

Ibn Ishaq's Record of the *Constitution of Medina*

Ibn Ishaq, biographer of the Prophet Muhammed

born c. 704, Medina, Arabia
died 767, Baghdad

in full Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq Ibn Yasār Ibn Khiyār

Arab biographer of the Prophet Muḥammad whose book, in a recension by Ibn Hishām, is one of the most important sources on the Prophet's life.

Ibn Ishāq was the grandson of an Arab prisoner captured by Muslim troops in Iraq and brought to Medina, where he was freed after accepting Islām. Ibn Ishāq's father and two uncles collected and transmitted information about the Prophet in Medina, and Ibn Ishāq soon became an authority on the Prophet's campaigns.

He studied in Alexandria and subsequently moved to Iraq, where he lived in the Jazīrah and Hīrah regions, and finally in Baghdad. Informants met on these travels furnished him with much of the information for his *Sīrah*, or life, of Muḥammad. Ibn Hishām, who died some 60 years after Ibn Ishāq, made the revision through which it is known today (complete Eng. trans. by A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 1955, and partial trans. by Edward Rehatsek as edited by Michael Edwardes, *The Life of Muhammad Apostle of Allah*, 1964). This extensive biography covers Muḥammad's genealogy and birth, the beginning of his mission and of the revelation of the Qur'ān, his migration to Medina and campaigns of conquest, and concludes with his death. Citations from the *Sīrah* also appear in the works of Arabic historians such as aṭ-Ṭabarī.

Ibn Ishāq was criticized by some Muslim scholars, including the theologian and jurist Mālik ibn Anas. Ibn Ḥanbal accepted Ibn Ishāq as an authority for the campaigns but not for traditions about the Prophet having legal force, on the grounds that he was not always exact enough in naming his authorities.

Source: Ibn Ishāq. (2009). *In Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved November 29, 2009, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/280772/Ibn-Ishaq>

Ibn Ishaq's Record of the *Constitution of Medina*:

“The Messenger of God wrote a document between the Emigrants and the Ansar, and in it he made a treaty and covenant with the Jews, establishing them in their religion and possessions, and assigning to them rights and duties.”

“In the name of Allah (The One True God) the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is a document from Muhammad, the Prophet, governing the relation between the Believers from among the Qurayshites (i.e., Emigrants from Mecca) and Yathribites (i.e., the residents of Medina) and those who followed them and joined them and struggled with them. They form one and the same community as against the rest of men.

Ibn Ishaq's Record of the *Constitution of Medina*

“No Believer shall oppose the client of another Believer. Whosoever is rebellious, or seeks to spread injustice, enmity or sedition among the Believers, the hand of every man shall be against him, even if he be a son of one of them. A Believer shall not kill a Believer in retaliation of an unbeliever, nor shall he help an unbeliever against a Believer.

“Whosoever among the Jews follows us shall have help and equality; they shall not be injured nor shall any enemy be aided against them.... No separate peace will be made when the Believers are fighting in the way of Allah.... The Believers shall avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of AllahWhosoever kills a Believer wrongfully shall be liable to retaliation; all the Believers shall be against him as one man and they are bound to take action against him.

“The Jews shall contribute (to the cost of war) with the Believers so long as they are at war with a common enemy. The Jews of Banu Najjar, Banu al-Harith, Banu Sa'idah, Banu Jusham, Banu al-Aws, Banu Tha'labah, Jafnah, and Banu al-Shutaybah enjoy the same rights and privileges as the Jews of Banu Aws.

“The Jews shall maintain their own religion and the Muslims theirs. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The close friends of Jews are as themselves. None of them shall go out on a military expedition except with the permission of Muhammad, but he shall not be prevented from taking revenge for a wound.

“The Jews shall be responsible for their expenses and the Believers for theirs. Each, if attacked, shall come to the assistance of the other. “The valley of Yathrib (Medina) shall be sacred and inviolable for all that join this Treaty. Strangers, under protection, shall be treated on the same ground as their protectors; but no stranger shall be taken under protection except with consent of his tribe....No woman shall be taken under protection without the consent of her family.

Whatever difference or dispute between the parties to this covenant remains unsolved shall be referred to Allah and to Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah. Allah is the Guarantor of the piety and goodness that is embodied in this covenant. Neither the Quraysh nor their allies shall be given any protection.

“The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib. If they are called to cease hostilities and to enter into peace, they shall be bound to do so in the interest of peace; and if they make a similar demand on Muslims it must be carried out except when the war is against their religion.

“Allah approves the truth and goodwill of this covenant. This treaty shall not protect the unjust or the criminal. Whoever goes out to fight as well as whoever stays at home shall be safe and secure in this city unless he has perpetrated an injustice or committed a crime.... Allah is the protector of the good and God-fearing people.”