difficult for Jews living in and moving through their territories, they also allowed foreign Christians to trade in Almohad ports" not to speak of the mercantile treaties undersigned by the Almohad authorities with different Mediterranean Christian powers. For his part, Dominique Urvoy sees the Almohads' anti-*dhimmi* policies as a natural consequence of their ideology, even though the Almohads themselves do not seem to have elaborated any theoretical justification. This fact, according to J.P. Molénat, reflects Almohads' awareness that their actions against the tributaries were blameworthy and therefore to be kept hidden or silenced.

13. David Corcos, *The Attitude of Almohad Leaders Toward the Jews*, *Studies in the History of the Jews of Morocco*

From the time that two research papers of Solomon Munk were published about a century ago, his view has become authoritative regarding the subject we are addressing. In his view, the harassment of Jews by the Almohads was ideological, starting with an official, open policy of coercion, and in Munk's picture it continued throughout a defined time period. Historians who dealt with Jewish history, starting with Zvi Graetz and ending with Solomon Baron, accepted without reservation the essential elements of his views regarding the position of Jews under Almohad reign... These views seem to have support in the testimony of Latino-Hispanic chronicles, contemporary with the events they describe. The first historians of the North African church, who had other sources, also come to endorse the accepted assumption... The general Hebrew sources seem to provide great support for Munk's view, when examined without fundamental dissection...

14. Ross Brann, Translation of Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra's elegy, *Woe! Evil has descended from Heaven upon Spain*

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=bbrCTfBSFaEC&pg=PA121&pg=PA121>

O woe! Misfortune from heaven has fallen upon Sefarad!

My eyes, my eyes flow with tears!

My eyes weep like ostriches on account of Lucena!

The Exile dwelt there blamelessly in safety

Without interruption for a thousand and seventy years.

But the day came when her people were banished and she became like a widow,

Without Torah study or biblical recitation, the Mishnah sealed shut,

The Talmud as though desolate, all its glory vanished.

With murderers and mourners this way and that,

The place of prayer and praise reduced to ill-repute...

15. David Corcos, *The Attitude of Almohad Leaders Toward the Jews*, *Studies in the History of the Jews of Morocco*

In summary, the general position of non-Muslims was truly bad, as described in many sources. But the assumption that official orders caused, as it were, this descent, is only the fruit of the imagination of certain Arab scribes. The historical truth is quite varied in this matter. In our view, there was no unified, continuous state which was common throughout the Muslim world in any one period...

16. Amira Bennison, Maria Gallego, *Jewish Trading in Fes on the Eve of the Almohad Conquest* (2007)

While violent and intolerant attitudes towards *dhimmis* seem to be confirmed for specific periods of Almohad rule, the assumption that Almohad persecution of non-Muslim religious minorities was a *systematic* or *official* policy throughout

their rule is more problematic. New readings of the existing primary sources and incorporation of new material can shed fresh light on this episode of Jewish-Islamic history.

17. Rabbi Moses Maimonides, Letter of Assimilation - Declaration on Sanctification of the Divine Name
(Hebrew available at <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/mahshevt/mekorot/kidush-2.htm>)

From Part I: Should a man make this declaration in order not to die and have his children mixed in among the nations, or should he die rather than utter that testimony, since he is obligated by the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu, and since that testimony also brings a person to abandon all mitzvot?...

We would respond to the body of this man's statement even though it is long, weak and burdensome, were it not for our pity upon the great kindness Gd performed with us, meaning the power of speech, as it is written, 'Who gave Man a mouth.' It is appropriate for a person to have greater pity upon his power of speech than upon his property, not increasing his speech, minimizing his discussion....

It is fitting to know that a person should not speak and orate before the nation's ears until he reviews that which he wishes to say once, twice, thrice and four times, studying it well, before speaking... This is regarding speech; when a person will engrave it by hand and write it on a book, it would be appropriate for him to review it one thousand times, were it possible...

From Part II: If the great pillars of the world – Moshe, Eliyahu and Yeshayahu and the ministering angels – were so punished when they raised just a few words against the Jewish people, then how much more so the lightest of the world's lightweights, who would loose his tongue upon the communities of Israel, sages and their students, Kohanim and Levites, to call them sinners and wicked people and non-Jews and people who are disqualified from testimony and deniers of the Gd of Israel! One who writes this in his hand, what will be his punishment? And these people did not rebel against Gd seeking sweetness and benefit, and they did not abandon religion and distance themselves from it in order to achieve benefit and temporal pleasure – "They wandered because of weapons, because of outstretched swords, because of the aligned bow, because of the weight of war (Yeshayah 21:15)."...

It is also known that Rabbi Meir was caught [to be compelled] for *shmad* in one of the *shmadot* in which the sages of Israel were killed. Those who knew him said, "Are you not Meir?" To which he replied, "I am not." They said to him, "Eat this if you are not a Jew," and there was pig before them, and he said, "I will eat it willingly," and he pretended to eat it but he didn't eat it....

From Part III: I will now explain the error in which this one who increased emptiness fell. Achav ben Omri, who denied Gd and worshipped idols – and about whom Gd testified, "There was never another like Achav" – fasted for two and a half hours, and then, the sages taught, the decree upon him was voided... Gd did not cheat him of the reward...

If Gd would give good reward for small good deeds for these well-known heretics, then how could Gd not reward Jews who were forced into *shmad* and who performed mitzvot in private? Would there be no distinction for him between those who performed mitzvot and those who did not, those who served Gd and those who did not?...

From Part IV: For some of the mitzvot – idolatry, sexual immorality and murder – the law is that whenever one is compelled to violate one of them, he is instructed to be killed rather than violate it, at any time and in any place and in any matter. "In any time" means whether during a time of *shmad* or not, and "in any place" means whether in private or public, and "in any matter" means whether with intent to cause him to violate Judaism or not. The law is that he must be killed rather than violate it.

For all mitzvot other than these three, one who is compelled should examine whether it is for the sake of the compeller's personal benefit. If it is for the compeller's personal benefit, then he should violate the law rather than be killed, whether at a time of *shmad* or not, whether in private or in public... But if the intent is to cause him to leave Judaism, then he should see whether it is a time of *shmad*, in which case he should be killed rather than violate the law, whether in private or in public. If it is not a time of *shmad*, then if it is private then he should violate rather than be killed, and if it is public then he should be killed rather than violate it....

And if one is not killed, but he violates because of compulsion, then he has not done well, and he desecrates the Name of Heaven under compulsion. However, he is not liable for one of the seven penalties [four death penalties, *kareit*, Divine

execution or lashes], for we have not found in the entire Torah, not in light or severe laws, any case in which Gd required punishment of one who was compelled. Punishment is only for those who act willingly....

There is no need to bring proof for this, for how could the law of a compelled person be equal with that of a willing violator? And [here] the sages said one should violate the law rather than be killed – but this writer is more precious than the sages, more careful in mitzvot, and he permits his own death with his mouth and tongue! According to his words he sanctifies Gd's Name, but in his deeds he sins and rebels, and he is liable for his life according to the words of Gd, "These are the laws one must practice, and by which one must live," and not die, per Sanhedrin 74a....

Know that in all of the *shmadot* of the time of the sages, they were instructed to violate the mitzvot in some action, as the Talmud records that they were told not to involve themselves in Torah, not to circumcise their children, or to live with their wives when they were *niddot*. But in this *shmad* they are not obligated to do anything, only to speak. One who wishes to fulfill all 613 mitzvot in private may do so, without liability....

When we are asked whether one should be killed or make this declaration, we tell him to declare it and not be killed. But he should not remain in that king's land, but rather he should sit in his house until he leaves it if he must, and he should engage in his activities in secret, for we have never seen such a remarkable *shmad*, in which one is not compelled in anything other than speech....

One who faces this *shmad* must follow the conduct I advise: That he should place between his eyes to practice and fulfill all mitzvot he can practice. Should it occur that he violate many mitzvot or desecrate Shabbat, he should not transport anything he is prohibited to transport [on Shabbat], and he should not say, "What I have already violated is greater than that regarding which I am now careful." Rather, he should be careful in anything he is able....

The advice I give for myself, and the approach I choose for myself and my loved ones and anyone who seeks my counsel, is to leave these places and travel to a place where he can establish his religion and fulfill his Torah without compulsion. He should not fear, and he should abandon his home and family and all he has, for the religion Gd gave to us is great, and its mandate precedes all of the degraded things in the eyes of those with insight. They do not last; awe of Gd endures. Not only this, but even were there two Jewish lands, and the people in one were better in their deeds and customs and more careful and more dedicated to the mitzvot than in the other, one who had awe of Gd would be obligated to leave the land in which their deeds were not as good, to go to the good land....

But those who seduce themselves, saying that they will remain where they are until Mashiach comes to the Maghreb, at which time they will leave for Jerusalem – I don't know how this *shmad* will cease from afflicting them. These people sin, and they cause others to sin....

One who cannot leave due to the desires of his heart or the dangers of the times, so that he remains in those places, must see himself as desecrating the Name of Heaven. It is not by desire, but it is close to being by desire. He is distanced from Gd and punished for his evil desires. However, coupled with this he should know that if he performs any mitzvah, Gd doubles his reward for it. He does it only for the sake of Heaven, and not to be elevated or to be seen to perform mitzvot. The reward for one who performs a mitzvah without fear cannot be compared to the reward of one who performs a mitzvah knowing that should it become known he could lose his life and all he possesses.

18. Rabbi Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Foundations of Torah 5:3

During the time of a decree, such as when Nevuchadnezzar and his colleagues decree upon Israel to nullify their religion or one of their mitzvot, the Jew should be killed rather than violate even one of the other [non-Big Three] mitzvot, whether among ten [Jews] or among idolaters.