

JUDAISM IN ISLAM

BIBLICAL AND TALMUDIC BACKGROUNDS OF THE KORAN AND ITS COMMENTARIES

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

SEPPER-HERMON PRESS INC.

NEW YORK

INTRODUCTION

Nature of Study

Ever since Abraham Geiger wrote his book, "Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?",¹ a number of scholars I tried to corroborate his view that Islam owes a tremendous debt to Hebraic writings and traditions. "The Koran," according to R B Smith, "teems with ideas, allusions, and even phraseology, drawn so much from the written as from:

1. the oral Jewish law, from the traditions that grew, round it, and the commentaries on it...
2. It (the Talmud) is the meeting point of the three Monotheistic creeds of world; and, even with the imperfect information that the Eastern scholars have given respecting it, it has done much to throw light upon them all. Mohammed was never backward to acknowledge intimate connection between his faith and that of the Jews.
3. And more than one passage of the Koran he refers with equal respect their oral and to their written law. "²

On the other hand, there are scholars like Brockelmann, who cite that Muhammed's "acquaintanceship with biblical material was, to be sure, extremely superficial and rich in errors. He may have owed some of its (Koranic) characteristics to the Jewish legends of Haggadah, but more to the Christian teachers who, in addition acquainted him with the Gospel of the Infancy, the legend of the Seven Sleepers, the saga of Alexander, and the other recurrent themes of medieval world literature."³

The same opinion is maintained by Wellhausen ⁴ and H. P. Smith,⁵ who feel that "the impulse came from Christianity." However, no conclusive research has been done thus far to determine how much of Jewish and how much of Christian tradition went into the making of Islam.

The lack of unanimity among these scholars is due primarily to the character of the literature with which they deal. Though Muhammad never disclosed the sources of his information, the Koran suggests that he obtained much of his knowledge from both Jewish and Christian scholars. "With Judaism," writes Torrey, "on the contrary, his acquaintance is intimate and many-sided. He learned his lessons well; and when a thorough-going comparison is made of the Koranic material, of all sorts, with the standard Hebrew-Jewish writings then current, we must say with emphasis that his authorities, whoever they were, were men well versed in the Bible, in the oral law, and the haggada."⁶

The scholars who have written on the subject of Jewish influence on the Koran have dealt with this theme from a general point of view. They either discussed whole narratives or dealt with religious terms or Haggadic stories common to Islam and Judaism.

In this volume the author treats the subject by means of a verse by verse study of the Koran and at the same time utilizes the Moslem commentators and traditionalists, Zamakhshari,⁷ Baidawi,⁸ Bukhari⁹ and Tabari.¹⁰ "The Koran," correctly writes von Grunebaum, "is not the book as Mohammed revealed it. In fact, he never revealed a book; he revealed short visions, injunctions, parables, fables, or doctrinal discourses."¹¹ Our approach, therefore, is to relate, wherever possible, Muhammad's single utterances to their rabbinic sources. The study does not deal, however, with the detailed theological and philosophical doctrines of the two religions. For this study Suras two and three¹² were chosen as the most representative in the Koran.¹³ Sura two, entitled al-Baqarah, and described as the "Koran in miniature," is a summary of all the essential points of the Revelation, which are elaborated elsewhere.¹⁴ Furthermore, it tells of Muhammad's experiences with Jews, his discussions with them and his efforts to convince them of his greatness. One is apt, therefore, to find more of rabbinic background in this Sura than in any other. Sura three complements Sura two and contains a

number of references to the Jews and Christians. However, less of the Hebraic background is evidenced there. It is the hope of the author to publish other Suras by this method in the future.

Our study reveals that Muhammad (570-632 C. E.) borrowed extensively from Jewish sources. He was fully aware of the importance of the Jewish religion and leaned heavily upon it. He used all sources, the Bible, the Talmud, as well as the Apocrypha. The Christian tradition, too, was an invaluable material for the development of his new structure.¹⁵

Early Stages of Islam

According to the Koran, Muhammad alone possessed a true understanding of God. He stated that he did not come to abrogate the Old and New Testaments, but rather to fulfill the spirit and the letter of the Book. He maintained that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but the true expounder of ethical monotheism, and that the Koran, as revealed to him by Allah through the angel Gabriel, embodied the true revelation which the Jews and the Christians had failed to follow. Tracing his genealogy to Abraham through his son Ishmael, Muhammad claimed to be the rightful heir to Abraham's high rank.¹⁶

It was Muhammad's contention that God could not have omitted the Arabs from the revelations with which He had favored the Jews and the Christians. Though he denied the divinity of Jesus, he accepted the Nazarene as the last of the Hebrew prophets. Himself he considered the Messenger of God and "the Seal of all the Prophets." He accused the Jews of deleting from the Bible predictions of his advent. At the same time, however, he accepted most of the narratives of the Bible.

Muhammad never intended to establish Islam as a new religion. He considered himself the rightful custodian of the Book sent by Allah to "confirm" the Scriptures. It is for this reason that in the beginning he saw no difference between Judaism and Christianity and believed that both Jews and Christians would welcome him. It is only later, when he realized that he could never gain support from either of them, that he presented Islam as a new faith. He 'accepted whatever of their traditions that came within the purview of his plan, making such changes as he saw fit. This accounts for the seeming discrepancies between the stories of the Bible and the Koranic version of the same narratives. However, in relating the Koranic version of the biblical story to the Aggadic source as indicated in our study, the discrepancies almost entirely disappear. For, astonishingly enough, the biblical narratives are reproduced in the Koran in true Aggadic cloak.

At the time of Muhammad's appearance, a great number of Jews made their home in Arabia, where, indeed, they had lived for many centuries. The Hebrew Bible contains a number of references to the close relationship between Arabs and Jews.¹⁷

Arabic sources abound in incidents attesting to the friendly relations between the Jews and the Arabs in the pre-Islamic period (Jāhiliyya).¹⁸ The southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula, known as Yemen, was generally considered a Jewish state. The last Himyaric king, Dhū Nuwas, who converted to Judaism, fell in battle in 525 C.E.¹⁹ The Jews of Yemen wrought a tremendous change in the religious life of the Arab people, hundreds of years before the advent of Muhammad. It is likely that had Islam not appeared, the Jews and the Christians would have absorbed all Arabia into their faiths.

The Arab tribes in the Jāhiliyya period who had accepted Judaism followed Jewish practices extensively. Jewish customs and traditions were known to and practiced by many Arabs, and Muhammad who knew many of these laws and customs incorporated a considerable number of them into his religious teachings.²⁰

The Koran

Like the Torah in Judaism, the Koran²¹ is considered the fountainhead of all knowledge dealing with human life. Furthermore, the arrangement of the Surahs, the nomenclature for the new religion, and the pillars of Islam seem to have Jewish backgrounds. The term Koran is probably derived from the Hebrew and, like the Bible, it is known as "The Book." The division of the Koran into 114 Surahs follows similar divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures. The veneration of the Koran by the Moslems, as well as the practice of reading it at Friday Assemblies and other religious holidays, follows the Hebrew pattern.

Fundamental Tenets of Islam

Islam is built on Iman (religious belief) and Din (religion or practice). Iman involves six major principles,

i.e.

1, Belief: (a) in God, (b) in His angels, (c) in His "scriptures," (d) in the prophets, (e) in the Last Day and (f) in predetermination of good and evil. The religious duties of the Moslem center upon five canonical obligations:

2. Creed the shahadah, or the affirmation that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger; the observance of prayer; the payment of zakah (legal alms); the pilgrimage to Mecca; and fasting in Ramadan.²²

The canonical obligations or the pillars of Islam as well as a great number of names or narratives in the Koran have their biblical and Aggadic counterparts.

1. Adam, Noah, Abraham are mentioned 70 times each;
2. Ishmael, Lot, Joseph, Saul, David, Solomon, Elijah, Job and Jonah figure prominently.²³
3. Moses' name occurs in 34 Suras.
4. The story of the Creation and the
5. Fall of Adam is cited five times and the
6. Flood and Sodom eight times.

The Unity of God

Like the Jew, the Moslem affirms the unity of God. God is one, eternal, merciful, compassionate, beneficent, almighty, all-knowing, just, loving and forgiving. Like Judaism, Islam does not recognize saints serving as mediators between the individual and his Creator. In both the Jewish and Moslem religions any learned man of good character may conduct the prayer service. Like the Jew, the Moslem believes in the immortality of the soul and in personal accountability for actions on earth and negates the doctrines of original sin and redemption. And like the Jew, the Moslem believes that each individual is to follow a righteous path and secure atonement by improving his conduct and by sincere repentance.

Gabriel

According to Islam, Muhammad is the Apostle of God to whom God revealed his will through the angel Gabriel. The latter is of the same stature in the Koran as the angel Michael in the Bible. Scholars have been puzzled by Muhammad's selection of Gabriel and have indicated that in his break with the Jews he probably substituted Gabriel for Michael. They claim that in Islam Gabriel is considered an adversary of the Jews and a friend of the Moslems who brings them prosperity and good tidings.

Jewish tradition, however, does not substantiate this view. On the contrary, in numerous instances Gabriel occupies a position almost similar to that of Michael.

To the writer, it appears that the primary reason for designating Gabriel as the angel of Muhammad's revelations is to be found in the role Gabriel played in the lives of the two outstanding personages in Judaism, Abraham and Moses. Gabriel is described in rabbinic literature as having been the guardian angel of Abraham and Moses, and he is generally more prominent than Michael in the careers of these great Jewish leaders. Hence, Muhammad selected Gabriel as the angel of Revelation, because he believed him to be closely associated with Abraham, the "father of Islām,"²⁵ and with Moses, the exalted of all prophets.²⁶

Prayer

Every Moslem is obligated to pray five times daily (at sunrise, mid-day, mid-afternoon, sunset and at night before retiring). "While Muhammad and his followers," writes Brockelmann, "prayed twice a day in Mecca, and according to Jewish example three times a day in Medina, subsequent ritual, under Persian influence, makes five prayer periods obligatory."²⁷ Goldziher in his article on Islam in the Jewish Encyclopedia, regards the five daily prayers as of Persian influence. On the other hand, we find the famous rabbinic scholar Simon Duran (1361-1444) of Algiers attributing the Moslem custom of five prayers to the Jewish practice on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Similarly, Professor Torrey states that in their anxiety to surpass the Jew in devotion, the followers of Muhammad adopted the five daily prayers, "and it is not clear that they were instituted by Mohammed. It is not like him to ordain a five-fold service even for one day in the week."²⁸

However, in addition to the sunrise prayer, the mid-day prayer and the night prayer, which Torrey cites from the Koran, we also find references to the mid-afternoon prayer in 20:130 and to the sunset prayer in 11:116. Islamic tradition also claims that it was the Prophet who told his followers that "Allah has made obligatory upon them the five prayers every day and night."²⁹

It would appear, however, that in regard to worship, as in so many other Moslem practices, Islam has followed a Jewish pattern. The late Professor Louis Ginzberg, the eminent authority on Talmud, claimed that the Arabian Jews actually prayed five times daily; but this number was reduced to three, by combining two prayers in the morning and two in the evening, in order not to make the burden upon the congregation too onerous. The five daily prayers were undoubtedly ordained by Muhammad as a result of this early Jewish practice of gathering five times daily for prayer.³⁰

Among the Moslems, the hours of prayer are announced by a crier (Mu'adhdhin) from the tower of the mosque. Muhammad was under the impression that the Jews used the blowing of the horn (Shofar) for summoning the Jewish people to worship. For the Moslems, however, he ordained that a man sound the call for prayers. This Moslem practice may be traced to an ancient custom followed in the Temple in Jerusalem. According to a Talmudic passage an appointed crier used to announce: "Arise, ye priests to your service, ye Levites to your platforms, and ye Israelites to your stands."³¹ The crier's voice was heard at a distance of three miles.

Muhammad chose Friday to take the place of the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday. Now we know that the practice of the Jews in Arabia was to begin the observance of the Sabbath early on Friday. It is quite possible that Muhammad took this pattern as a model for his day of rest, although the notion of a complete day of rest was alien to him. Though he considered the day of rest as a burden imposed upon the Jews and the Christians, nevertheless he followed the Jewish practice of making Friday a day of special congregational services, including a sermon.

Almsgiving

The giving of alms is another fundamental pillar, of Islam. The Koran is studded with verses and aphorisms extolling the importance of and the reward for the giving of sadaqah (alms) to the poor, the widow, and the orphan. This doctrine is of Jewish origin.³² The Bible and the Talmud regard the giving of charity (Zedakah) as an act of righteousness, and not merely as an act of generosity or philanthropy. All wealth is the Creator's and man is merely the custodian who must share it with the less fortunate of God's children.

Hajj (Pilgrimage)

It is incumbent upon every Moslem to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime unless he is physically and financially unable to do so. The idea of the pilgrimage is well known in the Bible, which prescribes that the Israelites make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year. After the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B. C. E. when the Jews were no longer able to travel to Jerusalem, the synagogue was instituted, out of which the church and the mosque developed. Like the synagogue, the mosque is a house of worship without any images or figures. The purpose of prayer in the case of the Moslem is comparable to that in the case of the Jew, i.e. self-examination, training to be humble, exalting the Almighty, offering thanksgiving and receiving God's mercy and guidance.³³

Ramadan

Muhammad at first accepted the Day of Atonement as a day of fast. It was known as 'Ashura' ("the fast of the tenth"), a synonym for the Jewish Day of Atonement, which falls, according to the Hebrew calendar, on the tenth of Tishri. Only later when he turned his back on Judaism did Muhammad institute the fast of the month of Ramadan which occurs during the ninth month of the Moslem lunar year. However, 'Ashura' has been retained as a voluntary fast and observed not on the original tenth of Tishri but rather on the tenth of the Moslem Muharram.

Ramadan has been held by scholars to be a Moslem counterpart of the Christian Lent, but it also resembles the Jewish observance of the month of 'Elul as a period of Teshubah or penitence. To this day, pious Jews still keep the forty days from the beginning of 'Elul until Yom Kippur as a season for fasting and prayer. The rabbinical explanation for this observance is that it commemorates the forty days which Moses spent on Mount Sinai before giving the Torah to Israel.³⁴

Jihad

The duty of Jihad, the waging of a Holy War, has been raised, the dignity of a sixth canonical obligation, especially by the descendants of the Kharijites.

To the Moslem, the world is divided into regions under Islamic control, the dar al-Islam, "and regions not subjected as yet, the dar al-harb. Between this 'area of warfare' and the Muslim-dominated of the world there can be no peace. Practical considerations may induce the Muslim leaders to conclude an armistice, but the obligation conquers and, if possible, convert never lapses. Nor can territory once under Muslim rule be lawfully yielded to the unbeliever. Legal history has gone so far as to define as dar al-Islam any area where at least one Muslim custom is still observed."³⁵

Thanks to this concept the Moslem is required to subdue the infidel, and he who dies in the path of Allah is considered a martyr and assured of Paradise and of unique privileges there.³⁶

Other Precepts discussed in the study

1. Muhammad found guidance for his legislation in Hebraic tradition in rabbinic lore.
2. Cleanliness plays a tremendous role in Jewish life. Cleanliness is part of godliness, and the individual, made in the image of God must always be pure in mind as well as in body.
3. He must always be charitable, love mercy, be kind and walk humbly with his God and fellow men. Similar concepts are found in Islam. "The key to paradise is prayer, and the key to prayer, is purification."³⁷
4. The Koran prescribes the need of at least two witnesses to a formal business transaction. However, in ordinary loans or transactions no evidence in writing is required; it is assumed as in Jewish law that no man will go back on his word.
5. Regarding usury, the Moslem, following biblical law, is duty-bound not to engage in usury with a fellow believer. It is permissible, however, in dealing with infidels (non-Moslems).
6. Muhammad regarded many of the precepts given to the Jews as a punishment from God and for that reason a Moslem is not obligated to observe them. Thus, the Koran disregards the Jewish concept of a day of rest, inheritance laws, and dietary laws, but prescribes the rite of circumcision and prohibits the use of blood and of the meat of a pig or of an animal that "dieth of itself" for culinary purposes.
7. The Koranic stories of the Creation, life in Paradise, the question as to whether earth or heavens came first, the objection of the angels to the creation of man, Adam's remarkable wisdom. Satan's rejection of Adam, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Adam's universal lesson for repentance, stem from biblical and midrashic elements.
8. The stories about Israel's covenant with God, the travails in Egypt, the miracles at the Red Sea, the making of the golden calf after Moses went up the mountain, the Israelites' request to see God manifestly in order to believe in Him, the restoration of the stricken dead to life, the pillar of cloud, the manna and the quails, Moses' smiting of the rock, the objection to the taste of the manna, the giving of the Torah by "raising the mountain," the breakers of the Sabbath, the red heifer - all these stories in the Koran are traceable to Jewish origins. Likewise, the concepts of ethical monotheism, the unity of God, prayer, consideration for the underprivileged, reverence for parents, fasting, penitence, the belief in angels, the stories about Abraham, the Patriarchs, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, the injunction of a pilgrimage to Mecca, waging war against the enemy, the status of women, and the position of prophets, all, have their antecedents in Jewish tradition.

In tracing the rabbinic background of each Koranic verse and relating it to the comments by authoritative Moslem exegetes, the author feels that he has succeeded in shedding new light upon the debt Islam owes to Judaism. Many biblical stories and sayings (especially from the Pentateuch and the Psalms), intertwined with an inexhaustible amount of Talmudic and Midrashic tales, weave the structural core of the Koran and its exegeses.

Our findings negate the theories of many historians who claim that the Arabian Jews were uncultured and ignorant and were severed from traditional Judaism that had been flourishing in Palestine and in Babylonia. The abundance of Jewish thought and ideas contained in the Koran and in its early authoritative commentaries testify to the profound knowledge of Judaism possessed by Arabian Jews.

They may even help us to restore some Aggadic concepts lost in the course of time and unknown to Jewish scholarship today, as well as to gain much-sought data about the life and practices of the Jews in Arabia. From the literature of the Moslem exegetes we may rightfully surmise that had Islam not appeared on the scene, Judaism would have extended its faith throughout all of Arabia or at least through an extensive part thereof. Many Arab communities accepted the Jewish faith and practices and even Muhammad himself was almost Judaized.

The knowledge of the Jews and Judaism displayed in Islamic literature reflects not only upon the excellent relationship between the Jews and the Arabs but also shows that Arabian Judaism was not different from that of other Jewish communities. The Arabian Jews abided by the laws and traditions that prevailed among Jews everywhere who, steadfast in their faith, resisted Muhammad's attempt at Islamizing them. The unusual number of Aggadic stories quoted in the writings of Zamakhshari, Baidawi, Bukhari and Tabari testify to the fact that the Arabian Jews took an active part in Jewish spiritual life, erected many synagogues, schools and other institutions, and succeeded in maintaining strong permanent ties with the Jews of Palestine and Babylonia. The Moslem commentators used in our study are thus excellent source material for reconstructing Jewish traditions hitherto unknown and forgotten.

CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ARABS AND JEWS AFTER THE HIJRA

The Arabic language which, with its increasing momentum, spread rapidly after the emergence of Islam gradually became also the vernacular of the Jewish community in the Orient. The two Semitic peoples worked together through the medium of Arabic and contemporaneously advanced the teachings of the great centers of learning of Basra and Cordova. The spread of the Arabic language among the Jews is well indicated by the "father of Hebrew translators" and physician Judah ibn Tibbon (1120-1190) in the Introduction to his translation of Bahya's "Kitab al-Hidâya ilâ. Farâid al-Kulub": "Most of the Geonim in the dispersion under the rule of Ishmael in Babylon, Palestine and Persia were speaking Arabic, and likewise all the Jewish communities in the lands were using the same tongue. Whatever commentaries they wrote on the Bible, the Mishnah, and the Talmud, they wrote in Arabic, they similarly did with their other works, as well as with their Responsa, for all the people understood that language."³⁸ Works confined to limits of Jewish usage were of course written in Hebrew, whereas works of a wider scope of interest were written in the language of educated classes in Arabic or in Judaeo-Arabic.³⁹

It is to these Semitic peoples that we owe the perpetuation of thought in Europe throughout the Middle Ages. Aristotle, Plato and other Greek thinkers came to Western civilization filtered through minds of Moslem, Jewish and Christian theologians. The seed of the philosophers and the great Alexandrians, which had laid so long dormant and inactive, now began to fructify and blossom, producing many advances in the fields of mathematics, medicine, philosophy and the physical sciences. Thanks to the Jewish and Muslim scholars, we owe survival of many a classic text. Greek works were first rendered Syriac, Aramaic or Hebrew, thence into Arabic. Then again these still were translated from Arabic into Hebrew.⁴⁰ Much of the Greek and the Arabic versions are lost and only the Hebrew rendering survives.⁴¹

The Jews, dispersed among the people of the Orient and the Occident served as an international educational bridge at a time when other nations warred. In striking contrast to an intellectually frozen world in the Middle Ages, the Jews manifested a burning zeal for education and considered it essential to their very survival. A knowledge of reading and writing was a normal possession of every Jew. As a link between East and West the Jews were excellent carriers of Arabic learning to the

profit of mankind.⁴²

Throughout the entire Moslem empire in Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Palestine and Babylonia, the Jews took an active part in the Arabic renaissance. One of the prominent physicians to the Caliph Umar was the scientist of Jewish descent, Maser Djawah ibn Djeldjal of Basra. He was also a noted poet, scientist, philosopher and translator of many literary works.

The sole survivor of Charlemagne's delegation to Hārūn al-Rashid in 797 A.D. (who brought back the first elephant seen in Europe in 802 A.D.), was the Jew Isaac, who was fluent in Hebrew and Arabic.

Another Jew, by the name of Joseph, who lived in Spain in the ninth century, is said to have introduced to the Western world the system of Arabic numerals which was used then in India.⁴³

One of the greatest physicians of this period was Isaac Israeli of al-Qayrawan (circa 855-955) known to the Western world as Isaac Judah distinguished himself by his treatises on fevers, and his work on medicine was one of the Western lights of the Arabian period. He excelled first as an oculist and later on in the treatment of trachoma and ophthalmis. Isaac was born in Egypt but eventually settled in Qayrawan. At the behest of the Fatimid Caliph 'ubaydullāh al Mahdi, he composed several medical works which were written in Arabic and translated into Latin.⁴⁴

The list of Jewish scientists of the ninth century in Bagdad, Kufa and Basra, the great centers of Arabic learning of that era, reads like a Who's Who. They wrote unique treatises on medicine, astronomy, embryology, psychology and zoology. The interest by Jewish leaders in advancing medicine continued later on in Spain where we come across Hasda ben Shaprut (c. 915-970) who acted as private physician to the Caliph 'Abd-al-Rahman III of Andalusia, at the capital city of Cordova. He, with the aid of a Byzantine monk, translated into Arabic, Dioscoride's work on botany, which later was used extensively in medieval Europe.⁴⁵

Medicine was part of the discipline of Jewish scholarship and most of the rabbis pursued the medical profession.⁴⁶

Maimonides' fame extended far beyond the confines of the Moslem world and he declined an invitation from Richard the Lion-Hearted to become his physician. As a result of the Muwahhid persecution he left Spain about 1165 and settled with his family in Fostat, a suburb of Cairo, Egypt, where he was appointed physician at the court of Saladin. Ten medical works of Maimonides all written in Judaeo-Arabic have been translated into Hebrew, some into Latin and other European tongues. These have exerted great influence upon European medical science.⁴⁷ Israel scholars are now editing several of his works which are still in Arabic and Hebrew manuscripts. He also wrote important medical works under the title "Aphorisms According to Galen and Aphorisms of Hippocrates."⁴⁸ A very popular work of his during the Middle Ages concerned poisons and antidotes. These writings lost their medieval aspect for so much of them are in accord with modern practice.

His works on medicine and antidotes were often quoted by writers in the 13th and 14th centuries. In his treatises Maimonides relied more on diet than on drugs, and advised moderation in all things, even in the choice of medicine. He considered the study of medicine a very important factor of Jewish ethics. To him "Medicine teaches man to restrict his boundless lusts which undermine his health and to choose the right manner of living. It helps to maintain the fitness of the body and enables him to purify and raise his strength to an uplifted ethical plane. It leads man to his higher destiny and thereby enables him to recognize the truth and bliss." Ibn abi-Usaibi'ah (1203-1270), the great Arabic historian of medicine, a contemporary of Maimonides, closes his biographical sketch of Maimonides with a poem by the poet Al-Said ibn-Sina Almulk:

Galen's art-heals only the body,
But abu-Imran's the body and the soul.

His knowledge made him the physician of the century.
He could cure with his wisdom the disease of ignorance.
If the moon would submit to his art,
He would free her from her spots at the time of full moon,
Would relieve her of her monthly ailments
And at the time of her conjunction, save her from waning.

Maimonides was not only a philosopher and physician of distinction but was a philosopher in medicine and a physician in ethics and philosophy.⁴⁹

Maimonides' spirit of free inquiry was carried forward after the Jewish Golden Age of Spain into the Ottoman Empire and Italy and later on into the Netherlands.

Jewish interest in philosophy revived considerably paralleling the development of the interest of Moslem theologians in philosophy. The emergence of the school of Mu'tazilites (from the Arabic "itazala"—to separate or to dissent), brought about, in the second century of the Hijra, a schism in the Moslem theological schools of Basra. In order to avoid the stigma of heresy, the Mu'tazilites sought to support the doctrines of philosophy. They thus founded a rational theology which they designated as the Ilm-al-Kalām (Science of the Word), and those who professed it were known as Mutakallimun.

The Kalām gradually shifted to Jewish soil and underwent the same transformations as among the Moslems. It was the result of the Karaite movement⁵⁰ which emerged in the middle of the 8th century in Babylonia rejecting the oral tradition and challenging the authority of the Talmudists. It was at this time that the work "Kitāb al-'Amanat Wal-'Itikada" or "Book of Beliefs and Opinions"⁵¹ was authored by Sa'adia ben Josef al-Fayyumi (Hebrew, Saadia Gaon) (882-942), who in his effort to combat the Karaite and other sectarian views which dangerously undermined the spiritual foundations of Judaism, supported greatly the Kalam. This book, written in 933, which constituted the first systematic presentation of Judaism as a rational body of beliefs, was written in Judaeo-Arabic and translated into Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon in 1186. Saadia is the first Jewish philosopher who shows a thorough familiarity with the problems raised by the Mu'tazilites. He was also the first Jewish scholar of renown to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Arabic, a version which is still used by Jews in Arabic-speaking countries. His translation of the Bible into Arabic was an epoch-making achievement, comparable in its importance to the historic rendering of the Bible into the Septuagint. He had written an extensive commentary on the Bible for more learned readers in Arabic. Another important work of his was his Siddur written in Judaeo-Arabic, the first scientific investigation of the ritual of the Synagogue. Saadia was the spiritual head of the Talmudical Academy of Sura and the chief Jewish legal authority in the world at that time.⁵²

The first Jewish philosopher in Arabic Spain was Solomon ibn Gabirol (Avicebron, Avencebrol c. 1021-1058). His work, "On the Improvement of the Soul," written in Arabic, presents him as the first teacher of Neoplatonism in Europe. An outstanding poet, philosopher and moralist, he is considered the "Jewish Plato" and "the most original philosophical writer among the Jews and Arabs." He is better known as the author of "Yanbū al-Hayāh" or in Latin, "Fons Vitae" (the fount of life) and in Hebrew, "Meqor Hayyim." This book, the first Jewish philosophic treatise of magnitude in Spain has, from its publication date, ranked very high in the estimation of Arab and Jewish men of thought and reflection. It exerted a tremendous influence upon Christian philosophy and theology. It was translated into Hebrew, Spanish and Latin during the beginning of the middle of the 12th century.⁵³

Abraham ibn Dāwud of Toledo in the 12th century took exception to Gabirol's teachings, and in order to negate Gabirol's influence as a philosopher wrote an Arabic book which was later translated into

Hebrew under the title "Emunah Ramah," in which he bitterly reprimands Gabiröl for having philosophized without any regard to the tenets of the Jewish religion. Gabiröl made an impression on the non-Jewish philosophic thinkers of the Western world. As late as 1843, Jourdain called attention to the major position of Avicbron in the history of Christian philosophy. Gabiröl, however, is highly regarded among the Jews as an outstanding poet and for his "Keter Malkhut," a religious philosophical treatise, a versified form of "Fons Vitae."

Gabiröl's extensive poetical works and philosophic treatise are a tribute to the brief and stormy life of the genial poet among the philosophers and philosopher among poets. Just as Sa'adia shows the entrance of Mu'tazilite discussion among the Jews, so does Gabiröl show how the Aristotelian philosophy was introduced to a Jewish milieu. In fact, all the intellectual experiences of the Moslem community were repeated by the Jews of Spain. Jewish thinkers in Moslem philosophical studies did not merely limit themselves to transmission from Asia to Spain but to actual participation and development.

Like Gabiröl, Bahya ibn Paludah immortalized himself in his famous philosophic treatise, "Kitāb al-Hidayāh ila Farā' id al-Kulūb," Hebrew, "Hobot ha-Lebabot" (Duties of the Heart), written in Arabic and translated into Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon and Joseph Qimhi. His influence upon Christian philosophy and theology was great, but greater was his impact on Jewish religious thought.

In the 12th century the Mu'tazilites and Moslem philosophers were followed by the Moslem Scholastics, whose philosophy took its shape and form under Al-Ghazali (1005-1111). Similarly, in Judaism, Al-Ghazali had his parallel in the person of Jehuda Halevi (c. 1085), the greatest Hebrew poet of the Golden Age of Spain, about whom Heinrich Heine wrote, "When God created the soul of Halevi, He was so enraptured by its beauty and exquisiteness that He could not restrain Himself and kissed it." Having received a well-rounded education, he became a student of medicine and a master of Arabic and Hebrew language and literature. And though he immortalized himself in Jewish liturgy as the Sweet Singer of Zion, he is also known as the founder of orthodox Jewish scholasticism through his philosophic book written in Judaeo-Arabic, "Kitab al-Khazari," (The Book of Proof and Argument),⁵⁴ a dialogue about God between the King of the Kazars and a Jewish visitor to his court.

There were three main centers for Jewish activity as interpreters to Europe of Greco-Arabic science. One was in Spain, during the period commonly known as the Golden Age of Spain. Another was in Naples under the auspices of the House of Anjou. The third was Provence, the link between France and Spain, where local Jewish scholars translated large numbers of literary works from the Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic into Hebrew. These works were frequently rendered into Latin at the request of Christian scholars.

The 13th century shows a continuous effort on the part of Hebrew scholars to present Abu-al-Walid Muhammad by Ali mad ibn-Rushd (Averroës) to the Western world. Among them were Yehuda Ben Solomon Cohen in 1247 and Solomon Ben Yusuf Ben Aiyuh in 1257. This was followed in the 14th century with Hebrew versions on Ibn Rushd's commentaries by Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, Ben Meir, Levi ben Gershon, Moses Narbonne and others. The 14th century was the Golden Age of Jewish scholasticism and though the following century sees it in its decay, Ibn Rushd was still studied and commentaries were still compiled by Jewish scholars.⁵⁵ This lasted until the end of the 16th century when later Jewish philosophers such as Spinoza were no longer in touch with medieval tradition. The study of the Arabic commentators on Aristotle fell generally into disrepute and even Arabic medical writers ceased to have a strong influence in the European universities.

Henceforth it is the sheer intellectual interests that drew scholars to take up Oriental studies, in order to trace the origin and development of the great religions of the world and especially the Hebrew language. In the field of Biblical exegesis, Arabic also exerted an influence among the Jewish

commentators. In addition to Sa'adia, we find that Abraham Ibn Ezra (1093-1167) of Toledo explains difficult Biblical passages by referring to Arabic and Aramaic grammar for comparison. Rabbi Ben-Ezra is also noted as a Talmudist poet and translator. Among his translations from Arabic are two treatises on astrology by the noted Jewish astrologist, Masha'-Allah (d. 815) and the commentary on al-Khwarizmi's tables by al-Biruni.⁵⁶ In a like manner Nabmanides (1194-c.1270) shows the influence of the Arabic intellect in his commentary on the Scriptures.

Prof. George Sarton of Harvard University, the renowned historian of science, claimed that the great cultures of the Moslems and the Jews in the so-called dark ages were responsible for the preservation of the great cultures of the Greeks and Romans. He maintains that it was they who laid the foundation of modern social structures and suggests that the modern investigator or student of European civilization should learn Arabic and Hebrew instead of Greek and Latin in order to probe sources of what came to be known as the Renaissance and Reformation.⁵⁷

The Reformation stimulated the study of the Bible and its language and, as a result of the keen interest in Hebrew, other Semitic languages benefited. The Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts at the library of Leyden attracted many Jewish students in the 17th century. Among them were Isaac Gabbai from Constantinople in 1625, Zaad Abraham from Morocco in 1626, Rabbi Moses from Poland in 1647, and others. These students taught their non-Jewish professors Hebrew and cognate languages. By the end of the 18th century, Leyden became the seat of philology and Oriental studies. The Dutch example paved the way in other countries and especially in the German universities. Late in the 19th century we find the noted Orientalist, Gustav Weil, teaching at the University of Heidelberg, which eventually became a beehive of activity for Oriental studies. Likewise, do we notice in the University of Frankfurt Jewish Orientalists such as Martin von Plessner, Joseph Horowitz and others, advancing Islamic studies. Horowitz also was for a time professor at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, India.

The great tradition of Jewish dedication to Islamic and Arabic studies has been revived in modern times. Ignaz Goldziher of the University of Budapest (1850-1921) blazed the trail towards a historic understanding of Islam in its relation to Judaism and Christianity. He was the first European to study at the famous al-Azhar University in Cairo, and his Oriental library, which is now in the possession of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is considered one of the most important private collections in the world. It contains ancient prints of extreme rarity, unmatched by European libraries. From his pen came to us such valuable treatises as *Mohammedanische Studien*, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, *Vorlesungen fiber den Islam* and *Richtungen der Islamitischen Koranauslegung*. He was one of the founders of, and contributor to the classic *Encyclopedia of Islam* to which major Jewish contributions were made.⁵⁸

In England much research has been done toward the understanding of the Koran and the Prophet of Islam. The classic works of the Jewish scholars Hartwig Hirschfeld, M. Friedlander, and D. S. Margoliouth are indispensable for the student of Islam today.⁵⁹ Jewish interest in Islamic studies is also keen in the New World. As in the Old World, Jews continue to delve into dusty Arabic manuscripts bridging the cultural gaps in the great legacy of Semitic civilization. Jewish scholars are active in research and in teaching the Arabic language and literature. Some of their writings have resurrected the ideas and the teachings of Ibn Khaldun and other Arabic philosophers and historians, and made them accessible to the English reader. Professors F. Rosenthal and M.M. Braverman have been leaders in the field of Arabic linguistics. In the departments of Semitics in American universities, Oriental studies have been fostered by H. Malter, M.M. Jastrow, Harry A. Wolfson, E.A. Speiser, W.F. Fischel, A.S. Halkin, J. Mann, J. Finkel, Ilse Lichtenstaedter, Gustave E. von Grunebaum, Leon Nemoy, Julian Obermann, A.I. Katsh. M. Perlmann, and others. In the Judaeo-Arabic field notable

contributions have been made by Solomon L. Skoss, Lawrence Marwick, Moses Zucker, and Samuel Rosenblatt. They have translated into English, among other things, works by Sa'adia Gaon and Maimonides.

The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, through its Department of the Near East, as well as other scholars in schools of higher learning have attracted outstanding Jewish Orientalists, such as Professors D.Z. Banneth, J.J. Rivlin, N. Brown, S.D. Goitein, Jacob M. Landau, J.H. Hirschberg, E. Strauss (Ashtor), Ch. Rabin, L.A. Mayer, I. Ben-Ze'eb, L. Kopf, J. Blau, M. Goshen, S. Morag, M. Plessner, and others. All of them have been actively engaged in extensive writing pertaining to the laws of Islam, early development of the Moslem religion, and Arabic linguistics.

Through the writings of the modern Jewish Orientalists the affinity of these two great Semitic peoples is stressed. In fact, there is hardly an important Jewish scholarly magazine or *Gestschrift* that does not contain some research dealing with Arabic learning.⁶⁰ In the colleges and universities, as well as through the written word, Jewish Orientalists in America share in the intellectual heritage of their Arab colleagues. Just as they played a part in the days of yore as intermediaries in the transmission and unfolding of Islamic culture to the Latin world, so Jewish scholars today are contributing in no small measure to the advancement of Arabic learning in the English-speaking world.

Notes:

1 Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* Bonn, 1833; translated into English by F. M. Young under the name *Judaism and Islam*, Madras, 1898. The references here will be to the German original (Leipzig, 1902 edition) unless otherwise indicated. Cf. S. Krauss, "Talmudische Nachrichten über Arabien," *ZDMG*, LXX (1916), pp.325-53; Rudolph Leszynsky, *Mohammedanische Tradition über das Jungste Gericht*, Berlin, 1909, also *Die Juden in Arabien zur Zeit Mohammeds*, Berlin, 1910; M. Maas, *Bibel und Koran*, Leipzig 1893.

2 R. B. Smith, *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, London, 1889, p.146; cf. Julian Obermann, "Islamic Origins," *The Arab Heritage*, ed. N. A. Farris, Princeton, 1944, pp. 58-120; I. Gastfreund, *Mohammed nach Talmud und Midrasch*, Berlin, 1875; J. Barth, *Midraschische Elemente*, Berlin, 1903 and *Studien zur Kritik und Exegese des Qorans*, Strassburg, 1915; J. J. Rivlin, *Gesetz im Koran*, Jerusalem, 1934; Heinrich Speyer, "Von den biblischen Erzählungen im Koran," *Korrespondenzblatt*, Berlin, (1923-24), pp. 7-26; M. Grunbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sagenkunde*, Leiden, 1893; I. Ben-Zeeb, *Hayehudim Ba'arab*, Tel-Aviv, 1931.

3 Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, London, 1950, pp. 16-17; cf. K. Ahrens, "Christliches im Koran," *ZDMG*, LX (1930), p. 15-16, 148-90; C. H. Becker, *Christentum und Islam*, Leipzig, 1907. Also, *Islamstudien*, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1924-32.

4 "Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass Muhammed denselben durch jüdische Vermittlung zugeführt bekommen hat, wenngleich man dessen eingedenk bleiben muss, dass derselbe Sagenstoff auch bei den orientalischen Christen im Umlauf war, und dass die Haggada ihre Quelle grossenteils in apokryphen Schriften hatte, die wenn sie auch jüdischen Ursprungs, waren doch seit dem zweiten Jahrhundert immer ausschliesslicher in christlichen Besitz übergangen." J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, Berlin 1897, p. 205, quoted in Ch. C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, New York, 1933, p. 66. Cf. Tor Andrae, *Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum*, Uppsala, 1926; also, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde*, Stockholm, 1918.

5 H. P. Smith, *The Bible and Islam*, New York, 1897, p.315; cf. R. Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, London, 1926; E. Fritsch, *Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter*, Breslau, 1930; Axel

- Moberg, *Über eine Christliche Legende in der Islamischen Tradition*, Lund, 1930; D. L. O'Leary, *Arabia Before Muhammad*, London, 1927; H. Lammens, *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'hégire*, Beyrouth, 1928.
- 6 Torrey, op. cit., p. 61; cf. J. Horrovitz, "Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran," *HUCA*, Vol. II, 1925, pp. 145-227; Abraham I. Katsh, "Li-She'elat Hashpa'at ha-Talmud 'al ha-Koran," *Hatekufah*, New York, Vols. XXXIV—XXXV, 1950, pp. 834-38; H. Hirschfeld, *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, London, 1902; *Judische Elemente im Koran*, Berlin, 1878; and *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Koran*, Leipzig, 1886; I. Schapiro, *Die haggadischen Elemente im erzählenden Teil des Korans*, Leipzig, 1907.
- 7 Zamakhshari, *The Kashshaf 'an Haqaiq al-Tanzil* (ed. Lees), 2 vols., Calcutta, 1856.
- 8 Baidawi, *Tafsir* (ed. Ministry of Interior), 2 vols., Cairo, 1355 A.H.
- 9 Abou Abdallah Mohammed ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *Recueil des Traditions Mahométanes* (Krehl ed.), Leyde, 1862-1908.
- 10 Muhammad ibn-Jarir al-Tabari, *Jāmi'u'l-Bayan fi Tafsiru'l-Qur'an*, 30 vols., Cairo, 1331 A.H.
- 11 G. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, Chicago, 1946, p. 80; cf., Báidawi, *Anwāru'l-Tanzil*, Lipsiae (ed. Vogel), 1848, p. 552: "we, sent it down gradually piece by piece," 25:32; and compare with B. Git, 60a.
- 12 According to Bukhari, Muhammad once remarked: "whoever reads the last two verses of the chapter entitled Baqarah on any night, they are sufficient for him." M. M. Ali, *The Holy Qur-an*, Lahore, 1935, p. xlv; cf. Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, London, 1930, p. 23.
- 13 Sure I, known as Al-Fatihah (the Opening), consists of seven verses only, and is essentially a prayer.. It is used by every Moslem at least thirty-two times a day.
- 14 References to other verses in the Koran are frequently cited when they are related to this study.
- 15 A. Sprenger, *Mohammed und der Koran*, Hamburg, 1889; H. Lammens "Mahomet fut-il sincere," *RSR*, 1911, P. 22; D. B. Macdonald, *Aspects of Islam*, New York, 1911, pp. 72-74; Tor Andrae, *Muhammad: The Man and His Faith*, New York, 1936, pp. 63-70; Noldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans*, Leipzig, 1909, Vol. 1, pp. 4-6; W. C. Klein (tr.), *Al-Ibānah 'an usūl ad-Diyanah*, New Haven, 1940, p. 13; J. Horovitz, *HUCA*, Vol. 11(1925), Pp. 145 f.; D. S. Margoliouth, "Old and New Testament in Muhammedanism," *ERE# IX*, pp. 482 f.; C. F. Gerock, *Versuch einer Darstellung der Christologie des Koran*, Hamburg, 1839; John Walker, *Bible Characters in the Koran*, Paisley, 1931.
- 16 William Thomson, "Muhammad: His Life and Person," *The Moslem World*, XXXIX, #2 (1944), pp. 96-137.
- 17 "Commercial relations on a large scale between Palestine and Arabia certainly go back to the days of Solomon; and many books of the Old Testament, particularly Job and Proverbs, which are strongly marked by the presence of Arabic words, show that the connexion was steadily maintained." Alfred Guillaume, "The Influence of Judaism on Islam" in *The Legacy of Israel*, edited by Bevan and Singer, Oxford, 1928, p. 132. About the exalted Jewish poet al-Samaw'al in the pre-Islamic period see R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge, 1941, pp. 84 f.; J. W. Hirschberg, *Yisrael Ba'ayab*, Tel Aviv, 1946, pp. 245-69: "We may gather ... that the Arab Jews possibly exercised a certain indirect influence on the construction of the Talmud. Some paragraphs in the Mishnâh refer exclusively to the Jews of the Peninsula. It was considered lawful for them to live in Bedouin tents, and their women were permitted to go out on Sabbath wearing a veil. The Talmud also alludes to the custom of circumcision among Arabs and twice mentions Arab foot-gear." Hirschfeld, op. cit., p. 104; see also G. Levi Della Vida, "A proposito di as-Samaw'al" in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, XIII, pp.53-72.

- 18 "Whole tribes seem to have gone over to Judaism and accepted monotheism before the rise of Muhammad," Guillaume, *ibid.*, p. 154; cf. D. S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, London, 1889, p. 36; R. Dozy, *Die Israeliten zu Mekka*, Leipzig, 1864, pp. 15 f.
- 19 Tabari, *Annales*, 1885-93, Vol. I (ed. M. J. de Goeje), Leiden, pp. 901-3;
D. S. Margoliouth, *The Relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the Rise of Islam*, London, 1924, pp. 65 f.; Th. Noldeke, "Die Geschichte der Juden in Arabien" in *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Poesie der Alten Araber*, Hannover, 1864, pp. 192 f.; Ilse Lichtenstadter, "Some References to Jews in Pre-Islamic Arabic Literature," *PAAJR*, Vol. X (1940), pp. 187-1.; J. Horowitz, "Judaean-Arabic Relations in Pre-Islamic Times," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 111 (1929), pp. 161-99.
- 20 J. Finkel, "A Risala of al-Jahiz," *JAOS* (1927), pp. 326-28 and "Old Israelitish Tradition in the Koran," *PAAJR*, Vol. II (1931), pp. 7-21. Also, "Jewish, Christian and Samaritan Influences on Arabia" in D. B. Macdonald *Presentation Volume*, Princeton, 1933, pp. 147-66; C. C. Torrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-45; A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, Berlin, 1869, Vol. I, pp. 54-57; Gustav Well, *The Bible, the Koran and the Talmud*, New York, 1846, also *Biblische Legenden der Muselmänner*, Leipzig, 1886, and *Das Leben Mohammeds nach Mohammed ibn Ishaq . . .*, Stuttgart, 1864, Vol. I, p. 143.
- 21 I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, Halle, 1899, Vol. II, pp. 40-45.
- 22 Cf. Bu., Vol. I, p. 21.
- 23 Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 7th ed., London, 1960, P. 125.
- 24 B. Sanh. 44b; cf. notes to 2:91.
- 25 2:125
- 26 2:91.
- 27 Brockelmann, *op. cit.*, p.39
- 28 Torrey, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 29 Bu., Vol. I, P. 354.
- 30 Louis A. Ginzberg, *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud*, New York 1941, Vol. I, p. 73.
- 31 Hirschberg, *op. cit.* p. 197; cf. Georges Vajda, "Jeunes Musulmans et jeunes Juifs," *HUCA*, XII—XIII (1937-38), pp. 367-79 and "Juifs et Musulmans selon le Hadit" in *Journal Asiatique*, Paris, 1937
- 32 Cf. Notes to 2:1-2, 172; G. Weil, "Oral Tradition in Judaism and in Islam" (Hebrew), *Magnes Anniversary Book*, Jerusalem, 1938, pp. 132-48.
- 33 2:193.
- 34 2:179-181.
- 35 Grunebaum, *op. cit.*, P. 9.
- 36 2:125, 187
- 37 Cf 2:1-2, notes 45-64.
- 38 Hobo ha Lebabot, Tr Introduction. Cf. Solomon L Skoss, *Kitāb Janis Al-Alfaz of David Ben Abraham Al-Fasi*, Yale University Press, 1936; Vol. I. P. xxv.
- 39 S. D. Goitein, *Jews And Arabs*, Schocken Books Inc., New York, 1955.p. 132
- 40 Hitti *op. cit.* P 583
- 41 M. Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher*, Berlin, 1893, p. 490f.
- 42 *Ibid*, p. 491f.

- 43 Harry Friedenwald, *The Jews And Medicine*, Vol. I, The John Hopkins Press, 1944, pp. 153f.
- 44 Friedenwald, op. cit., pp. 185-192; Steinschneider, op. cit., p. 393.
- 45 Hitti, op. cit., p. 577.
- 46 Israel Zinberg *Toledot Sifrut Yisrael*, Tel-Aviv, 1955, Vol. 1, pp. 140-153.
- 47 Hitti, op. cit., pp. 584-85; cf. *The Guide For The Perplexed* tr. by M. Friedland, New York, 1942
- 48 See the edited works of Suessmann Muntner *Medical Aphorisms of Moses and others*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 1959.
- 49 Friedenwald, op. cit., pp. 193-216; cf. H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*. Harvard University Press, 1947, Vol. II, pp. 303f.
- 50 From Hebrew Qara, Kara, to read or study the Scriptures.
- 51 Tr. by Samuel Rosenblatt, Yale University Press, 1948.
- 52 See Henry Malter Saadia Gaon *His Life and Works*, Philadelphia, 1942; cf. *Siddur R. Saadja Gaon* (Kitab Gāmi' As-salawāt Wat-Tasābih) ed. I. Davidson, S. Assaf, B. I. Joel, Jerusalem, 1941.
- 53 Gabirol's *Islah al-Akhlag*, has been edited and translated by S. S. Wise, New York, 1901.
- 54 See H. Hirschfeld, ed. *Kitab al-Khagari*, New York, 1927.
- 55 Friedenwald op. cit., pp. 221f.
- 56 Hitti, op. cit., p. 589.
- 57 G. Sarton, *History of Science*, New York, p. 101.
- 58 A new edition is now being published. Vol I has already appeared. Cf. Sandor Scheiber's research at the Academy of Science in Budapest, Hungary.
- 59 See also the writings of N. Wieder, Z. Werblowsky, J. Rosenblatt, A. J. Wizenberg and others.
- 60 Cf. A. I. Katsh, *Cultural Relations: Arabs and Jews*, *Israel Life and Letters*, Jan.-Feb., 1955.

PART TWO

SURA II

VERSES 1-2

That is the book!1 there is no doubt therein; a guide to the pious, who believe in the unseen, and are steadfast in prayer, and of what we have given them expend in alms.

The word "Koran" is either a genuine Arabic term signifying "reading" or "reciting," or a word borrowed from the Hebrew or Aramaic, which was used by the rabbis to describe Scripture or Torah.² The division of the Koran into 114 Suras (Chapters) follows the type of arrangement found in the Hebrew Scriptures. The veneration of the Book by the Moslems, as well as their practice of reading it on days and of reciting certain verses therein for prayers, also appears to emulate a Jewish pattern.³ Muhammad considers the Koran the fountainhead of all knowledge dealing with human life, and refers to it as "the Book" (al-Kitab).⁴ Similarly the Bible⁵ promises its followers: "When thou walkest, it shall lead thee, when thou liest down, it shall watch over thee; And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Referring to this verse in Proverbs (6:22), the Talmud explains: "When thou walkest, it shall lead thee (in this world); when thou liest down, it shall watch over thee (in the grave); and when thou awakest, it shall talk⁶ with thee (in the world to come)."⁷

The Koranic emphasis on the significance of prayer has its antecedent in Jewish tradition.⁸ We find in the Talmud that the injunction, "And ye shall serve the Lord your God," refers to the reciting of the Shema' (Israel's confession of faith, recited twice daily, in the morning and the evening), and to Tefillah (Prayer, the Eighteen Benedictions, i.e. "the main constituents of the regular prayers which are recited three times daily"). Both the Shema' and the Moslem Shahadah express identical ideas.⁹ As with the Shema',¹⁰ the Moslem in reciting the Shahadah accepts the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven, and in uttering the famous *la ilahā illa 'llāhu* (there is no God but Allah), he repeats the biblical phrases, "For Who is God, save the Lord,"¹¹ and "There is no God but the Lord."¹²

It is incumbent upon every Moslem to pray five times daily (at sunrise, mid-day, mid-afternoon, sunset and before retiring).¹³ Goldziher¹⁴ regards the five daily prayers as of Persian influence.¹⁵ Rabbi Simon Duran (1361-1444), who lived in Algiers, maintains that Muhammad borrowed the custom from the Jewish Day of

Atonement.¹⁶ Professor Torrey claims that, in their anxiety to surpass the Jews in devotion, the followers of Muhammad adopted the five daily prayers after his death. "There is in the Koran no prescription of the five daily prayers, and it is not clear that they were instituted by Mohammed. It is not like him to ordain a five-fold service even for one day in the week. What he commands in the Koran is characteristic. It is simple, reasonable, and like other features of the new legislation in its adaptation of an already existing ritual to Arabian conditions. The traditional Jewish prescription was three daily prayers, as e. g. in *Dan. 6:11*. In four passages (11:116, 17:80f., 50:38f., 76:25f.), all from the Mecca period, the prophet directs his followers to pray three times in the day: in the morning, at eventide, and in the night - a time better suited to the Bedouin travelling under the stars than to the city-dweller." ¹⁷

In addition to the four passages quoted by Torrey, we find several other passages in the Koran which give indications of the practice of five daily prayers. Thus, in 20:130 we read: "Bear patiently then what they say, and celebrate the praises" of thy Lord before the rising of the sun, and before its setting, and at times in the night celebrate them; and at the ends of the day; haply thou mayest

please (Him).” Here Muhammad directs his followers to pray at sunrise, sunset and "at the ends of the day," i. e., before retiring.¹⁹ In 11:116 Muhammad also directs his followers, "And be thou steadfast in prayer at the two ends of the day, and the (former and latter) parts of the night." Pickthall²⁰ renders the last phrase "and in some watches of the night," whereas A1i²¹ translates it "in the first hours of the night." This would add, immediately after sunset, another prayer to the three prayers mentioned in 17:80, i. e., "from the declining of the sun until the dusk of the night, and the reading of the dawn." In 24:57 the Koran also talks about "the prayer of dawn, and when ye put off your clothes at noon, and after the evening prayer." Thus, the sunrise prayer, the mid-day prayer and the prayer before retiring are referred to in 17:80, the mid-afternoon prayer in 20:30 and the sunset prayer in 11:116. According to Islamic tradition, it was the Prophet who told his followers: "Allah has made incumbent upon them the five prayers in every day and night."²³

The rules and regulations concerning prayer in general in Islam would indicate that the five daily prayers originated with Jewish practices. Thus, a Moslem, like a Jew, is encouraged to pray often and as frequently as possible.²⁴ Prayers may be combined or curtailed when one is on a journey or in time of danger. If one unwittingly omits a prayer he may recite it when he becomes aware of the omission.²⁵ Prayers, too, must not be said in a loud voice nor in a whisper.²⁶ Nor may a drunken man pray.²⁷ Similarly, the rules with regard to prayers pertaining to the congregation, such as reading from the Book, special prayers for the community, petitions for rain, etc., are all traceable to Jewish practices.²⁸ Some authorities even claim that at the early stages of Islam, Moslems used to put on a Tallit (prayer shawl) at services in the mosque.²⁹ It seems logical that, since most of the rituals were derived in the main from Jewish usage, the five daily prayers should have originated from the same source.

That the Jews in Arabia prayed five times daily is substantiated by recent Talmudic studies. In the Book of Daniel, it is related that Daniel's windows were "open in his chamber in Jerusalem, (and) he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did **aforetime**" (Dan. 6:11).³⁰ From this we may infer that the custom of three daily services included the morning (Shaharit), afternoon (Minhah), and evening prayers (Ma'arib).³¹ According to the Talmud, the Great Assembly³² establish institution of daily prayers. Important portions of the morning prayer were recited in the Temple,³³ which would indicate that regular daily services were in existence during the greater part of the Second Commonwealth. From the time of the destruction of the Temple, the public recitation of the Shemone 'Esre (Eighteen Benedictions) or, as they are also known, the 'Amidah became an important part of the three daily services, though the recitation of some of the benedictions must have been in vogue much earlier. It was Rabbi Gamaliel (c. 90 C. E.), of the Academy of Jabneh, who enacted that each worshipper should recite the Shemone 'Esre individually. In order not to deviate from the original public recitation, he ruled that the Reader should also repeat it in public. In the prayer book (Siddur), **the Shema' and the 'Amidah constitute the most important parts of the service, while the other parts are mainly supplementary. The Shema' is composed of verses from the following passages of the Pentateuch: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, dealing with the unity and love of God and observance of the precepts; Deuteronomy 11:13-21, emphasizing reward for the fulfillment of the laws and punishment for their transgression and the duty of the teaching of the Torah to the children; Numbers 15:37-41, embracing the law concerning the observance of the zizit (fringes on the garment) and an exhortation to submit to the laws of God in remembrance of the Exodus.** The Shemone 'Esre is divided into three parts. The first three prayers contain praises of the Lord; the twelve middle ones, petitions; and the last three, thanks to the Lord. In the morning prayer as well as in the evening prayer there is also, between the Shema' and the Shemone 'Esre, a benediction for the deliverance from Egypt, which is called the Ge'ullah.

In the Talmud, we find a difference of opinion between Rabbi Johanan and Rabbi Joshua b. Levi as to whether the Ge'ullah should be attached to the Shemone 'Esre at the evening prayer or not. Rabbi Jolianan holds that it should be attached to the Shemone 'Esre,³⁴ while Rabbi Joshua b. Levi maintains that it should not.³⁵ Unless the Ge'ullah is attached to the 'Amidak, there are two separate prayers, that of the Shema' and that of the Shemone 'Esre. Otherwise there is only one. The majority opinion agrees with Rabbi Johanan and holds that the Ge'ullah should be attached to the 'Amidah in the evening prayer. As for the Shaharit (morning prayer), all scholars agree that in it the Ge'ullah is attached to the Shemone 'Esre. Therefore, according to the Babylonian Talmud, we have only three daily prayers. However, Prof. Louis Ginzberg, in his monumental study on the Talmud Yerushalmi,³⁶ shows that the institution of Jewish prayer originally called for five daily prayers instead of the known three. Ginzberg maintains that all scholars in the Talmud Yerushalmi are of the opinion that the Jews in the Talmudic period did not attach the prayer of Redemption to the Shemone 'Esre in the evening prayer.³⁷ Thus the Shema and the Shemone 'Esre were two separate prayers.

In early times, the custom was to recite the Shema' at home before retiring and immediately upon arising. Before the institution of prayer, the people recited the Shema' in the morning at dawn and before the rising of the sun, i. e., between rising and the hours of work. This practice was based on the biblical verse, "and when thou liest down and when thou risest up."³⁸ Later on, when prayer became an institution, the morning prayer was held in the synagogue after the rising of the sun. The Shema', too, was recited in the synagogue at the usual time. The hardship of congregating twice, once for the Shema' and once for the "prayer" (Shemone 'Esre), was eased by reciting the Shema' closer to sunrise, immediately before the "prayer" (Shemone 'Esre). Though there were still many who continued to recite the Shema' at home and joined the congregation for prayer later on, the general practice was to combine the two. This finally led to the assumption that it was obligatory to attach the prayer of Redemption to the Shemone 'Esre.

Thus, we learn that the Jews in Arabia during the Talmudic period really met five times daily for prayer in the synagogue; twice for the recitation of the Shema',³⁹ and three times for the three regular "prayers."⁴⁰ For practical reasons, the two prayers in the morning⁴¹ were combined into one, as were the two prayers in the evening.⁴² The five daily prayers may thus have been directed by Muhammad as a result of the early Jewish practice of meeting five⁴³ times daily for prayer.⁴⁴

One of the cardinal principles of Islam is that of giving alms.⁴⁵ The tradition is "Faith in Allah, and then the hope that 'prayer' would carry the true believer half-way to God, that 'fasting' would bring him to the door of His palace, and that 'alms' would gain him admittance."⁴⁶ Throughout the Koran one finds numerous utterances which emphasize the importance of charity,⁴⁷ feeding the poor,⁴⁸ emancipating slaves,⁴⁹ taking care of widows and orphans,⁵⁰ so doing good to humanity in general,⁵¹ as well as engaging in other benevolent enterprises.⁵²

The Koranic zakah or sadaqah (righteousness)⁵³ signifies the supreme virtue obtainable by human beings. Through sadaqah "man becomes God-like and God's creditor."⁵⁴ All this is modelled after Jewish tradition.⁵⁵

Giving alms was prevalent among the Hebrews long before the Mosaic laws of charity were promulgated. Jacob, following his famous dream, vowed to give one-tenth of all his possessions to God: "I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:22). Moses later incorporated this principle into the biblical laws of charity (Deut. 14:22). The one-tenth of all the produce was to be given to the members of the tribe of Levi, who did not share in the tribal land division. Similar provisions were made for the poor, the needy, the landless and the foreigner (Lev. 19:9-10). According to Simeon the Just, "The world is based upon three things: The Torah, divine service, and the practice of kindness."⁵⁶ The rabbis stipulate that "an individual's obligation to support charity was in direct

proportion to his wealth; that every poor person must be supported; that even if he declined aid, he must be assisted through the subterfuge of a loan or a gift." Rabbi Judah said: "Great is charity, in that it brings the redemption nearer."⁵⁸ "Give unto him of that which is his."⁵⁹ "He who is merciful to others, mercy is shown to him by Heaven."⁶⁰

The attitude of Judaism towards charity is mirrored in all Koranic utterances and in the hadith.⁶¹ Technically, zakah is a fixed portion of one's wealth which a Moslem is obliged to contribute annually for the benefit of the poor, and the giving of sadaqah in secret is praised.⁶² According to Islam, the practical realization of the belief in the Unity of God, in Divine revelation and in the Hereafter, is through prayer and the service of humanity through charity. "But if they repent and are steadfast in prayer and give alms, then they are your brethren in religion."⁶³ This concept echoes the prayer of the Jew in the synagogue on the Holy Days: "Repentance, prayer and charity (righteousness) avert the (Divine) harsh decree."⁶⁴

Notes:

1 Ali in *The Holy Qur-an*, p. 12, translates Dhalika 'l-Kitab as "This book", and claims that Palmer's rendition as "That is the book" is erroneous, for Dhalika does not refer here to a remote thing, but indicates "the high estimation in which the Qur-an is held"; Pickthall, Rodwell, and Wherry also translate Dhalika as "this". Cf. Gen. 5:1, "This is the Book"

2 Mikra' . This term was used by the Jews for the Scriptures, .

Th. Noldeke claims that the word Sure is derived from the Hebrew Shurah (row), *Geschichte des Qorans*, Gottingen, 1860, pp. 24-25; cf. his *Neue Beitrage zur semit. Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg, 1910, p.26, as well as Noldeke-Schwally, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 31 f. Just as Judaism claims that Bible was written in the Holy Tongue (Hebrew), so Muhammad, too, claimed the Koran to be an "Arabic Koran" (20:112; 42:5; 43:2-3); cf. Jallalein 29:27; J. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1926, p. 75; Baidawi 3:98; Zamakshari 3:6. See also Arthur Jeffery, *The Qur'an As Scripture*, New York, 1952, pp. 9 f. and notes 2:48-50; 3:2 on furqan.

3 Hirschfeld conjectures that "the disfigurement of many Biblical names and words mentioned in the Qoran is due to misreadings in his (Muhammad's) own note made with unskilled hand... Sure, written in square characters () could easily be misread from Sidra ()." *New Researches...* p. 13 n.; cf. F. Buhl, "Sure," *El*, Vol. 4, pp. 560 f. See also Bu., Vol. IV, p.400.

4 2:171. Synonyms for the Koran are: al-Furqan (the "Distinguisher between right and wrong" or "Divine help"), 25:1; al-Tadhkira (the Reminder), 15:9; al-Tanzil (Revelation), 26:192; al-Hudā (the Guidance), 72:13; al-Rahmah (the Mercy), 17:84; al-Khair (the Goodness), 2:103; al-Ruh (the Spirit of Life), 42:52; al-Bayān (the Explanation), 3:133; al-Ni'mah (the Blessing), 93:11; al-Burhan (the Argument), 4:175; al-Qayyim (the Maintainer), 18:2; al-Muhaimin (the Guardian), 5:48; al-Nur (the Light), 7:156; and al-Haqq (the Truth), 17:83. In a similar vein, Judaism speaks of the Torah as "Tree of Life," "Maintainer," "Guide," "Light," "The Wisdom," "Truth," etc. Cf. M. M. Ali, *The Religion of Islam*, Lahore, 1926, pp. 17-57; Mishnah Ab.

5:19; B. 'Erub. 54b; and Cf. B. Meg., 16a; B. Ta'an., 7a; Num. Rab., 3.

6. I. e. "intercede on thy behalf."

7 Mishnah Ab. 6:9; cf. Yalkut Shim' oni, Prov., Vol. II, § 938.

8 B. Ber. 32a: "Prayer is more efficacious even than good deeds, for there was no one greater in good deeds than Moses our Master, and yet he was answered only after prayer," and Deut. Rab. 8:1: "Great is the efficacy of prayer before the Almighty." Cf. 2:239 note 3.

- 9 The Koranic, "There is no God but Allah (the God)," stresses the idea of Monotheism as expressed in , "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Deut. 6:4). The utterance of these phrases, according to Islam and Judaism, is tantamount to a confession of faith; cf. Zeph. 3:9 and Zech. 14:9 as well as Rashi's commentary on Deut. 6:4 that "He who now is our God and is not yet recognized by the nations as their God, will yet be the ONE God of the whole world"; see also 21:107: "Say, I am only inspired that your God is one God," According to Khatib Mishkāt al-Masabih, Vol. I, p. 12, "Whoever dies while he knows that there is no God but Allah enters paradise",
- 10 B. Ber. 13b; cf. "Israel, a nation unique on the earth, declares daily the Unity of His great Name, saying, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord Is One'" (Deut. 6:4), P.R.E., p. 26
11. . See also 3:16; 13:29; 112:1.
- 12 ; cf. Deut. 4:35, and Is. 6:3; Ps. 98:2; 138:4; Hos. 13:4. Cf. Torrey, op. cit., p. 134; and Hirschfeld, op. cit., 29-31. Regarding the incorporeality of God in the Koran and the Bible see H. A. Wolfson, Philo, Cambridge, 1947, Vol. 2, p. 152.
- 13 Fajr (morning); Zuhr (early afternoon); 'Asr (late afternoon); Maghrib (sunset); 'Ishā' (night). Cf. E. Mittwoch, Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des islamischen Gebets and Kultus, Berlin, 1913, p. 9 and A. J. Wensinck, Mohammed en de Joden te Medina, Leiden, 1908, pp. 106 ff. See also notes on 2:239, 240 and 3:7.
- 14 J. E., "Islam," Vol. 6, New York, p. 653; "Islamisme et Parsisme," RHR, xliii (1901), p. 15. Cf. Nöldeke-Schwally, op. cit., p. 151; Anton Baumstark, "Jüdischer und Christlicher Gebetstypus im Koran" in Der Islam, Vol. 16, Berlin, 1927, 229-48.
- 15 According to Pollack, the institution of five daily prayers is regarded by Islam as an integral part of the Sunna.
- 16 S. Duran, Qeshet u-Magen in Ozar Tob, ed. by Steinschneider, Berlin, 1881, p. 14: However, it is questionable whether the Musaf (additional service) following closely upon the Shaharit (morning service) should be considered as a separate service rather than as an extension of the Shaharit. Compare, however Maimonides, Hilkot Tefillah, Ch. I., Halakah V, VI and B. Ber. 26 b. Rabbi Duran (ibid., p. 14) also maintains that Ramadān is of Jewish influence:. See also Mittwoch, op. cit., pp. 36 ff.
- 17 Torrey, op. cit., pp. 135-36.
- 18 "Celebrate the praises" here refers to prayer, as shown by the context in 20:132: "Bid thy people prayer, and persevere in it." Cf. Ps. 68:20; Ps. 78:4; Ps. 96:3; Ps. 105:2:
- 19 Here the two evening prayers are spoken of together, while the sunrise prayer and mid-afternoon prayer are indicated.
- 20 Marmaduke Pickthall, op. cit., p. 234
- 21 The Holy Qur-an, p. 474; cf. Ali, The Religion of Islam, pp. 406 f.
- 22 Bu., Vol. I, p. 354:
- 23 Cf. discussion on the five prayers by Baidawi and Zamakhshari ad. loc. According to Zamakhshari and Baidāwi, refers to the sunrise prayer, whereas refers to the prayers of mid-day, mid-afternoon, sunset and before retiring. See also Ibn Hisham, Life of Muhammad (Arabic), Bulaq, 1877, Vol. I, p. 204: "It was Muhammad who decreed the institution of five daily prayers."
- 24 Bu., Vol. I, p. 181. "Frequent prayers are best for people to do." Cf. Bu., Vol. I, p. 144: "He who utters prayers, converses intimately with God" ; Yalkut Shim'oni, Vol. II, § 847.
- 25 4:10; Bu., Vol. I, p. 157:

26 17:111, "And do not say the prayers openly, nor yet murmur them, but seek a way between these." Compare: "But her voice could not be heard (I Sam. 1:13): from this (we learn), it is forbidden to raise one's voice in the Tefillah," B. Ber. 31b; cf. 23:3, "who in their prayers are humble," and Ecc. 5:1, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter a word before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."

27 4:46. Compare B. Ber. 31 b, ". . . a drunken person is forbidden to say the Tefillah."

28 Hirschberg, op. cit., pp. 196-7 Cf. notes to 2:239. Muhammad praising his followers for "reciting God's signs in the night-time" (3:109) recalls a Jewish practice (B. Ber. 3b; Mishnah Ber. 4:4; B. Sanh. 42b; also 3:188). Even the calling to prayer by a special person may be traceable to an old custom by which one man would assemble the entire congregation: Hirschberg, *ibid.*, p. 197; see Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, p. 101, quoted in I. Ben-Zeeb, op. cit., p.

29; Mishnah Yom. 1:8. The saying of 'Amin at the close of a congregational prayer in the mosque also follows the Hebrew usage, 'Amen. Similarly, has the same connotation as David Yellin, *Hikre Mikra*, Jerusalem, 1937, p. 33; and Is. 7:9; Ps. 44:14; 2:196. In Islam as in Judaism any learned man of good character may lead in the prayer service.

30. Bu., Vol. I, p. 181; Hirschberg, *ibid.*, p. 197: Cf. A. J. Wensinck, "Die Entstehung der Muslimischen Reinheitsgesetzgebung," in *Der Islam*, V (1914), pp. 62 ff.

31 Shahrīt - from sunrise to a third of the day; Minhah - from high noon to sunset; and Ma'arib—the entire night. Cf. Ps. 55:18; Talmud Yer. Ber. 4, 1; Numbers Rab. 2, 1.

32 During the Second Commonwealth. Cf. Solomon Zeitlin, "An Historical Study of the First Canonization of the Hebrew Liturgy," *JQR*, N.S., Vol XXXVI (1946), 211-29 and Vol. XXXVIII (1948), 289-316; I. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Leipzig, 1913; L. J. Liebreich, "The Intermediate Benedictions of the Amida," *JQR*, N.S., XLII (1952), #4, 423-26; L. Zunz, *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, 2nd ed., Frankfurt a. M., B. Ber. 33a; B. Meg. 17b.

33

34

35 *Ibid.*, cf.

36 Louis Ginzberg, op. cit., Introduction and Vol. I, pp 68-75.

37 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 68.

38 Deut. 6:7; 11:9.

39 Ginzberg, op. cit., Vol. 1, 64:

40 Shemone 'Esre; cf. 26:79-84 which recall some of the prayers in the Eighteen Benedictions.

41 I. e. the Shema' and Shemone 'Esre. Moslem tradition, too, provides when the days are short, the Zuhr and the 'Asr prayers may be combined. Similarly when the nights are too short the Maghrib and the 'Isha may be combined. See Bu., Vol. I, pp. 141-60.

42 Ginzberg, op. cit., p. 63:

43 *Ibid.*, p. 74:

44 *Ibid.*, p. 75. See, however, Naphtali Wieder, *Islamic Influences on the Jewish Worship*, Oxford, 1947, p. 16; cf. Ibn Hisham, op. cit., p. 72.

45 3:86: "Ye cannot attain to righteousness until ye expend in alms of what ye love. But what ye expend in alms, that God knows." Cf. Bu., Vol. I, p. 365: "Sadaqah is every Moslem's obligation"

46 J. J. Pool, *Studies in Mohammedanism*, Westminster, 1892, p. 7 (quoting the historian Gibbon).

- 47 2:172, 255, 265, 266; 3:86; 5:12; 24:22; 91:15. Cf. Note 55.
- 48 69:34; 76:8; 90:15; 93:9; Bu., Vol. IV, p. 114: "He who is not merciful receives no mercy"
- 49 Bu., Vol. I, p. 15. Cf.
- 50 17:36; 76:8; 89:17; 90:13; 93:8; 107:2. "One who takes care of the widow and the poor is like the one who fights for the cause of God" (Bu., Vol. I, p. 485).
- 51 90:14; 107:6; cf.: Bu., Vol. I, p. 11.
- 52 2:272,275,278;3:86,110;4:9;57:10-14;58:14 Cf. Bu., Vol. IV, pp. 117, 128.
- 53 Cf. See also Franz Rosenthal, "Sedaka, Charity" in HUCA, (1950-51) Vol. XXIII, Part 1, pp. 411-30.
- 54 2:246; Torrey, op. cit., p. 141, claims that the terminology and practice are of Jewish origin. Compare, however, K. Ahrens, Muhammad als Religionsstifter, Leipzig, 1935, p. 119, where he tries to show that though the terms are of Jewish origin, the practice is taken from Christianity. See also J. Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 206-8; Noldeke-Schwally, Geschichte des Qorans, Vol. II, p. 205, and notes to 2:172, 211, 246, 271, 272, 273, 280; 3:128, 136.
- 55 B. B. B. 9b; B. Ket. 67b; B. Git. 7b; B. Suk. 49b; cf. A. J. Wensinck, Mohammed., p. 114.
- 56 Mishnah Ab., 1:2. Cf. [B]
- 57 A. A. Neuman, The Jews in Spain, Philadelphia, 1942, Vol. 2, p. 171; cf.)
- 58 B. B. B. 10a; cf. B. Git. 7a: and compare with Bu., Vol. I, p. 365, that even the poor are not excused from charity.
- 59 Mishnah Ab. 3:8.
- 60 B. Shab. 151b; cf. B. Suk. 49b
- 61 The Koran prescribes: "and know that whenever ye seize anything as a spoil, to God belongs a fifth thereof, and to His Apostle, and to kindred and orphans, and the poor and the wayfarer" (8:42). The limit of one-fifth recalls B. Ket. 50a, that a man should not spend more than a fifth for charity. Torrey, op. cit., p. 143; also Talmud Yer. Peak 1, 1.
- 62 2:275; Bu., Vol. I, p.360: cf. B. B. B. 9b
- 63 9:11; cf. Bu., Vol. I, p. 334: "Allah has decreed . . . to bear witness that there is no God but Allah... prayers... and charity."
64. Cf. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayer books, compare Tobit 12:8; Matt. 6:1-8.

SURA II - VERSE 5

Verily, those who misbelieve, it is the same to them if ye warn them or if ye warn them not, they will not believe.

Baidawi, referring to a similar verse in Sura 3:84 comments that he who turns away from the truth after it has been made clear to him is sunk in error and far from guidance.² A counterpart is found in the Talmudic statement: "The wicked do not repent even at the gate of Gehenna."³ Muhammed's warning that those who pay no heed at all to him cannot benefit by his preaching, recalls the Talmudic statement that the wicked man is as little able to learn from the righteous as the righteous man is able to emulate the behavior of the wicked: Rabbi Eleazar said, "A wicked man lived between two righteous men and did not learn from their ways." ⁴

A similar thought is expressed in Jer. 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Notes:

1 Verily, those who misbelieve after believing, and then increase in misbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted; these are those who err,” 3:84

2 Baldawi, Vol I. p80

3 B. Erub. 19a

4 B. Yom. 38b

SURA II – VERSE 6

God has set a seal upon their hearts and on their hearing; and on their eyes is dimness, and for them is grievous woe.¹

Zamakhshari maintains that this sentence should not be taken literally but only to indicate that after man has willfully turned away from the truth, his capacities for comprehension become dulled as if a partition existed between the man and the things to be comprehended by him. Zamakhshari also states that this sentence does not contradict the idea of free will.² It is interesting to note that the very same problem posed by Zamakhshari with regard to free will was also raised by Sa’adia Gaon (882-942 C.E.) in connection with the sentence in Isaiah 6:10 ³. Sa’adia, too, endeavors to harmonize the sentence in Isaiah with the principle of free will.⁴ Likewise, Yellin ⁵ calls attention to the similarity of the roots used in the Bible ⁶ and in the Koran, ⁷ and claims that the Koranic verse is almost an exact translation of Isaiah 6:10, ⁸

Notes:

1 Cf. Isaiah 6:10

2 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p27

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4 Kitab al-Amandi wa'l-'itiqddat, ed. S. Landauer, Leiden, 1880, ch 4, p 160. Cf. Beliefs and Opinions, ed. S. Rosenblatt, New Havenm 1948, pp 198 f.

5 David Yellin, op. cit., pp 7, 32

6

7 is from the root =

8 "Make the heart of this people fat, And make their ears heavy, And shut their eyes."

SURA II - VERSE 12

And when it is said to them, 'Believe as other men believe,' they say, 'Shall we believe as fools believe?' Are not they themselves the fools? And yet they do not know.

The theory that he who disbelieves or transgresses is foolish is discussed extensively in Jewish tradition. "Resh Lakish said: A person does not commit a transgression unless the spirit of folly (shetul) enters into him."¹ This deduction the Talmud makes from the Scripture: "...if any man's wife go aside" (Num. 5:12).² We also find in the Talmud that "sin dulls the heart of man."³ In a similar vein Jeremiah (5:21) exclaims: "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding, That have eyes, and see not, that have ears and hear not."⁴

Notes:

1 B. Sot. 3 a.

2 The Hebrew word 'listeh' is rendered "to act in folly." Hence the rabbinical saying: "No one sinneth unless the spirit of folly has entered into him." P.H., p589n.

3 B. Yom. 39a. Cf Lev. 11:43.

4 Cf. Is 3:11

SURA II – VERSE 20

Who made the earth for you a bed and the heaven a dome; and sent down from heaven water, and brought forth therewith fruits as a sustenance for you; so make no peers for God, the while ye know!

The concept of rain as a heavenly gift rewarding good deeds occupies a prominent place in rabbinic tradition.¹ Thus: “The clouds draw water from the depth, as it is said, ‘He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth’ (Ps. 135:7), and in every place where the King commands them, there they cause rain (to fall), and forthwith the earth becomes fruitful and yields produce... But when the Holy One, blessed be He, desires to bless the produce of the earth and to give provision to the creatures, He opens the good treasures in heaven and sends rain upon the earth, namely, the fructifying rain...”²

The phrase here, “make no peers for God,” and the one in Sura 51:51, *ilah akbar*,³ recall the Hebrew phrase ‘Elohim’ *‘aherim*⁴ used in the Second Commandment (Exod. 20:3; Deut. 5:7).

The unity of God, which is a fundamental doctrine of Islam⁵ as well as of Judaism, is expressed by Muhammed as Allah ‘ahad (God is One) (112:1).⁶ The latter seems to be a replica of the Hebrew phrase ‘Adonai ‘Ehad (the Lord is One), which is from the Shema’.⁷ The Koranic unity of God negates the idea of a plurality of gods and condemns the worship of the sun, the moon and the stars. “And of His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Adore ye not the sun, neither the moon; but adore God who created you, if it be Him ye serve” (41:37). The same admonition is found in Deut. (17:3): “...and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, or the sun, or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have commanded not.”⁸

Muhammed frequently refers to God as *rabb* (Lord) (2:4; 2:19; 96:1) or, as in *Al-Fatihah*, *rabb al-‘alamin* (the Lord of the world); *Rahim* (Merciful); *Malik* (Master or King) and *Rahman* (Beneficent) (1:2, 78:3). Exact counterparts for the Divine being are used in the Bible and the Talmud: *ribbon hs-Olamin*; *ha-Rahman*; *Melek*. The same applies to the other names for the Deity mentioned in the Koran, which have their Hebrew equivalents, such as ‘Ahad (One); Quddus (Holy); Bari (Creator); Saam (Author of Peace); ‘Aliyy (Exalted); Kabir (Great); Hamid (Praiseworthy); Hakim (Wise); and Malik-al-mulk (Master of the Kingdom).⁹

Notes:

¹ Cf. the phrase in the Eighteen Benedictions. The Bible warns the people to “hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God” and the reward will be that “the Lord will open unto thee His good treasure the heaven to give the rain of the land in its season, and to bless all the work of thy hand...” (Deut. 28:12); the fact that God alone and not the idols, is capable of giving rain is clearly stated in Jer. 14:22. The Targum refers to idols. It would seem that the Koranic term for idolatry (2:257) is a derivative of the Aramaic used in the Targum. See however, Geiger, op. cit., p. 55, who claims the word for idolatry is not found in rabbinic literature.

The Talmud states that three keys has God “retained in His own hands and not entrusted to the hand of any messenger, namely, the Key of Rain, the Key of Childbirth, and the Key of the Revival of the Dead” (B. Ta’an. 2a). An identical view that God alone sends down water from heaven is expressed here by Muhammad. See also [B], and W. R. Taylor, “Al-Bukhari and the Aggada,” *The Moslem World*, XXXIII (1943), 3, p.196.

² P.R.E., p30 Cf. Jer. 5:24

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5 Cf. notes to 2:1-2. 256 and R.A. Nicholson p.225

6 Cf. la ilaha illa-'Ilahu (There is no God but Allah)

7 Deut. 6:4

8 For a lengthy discussion of these terms see Horowitz, HUCA, pp 198-204; Noldeke, op. cit., p93; Gieger op. cit., pp51-52, Obermann, op. cit., p100

9 cf. Sefer Yezirah, p. 10; Num. Rab. 14:10

SURA II – VERSE 23

But bear the glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that for them are gardens beneath which rivers flow; whenever they are provided with fruits therefrom they say, 'This is what we were provided with before,' and they shall be provided with the like; and there are pure wives for them therein, and they shall dwell therein for aye.

The Muhammadan promise for Paradise is that of a material world with gardens, rivers, fruits of various types, tastes and colors, wives or perpetual virgins of constant purity, wherein the God-fearing Moslem shall abide forever.¹

Jallalain, approving of this sense, supposes the fruits of Paradise, though of various tastes, to be alike in color and outward appearance.² According to Zamakhshari, however, the meaning is that the righteous will find there the kinds of fruits they tasted while on earth.³

In the liturgical epic 'Akadamut, written in the Aramaic language and recited on the first day of Pentecost prior to the biblical reading of the Decalogue, it is stated: "Leviathan and the wild ox of the mountain will meet in battle...And the sea monster will smite him with his powerful fins. His creator will then approach him with his mighty sword and prepare a banquet for the righteous. They will sit around tables made of precious stones and before them will flow rivers of balsam. They will regale themselves and drink full cups of the wine preserved for them from the time of the creation of the world."⁴ The items in this poem were gathered from the Midrashim⁵ and other rabbinic sources.⁶

Muhammad does not mention here the number and quality of the rivers, but the idea is competed in 47:16 where he mentions four rivers. They are the rivers of water, milk, wine and honey.⁷ A parallel is found in Yalkut,⁸ where we read that there flow four rivers: milk, honey, wine and oil. It is to be noted, however, that meat is not mentioned in the Koranic paradise, though it frequently appears in the rabbinic sources.⁹

Notes:

1 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p.59. Cf. 2:34; 3:13, 127, 130, 197; 9:73. The "pure mates" are the wives of the faithful. This is clearly indicated in the Koranic verse: "Verily, the fellows of Paradise upon that day shall be employed in enjoyment they and their wives, in shade upon thrones, reclining; therein shall they have fruits, and they shall have what they may call for. 'Peace!' – a speech from the merciful Lord!" (36:55)

2 Quoted by E.M. Wherry, A Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran, London, 1882, Vol. I, p. 298 n; cf. Is.3:10: "Say ye of the righteous, that it shall be well with him: For they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Also, B. B. B. 11a; B. Hag. 12a; B. Yom. 38b.

3 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 58. Cf. 77:41; 78:31-35; 88:5-14 and J. Horovitz, "Das Koranische Paradies," in Scripta Universitatis, Vol. I, article 6, Jerusalem 1934. 4

5 Cf. S. Lieberman, Jerusalem, 1935, p. 9; Abraham S. Yahuda, New York, 1946, p. 153. Rashi, ad loc., explains as an "outer space." This interpretation is based on Mishnah Kil. 4:3 6

7 47:16: "The similitude of Paradise which is promised to the pious, - in it are rivers of water without corruption, and rivers of milk, the taste whereof changes not, and rivers of wine delicious to those who drink; and rivers of honey clarified..."

8 Cf. B. Sanh. 99a and V Aptowitzer, "Die Paradiesesflüsse des Kurans," MGWJ, 1928, pp. 151-55

9 Cf. B. B. B. 75a.

SURA II – VERSE 26

How can ye disbelieve in God, when ye were dead and He made you alive, and then He will kill you and then make you alive again, and then to Him will ye return?

The idea that God destroys and restores life abounds in the Koran. In 53:45 Muhammad states: "And that it is He who makes man laugh and weep and that it is He who kills and makes alive..." Similarly, we find in 75:35: "Is not He able to quicken the dead?"

A comparable idea is found in the Talmud: "...the Holy One, blessed be He, restores the souls to the dead bodies..."¹ It also brings to mind the Jewish benediction, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who revivest the dead."² and the biblical passages, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up" (1 Sam. 2:6)..."I kill, and make alive; I have wounded, and I heal" (Deut. 32:39).

Zamakhshari associates the words of the Koran, "when ye were dead and He made you alive," with the emergence of a living man out of a dormant sperm.³ The same idea is expressed by Baidawa.⁴ In the Talmid we also find reference to the formation of a living soul out of the unfertilized seed:⁵ "An emperor said to Rabban Gamaliel: 'Ye maintain that the dead will revive; but they turn to dust, and can dust come to life?' Thereupon his (the emperor's) daughter said to him (the Rabbi): 'Let me answer him: In our own there are two potters; one fashions (his products) from water, and the other from clay: who is the more praiseworthy?' 'He who fashions them from water,' he replied (this being far more difficult). 'If he can fashion (man) from water (sperm), surely he can do so from clay!' (the dust into which the dead are turned)."⁶

Notes:

1 B. Sanh. 108a.

2 B. Ket. 8b. Cf. Bu., Vol II, p. 201.

3 Zamakhshari, Vol. I. p. 65:

4 Baidawi, ad loc.

5 Cf. Rashi to B. Sanh. 91aL

6 Cf. B. Sanh. 90b-91a; Hirschfeld, New Researches..., p. 43, about "resurrection" and notes to Verse 2:53 about "the revival of the dead." Also notes to 2:52, 53.

SURA II – VERSE 27

It is He who created for you all that is in the earth, then he made for the heavens and fashioned them seven heavens; and He knows all things.

This verse dealing with the creation recalls 50:38: "We did create the heavens and the earth and what is between the two in six days and no weariness touched us." In the latter verse, "heavens" precedes "earth", whereas in our present text the order is reversed. In the Talmud, too, there is controversy between the school of Shammai, and that of Hillel, as to whether the heaven or the earth was created first. The former, maintaining priority for the heavens, bases its claim upon Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The school of Hillel in upholding the opposite view claims that the earth was created first, as is written: "...in the day that Lord God made earth and heaven" (Gen. 2:4). Each school sets forth arguments to substantiate its claim by logical reasoning. The Sages, however, hold that both, heaven and earth, were created at the same time. They offer as evidence the Scriptural verse: "Yes, My hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand hath spread out the heavens; When I call unto them, They stand up together" (Is. 48:13) The Talmud then quotes Resh Lakish: "When they were created, He created heaven (first), and afterwards He created the earth; but when He stretched them forth He stretched forth the earth (first), and afterwards He stretched forth heaven."¹ The Midrash cites the above legend and adds that the controversy of the two schools lasted until the Shekinah rested on them and they both agreed that heaven and earth were created together.²

Moslem commentators also raise the question of sequence in the creation of heaven and earth. According to Zamakhshari, the creation of the earth preceded that of the heavens. Referring to the Koranic verse: "And the earth after that He did stretch out" (79:30), he explains that in the beginning the earth was created where Israel's sanctuary was later erected. This was in the form of a round rock surrounded by smoke. Later on the smoke ascended upward and the heavens emerged. Only then did the rock expand, and the earth assumed its final form. ³

That the world was created (started) from the place of the sanctuary is also a rabbinic conception. Thus: "The world was created (started) from Zion..."⁴ and "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the sea, it went on expanding, until the Holy One, blessed by He, rebuked it and caused it to

dry up.”⁵ The Talmud also adds that the heavens were created from fire and water, rather than from smoke.⁶

The seven heavens mentioned in the Koran are: the Garden of Eternity, the Abode of Peace, the Abode of Rest, The Garden of Eden, The Garden of Resort, the Garden of Pleasure, and the Garden of Paradise.⁷ The Koranic idea that God “fashioned them seven heavens” and that the latter were made out of one of them is also Jewish. This tale is found in Midrash ha-Ne’elam: “Rabbi Johanan said: This Rakia’ (heaven) that was created on the second day (of creation) is the uppermost one... All the other heavens were made out of this one... The Scriptures call it both Rakia’ and Shamayim (Gen. 1:8) because Shamayim was made out of Rakia’. And that heaven bore all the other heavens which came out of it.”⁸

Innumerable references to the heavens are found in rabbinic sources. Thus in Midrash ‘Aseret Hadibrot we find: “God created the heavens and he named the lowest one Wilon.”⁹ And elsewhere: “Rabbi Me’ir says: ‘There are seven heavens’;¹⁰ Resh Lakish said: There are seven heavens, named Wilon, Rakia, Shehakim, Zebul, Ma’on, Makon and ‘Arabot.”¹¹ “Every seventh is loved by God. In the heavens, the seventh is loved: Heaven, Upper Heaven, Raki’a, Shehakim, Zebul, Ma’on and ‘Arabot, as the Psalmist (68:5) writes: ‘Extol him that rideth upon ‘Arabot.’”¹²

We find a similar treatment in the Midrash with both a change of sequence and a change of one name. “Rabbi Eleazer said: There are seven heavens: Heaven, Upper Heaven, Rakia’, Shehaki, Ma’on, Zebul, ‘Araphel.”¹³ The Midrash also cites a controversy between Rab and the Rabbis. The former says there are two heavens; the latter claim that there are three. T. Eliezer, however, says that there are seven.¹⁴ The Koranic phrase that God “knows all things” is frequently mentioned in Jewish literature.

Notes:

1 B. Hag. 12a. From the word together in Is. 48:13 “the inference is drawn that heaven and earth are coeval.”

2 As to consult Talmud Yerushalmi, Hag. 2, 1, and ed. A, Marmorstein, Dvir, Book I, 1923, p.127

3 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 67

4 Cf.: Cf. Aptowitzer, re in Hazfeh, Budapest, 1926, p.270

5 Cf. B. Hag. 12a; V. Aptowitzer, “Zur Kosmologie der Agada,” MGWJ (Reprint), 1929, pp. 363-70

6 B. Hag. 12a; cf. Gen. Rab. 4, 7; Num. Rab. 12, 4.

7 Muhammad refers often to seven heavens. In 78:12 he calls the seven heavens “the seven strongholds” and in 23:17 he calls them the “seven paths”, corresponding to the talmudic expression . The Koran, however, stresses the fact that at the time of the creation “His throne was upon the water” 11:9. The latter idea is found in Rashi who states that the throne of glory stands in the air, and hovers over the waters by the command of God (Rashi, Gen. 1:2). Cf. Geiger, op. cit., pp. 64-5; Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 219. The Arabic terms... (heaven and earth) correspond to the Hebrew... J. Overmann, op. cit., p. 102.

8 quoted in T.S., Vol. I. p. 130

9 Quoted in Jellinek, 60

10

11 B. Hag. 12b.

12 According to Lisan-‘l-‘Arab, “The mention of seven and seventy and seven hundred is frequent in the Qur-an and in the sayings of the Holy Prophet, and the Arabs use them to signify a large number and multiplicity” (quoted in Ali, The Holy Qur-an, p. 22). Cf. Sa’adia on Gen. 4:15 and 24, where is rendered and .

13 Cf. Midrash ha-Gadol to Gen.24

14 In the explanatory remarks to Lekah Tob [B] (Gen. 1, 7 note 94) is substituted for . In the same place the word mentioned in the Midrash Tehillim Shohar Tob is corrected to read (three heavens).

15 In the prayer book of Rosh Hashanah the following is recited:

SURA II – VERSES 28-30

And when thy Lord said unto the angels, 1 ‘I am about to place a vicegerent² in the earth,’ they said, ‘Wilt Thou place therein one who will do evil therein and shed blood? We celebrate Thy praise and hallow Thee.’ Said (*the Lord*), ‘I know what ye know not.’

Rashi, on Gen. 1:26, sums up the Midrashim and states that when man was created God consulted the heavenly hosts in order to emphasize an ethical principle that “the greater should always consult and receive the permission of the lesser.”³ The general idea was that there be none of God’s likeness in the lower spheres, there would be jealousy among angels and man, and the earth would be jealous of the heavens.

In the Midrash, too, it is related that God consulted the angels concerning the creation of man.⁴ The angels were no all of one opinion. Because man would be affectionate, his creation was favored by the angels of love. But the angel of truth opposed it on the ground that man would rarely be truthful. The angel of justice, however, knowing that man would practice justice, favored his creation, while the angel of peace opposed it.⁵

Moslem commentators also inquire how the angels could have known in advance what man's character would be like. Tabari's⁶ and Zamakhsjari's⁷ statements that the ministering angels were informed by God himself are found in Aggadic sources. There the narrative reads: "Rad Judah said in Rab's name: When the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to create man, He (first) created a company of ministering angels and said to them: Is it your desire that we make man in our image? They answered: Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds? – Such and such will be his deeds, He replied. Thereupon they exclaimed: Sovereign of the Universe, *What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou thinkest of him?* (Ps. 8:5). Thereupon He stretched out His little finger among them and consumed them with fire. The same thing happened with a second company. The third company said to Him: Sovereign of the Universe, what did it avail the former (angels) that they spoke to Thee (as they did)? The whole world is Thine, and whatsoever that Thou wishes to do therein, do it. When He came to the men of the Age of the Flood and of the division (of tongues) whose deeds were corrupt, they said to Him: Lord of the Universe, did not the first (company of angels) speak aright? *Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you* (Is. 46:4), He retorted."⁸

The motif of the angels envying man is also illustrated in the story of Moses' ascent to God in order to receive the Torah. "'Sovereign of the Universe! What business has one born of woman amongst us?' 'He has come to receive the Torah,' answered He to them. Said they to Him. 'That secret treasure, which has been hidden but Thee for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created, Thou desirest to give to flesh and blood!...'"⁹ Whereupon God told Moses to "return them an answer." When Moses had explained to the angels that the Torah is given to man and not to the angels who have no opportunity for fulfilling its precepts, each one of them was moved to love Moses. They had to agree that man's intellectual qualities were superb and they praised the Lord for the creation of man upon the earth.¹⁰

As to the purpose of God's consulting the angles about creating man, Zamakhshari gives various explanations. One is that it might serve as a moral lesson for His subjects to consult others before acting, though God, of course, with His infinite wisdom, needs no advice.¹¹

The Midrash Lekah Tob also states that the reason why God said, "Let Us make man," is that God does nothing without consulting His heavenly court,¹² though He does not require their advice. Similarly, the Talmud states: "The Holy One, blessed be He, does nothing without consulting His heavenly Court."¹³

According to the Talmud, the Bible itself attests to the creation of man by God alone without assistance. This is deduced from the biblical verse: "And God created man in His own image" (Gen. 1:27). However, God wanted to teach man an ethical principle, always to ask the advice of others before doing something.¹⁴

Tabari quotes the Moslem tradition that God gathered earth from all over the world and that, therefore, man's physiognomy differs in color as does the earth out of which he was formed.¹⁵ In the same manner, Jewish tradition explains the various colors of the parts comprising the human body,¹⁶ and that for the creation of man, God collected the dust from all parts of the world.¹⁷

Notes:

1 The word used here for angel is mal'ak (pl.) which corresponds to the Hebrew mal'ak meaning the bearer of messages; cf. Macdonald's article on Mala'ika in E. I., Vol. 3, pp189-92. Also, S. S. Haas, "The 'Creation of Man in the Qur'an," in The Moslem World, XXXI (3), July 1941, pp 268-73; Horovitz, "Muhammads Himmelfahrt," in Der Islam, Vol. IX, pp. 159f.

2 The term used here means that man is endowed with the ruling of the rest of the earthly creation. It is so stated in 45:11, 12: "God it is who subjects to you the sea that the ships may sail thereon at his bidding, and that ye may crave of His grace, and that haply ye may give thanks; and He has subjected to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth – all from Him; verily, in that are signs unto a people who reflect." This idea is identical with the biblical statement that man was created in the image of God, "...after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth... and God said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth'" (Gen 1:26-28). Cf. Zohar I, 47, Vilna edition: The latter echoes Sa'adia's idea that man like God may possess the power of governing: . Sa'adia, (Euvres Completes..., ed. Derenbourg, Vol. I, 1893. See also, and , quoted in T.S., Vol. I, p.159n.

3 Rashi, ad. loc.:

4

5

6 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 157:

7 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 67:

8 B. Sanh. 38b.

9 B. Shab. 88b. Cf. [B] where the angels' reply to God's inquiry, "Who will obey My laws, if I shall not create man?" is replaced by, "We shall follow your teaching." Here Muhammad uses a similar expression, "we hallow Thy name."

10 Gen. Rab. 17, 5; Lehav Tob, Gen 2, 19. Cf. also 2:31 and Is. 6:3; Yalkut Shim'oni, Vol. II, 404

11 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 67:

12

13 B. Sanh. 38b.

14 Ibid.

15 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 165:

16 However, Targum Jonathan to Gen. 2:7 mentions three colors only,

17 B. Sanh. 38a-38b: "Adam's trunk came from Babylo, his head from Erez Yisrael, his limbs from other lands, and his private parts, according to R. Aha, from Akra di Agma." See also [Z] and Talmud Yerushalmi, Sanh. 4, 9.

SURA II – VERSES 31-32

And He taught Adam the names, all of them;¹ then He propounded them to the angels and said, 'Declare to me the names of these, if ye are truthful.' They said, 'Glory be to Thee! No knowledge is ours but what Thou thyself hast taught us, verily, Thou are the knowing, the wise.' Said the Lord, 'O Adam, declare to them their names;' and when he had declared to them their names He said. 'Did I not say to you I know the secrets of the heavens and of the earth, and I know what ye show and what ye were hiding?'

Adam's remarkable wisdom, according to Jewish tradition, was displayed by his ability to find names for all the animals:² "The ministering angels spake before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: Sovereign of all Worlds! 'What is man, that thou shouldst take note of him?' (Ps. 144:3) 'Man (Adam) is like unto vanity' (ibid. 4), upon earth there is not his like. (God) answered them: Just as all of you praise Me in the heights of heaven so he professed My Unity on earth, nay, moreover, are you able to stand up and call the names for all the creatures which I have created? They stood up, but were unable (to give the names). Forthwith Adam stood up and called the names for all His creatures, as it is said, 'And the man gave names to all cattle'" (Gen. 2:20).³

God also assembled all the angels and requested them to name the animals according to their kind. But they were not equal to the task. God then called upon Adam, and he spoke without hesitation.⁴ A direct parallel to this Aggadic source may be found in Zamakhshari who writes that God showed Adam the various species he created and taught him to name the horse, the camel, etc. God also informed Adam about their characteristics and their usefulness in secular and religious matters in this world.⁵

1 Cf. 55:3: "He created man, taught him plain speech." Note, however, that in verse 31 "Adam" is used for insan as in biblical Hebrew ; cf. S. Haas, op. cit., p. 269; A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, Baroda, 1938, p. 79

2 The story is fully related in the Midrash cited below. According to Lekah Tob, the names Adam called were to remain forever because Adam designated those names by the heavenly spirit.

3 P.R.E., p.91

4 Lekah Tob, Gen. 2,20 [B]; cf. Gen. Rab. 17,5

5 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 68:

SURA II – VERSE 33

And when we said to the angels, 'Adore Adam,' they adored him save only Iblis, who refused and what too proud and became one of the misbelievers.¹

Geiger claims that this "legend bears unmistakable marks of Christian development." He goes on to say that "it is true that in Jewish writings great honor is spoken of as shewn by the angels to Adam, but this never went so far as adoration; indeed when this was once about to take place in error, God frustrated the action."²

This claim of Geiger is refuted if we assume that the word sajada literally meaning "bow down" (before him), does not refer to the deification of man by the angels, but merely to tribute and honor. Such an interpretation is given by Zamakhshari and Baidawi who agree that the command to the angels to "bow down before Adam" is not to be understood as a command to adore or deify him.³ It is worth mentioning that quite apart from the Moslem commentaries, Torrey recognizes that "the Koran does not speak of worshipping, however, but merely of approaching a personage of high rank in a truly oriental way."⁴ To the interpretation of the Moslem commentators, the rabbis offer an abundance of parallels and counterparts.⁵ We find in the Midrash: "On the day when the first man was created, as it is said, 'In the day when thou (Adam) wast created they were prepared,' the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the ministering angels: Come, let us descend and render loving service to the first man..."⁶

That the angels adored Adam "save only Iblis," is also discussed in the Talmud and other rabbinic sources. R. Judah says: "Adam reclined in the Garden of Eden, whilst the ministering angels roasted flesh and strained wine for him;"⁷ thereupon the serpent⁸ looked in, saw him, and became envious of him.⁹ "In the hour when the Holy One, blessed be He, created man, the ministering angels mistook him for the Deity and wished to proclaim him as the Holy One. God then made man to fall into a deep sleep, and all knew that he was human."¹⁰

Notes:

1 Cf. 38:71075 and E. J. Jurji, *Illumination in Islamic Mysticism*, Princetown, 1938, pp.84 f.

2 Geiger, op. cit., p. 98 and p. 77 (English edition). He also quotes a source (found in Zunz, "Diese Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden," p. 291n.) that shows a striking resemblance to this Koranic verse. It is found in the ms. Midrash or Rabbi Moses Haddarshan, who, however, lived in the eleventh century. M. Grunbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sagenkunde* (p. 60), follows Geiger in that worshipping any other than God would be inconceivable in Jewish tradition. The same view is upheld

by Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 224. See also H. Speyer, op. cit., p.16: "Diese Vorstellung is typisch christlich."

3 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 69:

4 Torrey, op. cit., p. 71; according to Ali, op. cit., p. 25n, sajada means "saluted"

5

6 P.R.E., p. 89

7 The Talmud, repeating the Aggada that the angels were serving roast meat to Afam in the Garden of Eden, states that this was "flesh that descended from heaven" (B. Sanh. 59b)

8 I.e. Satan; cf. Gen. Rab. 17 and L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, Vol. 5, p. 84. Re. the term Iblis (Satan: Iblis – diabolos; Shaitan – Ethiopic), See Horovitz. Kor. Uni., p. 87; also (ash-shaitan) ibid., pp. 120f; cf. A. N. Pollack, op. cit., p130; and Ibn Ezra to Gen 3:1 See also L. Jung, Fallen angels, Philadelphia, 1926, pp. 59-61; and 7:22 as well as Tabari, Vol. I, p. 179

9 Yalkut Shim'oni, Vo. I, 15 and B. Sanh. 59b:

10 cf. Ecc. Rab. 6, 10.

SURA II – VERSE 34

And we said, 'O Adam dwell, thou and thy wife, in Paradise, and eat therefrom amply as you wish; but do no draw near this tree of ye will be of the transgressors.' And Satan made them backslide therefrom and drove them out from what they were in, and we said, 'Go down, one of you the enemy of the other, and in the earth there is an abode and a provision for a time.'

Equivalent phrases are found in Gen. 2:16-18; 3:4, 13-23. The Arabic term for the devil (Shaitan) is the same as the Hebrew Satan.¹ Likewise the Arabic Jannatun (Paradise) (68:32) (98:7) is undoubtedly borrowed from the Hebrew Gan or Gan 'Eden.²

Grunbaum claims that the identification here of Satan with the snake is not to be found in Jewish literature and should therefore be attributed to Christian influence.³ However, in Jewish lore of the post-Koranic period, Satan is definitely identified with the serpent.⁴ According to Zamakhshari and Baidawi, Satan hid himself in the mouth of the snake in order to be able to enter Paradise.⁵ A similar idea is expressed by Sa'adia Gaon, who states that an angel spoke out of the mouth of the snake and not the snake himself.⁶

Tabari elaborates on the sadistic acts of the snake as well as on the punishment inflicted by God on the snake and on Adam and Eve. He writes that when Satan wanted to enter Paradise he entered the body of the snake, which was a quadruped and had the appearance of a camel. In Paradise he came out of the snake, took the fruit from the forbidden tree, brought it to Eve and enticed her by pointing out the greatness of its beauty, the sweetness of its taste and fragrance. Eve tasted it and came to Adam and persuaded him, too, to follow her example. Adam also ate it and then they began to realize their nakedness and hid themselves in the tree. God came and called: "Adam, where art thou?" And Adam replied. "Here I am. I hid in the tree because I am ashamed to stand before Thee," God replied: "The earth out of which thou wert created will be afflicted because of thee, cursed shall be the fruits it shall bear, and no tree whether in Paradise or on earth, shall surpass in beauty the cedar and the lote trees in the Garden of Eden." And to Eve He said: "Painful (like death) shall be thy giving birth."

And to the snake He said: "Because thou misled My servant, be thou condemned. Upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. Enmity shall prevail between thee and man."⁷ This narration in its entirety is drawn from Jewish sources. That the snake was like a camel is related in the Midrash.⁸ Similarly, the Midrash speaks of Adam's sin of thorns and thistles that would grow from the earth instead of trees because of man's unworthiness.⁹ The same applies to the story about Adam hiding from God because he was ashamed of his wrong doings.¹⁰

As for the curses inflicted upon the earth, Adam, Eve and the snake, Tabari's words duplicate the story in Genesis 3:14-19: "...cursed art thou (snake) from among all cattle, and ... beasts of the field... I will put enmity between thee and the woman... 'I will greatly multiply thy (woman's) pain and thy travail; in pain thou shalt bring forth children... cursed is the ground for thy (man's) sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...'"

Tabari also mentions that the menstruation of woman is a punishment inflicted originally upon Eve because of her sin.¹¹ This, too, appears in several rabbinic sources: "Eve was cursed with ten curses, since it is written: Unto the woman He said, and I will greatly multiply (Gen 3:16), which refers to the two drops of blood, one being that of menstruation and the other that of virginity."¹²

According to Baidawi, the prohibition to "draw near this tree" was a means of precaution. For the proximity of a thing stirs up a desire for it.¹³ The Aggada, too, related that when Adam told Eve that God commanded not to eat from the tree of knowledge, he added the prohibition of "not touching" the tree as a preventative measure.¹⁴

Muhammad leaves us in the dark as to the nature of the prohibited tree. Zamakhshari and Baidawi, however do raise the question of "the nature" of the tree and state that opinions about it are divided among Moslem commentators. Some hold that it was a "wheat (tree)," others call it was a "vine (tree)," still others maintain it was a "fig tree."¹⁵ All three opinions mentioned above are found in the Talmud. "That (forbidden) tree from which Adam ate was a vine, for nothing else but wine brings woe to man. R. Judah said: It was the wheat plant, for an infant cannot say 'father' and 'mother' until it has tasted of wheat (thus, wheat is the first thing to induce knowledge). R. Nehemiah said: It was the fig tree, for whereby they transgressed, they were taught to make amends as it is written, And they sewed fig leaves together. (Gen. 3:7)"¹⁶

Around the Koranic statement, "one of you the enemy of the other," the counterpart of which is found in the Bible (Gen. 3:16), Tabari weaves an Islamic legend: Muhammad was once asked whether it was permitted to kill a snake. He replied: "man and snake are eternal enemies. When the snake sees man he frightens him and bites him and inflicts pain on him."¹⁷ In the Talmud, too. We find that "only an ox that killed (is tried) by twenty-three, but any other animal or beast who killed, whoever is the first to kill it acquires merit in the sight of Heaven..... Is not R. Akiba's opinion identical to that of the first Tanna (of the Mishnah)? – (No;) they differ in the case of a serpent (which, according to R. Akiba, can be killed even without trial)."¹⁸

Notes:

1 Ibn Ezra to Gen. 3:1; Maimonides,

2 Geiger, op. cit., pp. 46-7; " 'Eden,' , is the proper name of a region signifying bliss, and is the garden of pleasure." See also Torrey, op. cit., p. 71; Gen. Rab. 17, 18; Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews,

Vol. 5, p. 84. Though the term is used in the Koran in connection with other gardens and is also found in the pre-Islamic literature, there is no doubt that its derivation is from the Hebrew. S. Frankel, *Die Aram. Fremdwörter in Arabischen*, Leiden, 1886, p. 148. The Koranic expression here recalls the biblical "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden." Compare 18:107; 23:10; B. Hag. 14a and U. Cassuto, , Jerusalem, 1953, p.70

3 *Neue Beiträge*...., p. 61

4 quoted in T. S., Vol. I, p. 69

5 Zamakhshari, Vol. I. p. 69 Baidawi, ad loc.

6 Ibn Ezra's commentary, Gen. 3:1: . This idea is also found in ; cf. Geiger, op. cit., p. 100.

7 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 181:

8 9 10

11 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 182:

12 B. 'Erub. 100b; cf. T. S., Vol. II, p.273n

13 Baidawi, Vol. I p. 20. On God's command "do not draw near this tree" he writes Cf. 7:18, "but draw not nigh unto this tree or ye will be of the unjust." 14

15 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 21 ; cf. Zamakhshari, ad loc.

16 B. Sanh. 70a-70b; B. Ber. 40a; Gen. Rab. 15:7: "the forbidden tree was a fig tree." As to the nature of the tree of knowledge in Jewish and Christian sources see L. Ginzberg, *Die Haggada bei den Kirchenvatern und in der Apokryphischen Literatur*, Berlin, 1900, pp. 38 ff. and Judah Rosenthal, *HUCA*, XXI, 1948, p.56

17 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 181

18 B. Sanh. 15b: The rabbis also discuss the reason why the carcass of a snake is not contaminating like that of other creeping animals. Their opinion is that it was deliberately done so in order that the man should be eager to kill him and use his skin and thus fulfil God's command, Gen. 3:15, "and I will put enmity between thee and the woman..." quoted in T. S., Vol. II, p. 270. Cf. where it is stated that According to Targum Yerushalmi (Gen. 3:21), "the garments, which God made for man were made of the skin of the snake.

SURA II – VERSE 35

And Adam caught certain words from his Lord, and He turned towards him, for He is the compassionate one easily turned.

The Arabic expression of *وَوَلَّىٰ وَجْهَكَ*, if used in the religious sense, implies returning to a state of obedience, i.e., repentance.¹

According to Baidawi, the phrase, “and He turned towards him,” refers to the Lord turning to Adam mercifully and accepting his repentance.² This idea is also found in the rabbinic sources, where it is related that God showed Adam the way to repent.³ The Midrash derives its explanation from the biblical phrase, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Gen. 3:19).⁴

We also find that when Adam met Cain and inquired about his penalty for killing Abel, the latter replied that he had repented and his punishment was mitigated.⁵ Thereupon Adam realized the importance of repentance.⁶ The Midrash also states that when Adam violated the prohibition of eating from the forbidden fruit, he implored God not to mete out the punishment of death on the very same day, but one thousand years hence (God’s day), so that he would have ample time to repent.⁷ Tabari and Zamakhshari⁸ relate that Adam pleaded with God “Didst Thou create me? Didst Thou imbue me with Thy spirit? Didst Thou place mercy before anger?” Such a plea is, to our knowledge not to be found in rabbinic sources. However, the idea that God placed mercy before anger in his dealing with Adam is explicitly mentioned in rabbinic sources where it is stated that the reason for God’s calling to Adam, “Where art thou?”, was to place mercy before judgement and thus induce Adam to repent.⁹ Teaching Adam to repent has influenced the whole world to learn the art of asking forgiveness.¹⁰

Notes:

1 *وَوَلَّىٰ وَجْهَكَ* having the same meaning as the Hebrew term *וָשׁוּב* (repentance), from the root *וָשׁוּב*, “return”

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 21 Cf. Mahdi Allam, “The Theory of Forgiveness as expressed in the Qur’an,” in Manchester Literary and Phil. Society, Warrington, 1939, Vol. LXXXIII, pp. 63-79

3

4 Gen. 3:19

5

6 Cf. B. 'A. Z. 8a; Lev. Rab. 10, 5.

7

8 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 187: Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 70:

9

10

SURA II – VERSE 38 and 44

O ye children of Israel! Remember my favours with which I have favoured you; fulfil my covenant and I will fulfil your covenant.

O ye children of Israel! Remember my favours which I have favoured you with, and that I have preferred you above the worlds.

Compare the rabbinic dictum: “You have made me a unique object of your love in the world, and I shall make you a unique object of My love in the world.”¹

Similarly the Bible states: “And I will establish my covenant² between Me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout the generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7-9). The word “covenant” is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures,³ e.g.: “Now therefore, if ye hearken unto My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be Mine own treasure⁴ from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine” (Exod. 19:5)

According to Midrash Tanhuma the foundation of the world is the Torah, with which God favored the Israelites, that they should study and obey its precepts day and night, and be blessed by Him.⁵ A similar idea is found in Tabari, who also interprets the favors as referring to the Scriptures, the prophets and to the miracles in Egypt.⁶ The Rashbam offers a similar explanation.⁷ But Rabbi Obadia Sforno gives a more specific reason. He says: “Although the entire human species is dear to Me... yet you are the dearest of all... thereby will you be more beloved to Me than all the other peoples for you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, to understand and to teach the entire human race to call in the name of the Lord and to worship Him.”⁸

Notes:

1 B. Hag. 3a. Cf. See 3:111: “What ye do of good surely God will not deny, for God knows those who fear.” Also 2:147

2

3 Ps. 105:8, 8, 10 Cf. Exod. 19:5; 34:28; Deut. 5:31 9:9-11; 26:18; Mishnah Ab. 3:18:

4 The Hebrew term 'am segullah is translated by some as "peculiar treasure" or "peculiar people," the Latin translation being peculium. The Targumim, both Onkelos and Yerushalmi give as its meaning "beloved,"

5 Gen. 1, 13 [B]; the Torah was given to Adam after he repented as a substitute for the Garden of Eden which he had lost.

6 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 191:

7 Ad loc.; cf. Moshe Greenberg, "Segulla," JAOS, 1952, Vol. LXXI (3), pp 172-74; Boaz Cohen, "Peculium in Jewish and Roman Law," in PAAJR, XX (1951), pp. 135-234. The divine communication with Moses was for the sake of Israel. B. B. B. 121b; Rashi to Deut. 2:17

8

SURA II – VERSE 46

When we saved you from Pharaoh's people who sought to wreak you evil and woe, slaughtering your sons and letting your women live; in that was a great trial for you from your Lord.

Muhammad here combines two stories; the biblical tale about Pharaoh's decree to kill the sons "upon the birthstool"¹ and the Midrashic legend that Pharaoh was stricken with leprosy and ordered the slaughter of the Israelite children in order to bathe in their blood.²

Zamakhshari,³ Baidawi and Tabari⁴ quote a tradition that the Egyptian wise men foretold to Pharaoh that a male child would be born that year who would inflict defeat upon him and crush his empire. This caused Pharaoh to decree the death of all male children.

This tradition is well known in the Talmud, where it related that Pharaoh decreed the slaughter of all male children, because the astrologers had warned him that a boy was soon to be born to the Israelites who would overthrow him.⁵

The Midrash also describes how Pharaoh's people "sought to wreak" the Israelites "evil and woe." "The taskmasters of Pharaoh were beating the Israelites in order that they should make (for them) the tale of bricks, and it is said, 'And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them' (Ex. 5:8). The Israelites were gathering the straw of the wilderness, and they were carrying it on their asses and (also on) their wives, and their sons. The straw of the wilderness pierced their heels, and the blood was mingled with the mortar... the Holy One, blessed be He, descended and smote the firstborn of the Egyptians..."⁶

Pharaoh's cruel decree brought havoc to the whole community. It is related in the Talmud that "Amram was the greatest man of his generation; when he saw that the wicked Pharaoh had decreed 'Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river,' he said, In vain do we labour. He rose and divorced his wife. All (the Israelites) thereupon arose and divorced their wives. His daughter said to him, 'Father, thy decree is more severe than Pharaoh's; because Pharaoh decreed only against the males whereas thou hast decreed against the males and females. Pharaoh only decreed concerning this world whereas thou hast decreed concerning this world and the World to Come. In the case of the wicked Pharaoh there is a doubt whether his decree will be fulfilled or not, whereas in thy case, though thou art righteous, it is certain that thy decree will be fulfilled... He arose and took his wife back; and they all arose and took their wives back.'"⁷

The style in verses 46-95 of this Sura is much like that of the Mosaic admonitions in the book of Deuteronomy.⁸ It also recalls the biblical expressions describing the hardships of the Israelites at the hands of the Egyptian taskmasters.⁹

Notes:

1 Exod. 1:15-22; Rashi, ad loc.

2

3 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 75: Cf. Baidawi, ad loc.

4 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 208:

5 B. Sot. 12a; cf. [B]

6 P.R.E., pp. 385-86; cf. Geiger, op. cit., pp. 153-54

7 B. Sot. 12a. Cf. Exod. 1:11-21.

8 Deut. 29:1-5

9 Rashi in explaining the Hebrew word in Exod. 1:13 writes that the Israelites were put to rigorous labor which crushed and shattered their bodies. See also B. B. Sot. 12a-b

SURA II – VERSE 47

When we divided for you the sea and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people while ye looked on.

Chapter 14, verses 1-29 in Exodus relates the entire history of the Israelites in Egypt culminating in the events related in the 30th verse: "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." In verse 21, God commands Moses to stretch out "his hand over the sea." According to the Midrash, when Moses "stretched out his hand over the sea" the waters refused to be divided. "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He looked at the sea, and the waters saw the face of the Holy One, blessed be He, and they trembled and quaked, and descended into the depth..."¹ The Egyptians then "entered the sea after him (Pharaoh)... Forthwith the waters returned, and covered them..."²

Tabari writes that the Koran in using the word bikum implies that the sea was divided³ into twelve parts, a number equal to the twelve tribes. This is found in the Mekilta Beshalah.⁴

According to Zamakhshari, the Israelites refused to cross the sea unless the tribes, separated by the walls of water, were able to see each other while crossing.⁵

That the Israelites agreed to cross the sea only provided Moses met their conditions is also told in the Midrash.⁶ According to Jewish tradition, making the walls transparent so that the tribes could see one another was one of the ten miracles performed at the Red Sea.⁷

Jewish tradition also relates that Pharaoh sent along some Egyptians to see that Israel returned after three days. When the Egyptians notified Pharaoh that Israel reused to return, Pharaoh mobilized his army and set out in six hundred iron chariots. AT the end of the sixth day of the Exodus, the Israelites noticed the Egyptians approaching, Moses ordered his followers to advance all that night. The Egyptian chariots lost their wheels in the heat of the fiery pillar that moved behind Israel and therefore proceeded with great difficulty. Finally Israel reached the Sea. It separated and Israel passed

to the other side. The Egyptians followed. When they were all in the middle of the Sea, the waters began pouring back and drowned them all.⁸

Tabari relates that when all the Israelites entered the sea, Pharaoh watched them from the shore while riding on a male horse. Then Gabriel appeared on a female horse and when the male horse saw her, he ran after her. Pharaoh's horse was followed by the other Egyptian horsemen and they all entered the sea.⁹ This legend is found in Jewish sources. "The Egyptians desired to follow after Israel, but they turned backwards, fearing lest the waters would return over them. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He appeared before them like a man riding on the back of a mare, as it is said. 'To a steed in Pharaoh's chariots' (Cant. 1:9). The horse on which Pharaoh rode saw the mare (of God), and it neighed and ran and entered the sea after it."¹⁰

In the Pentateuch there is no statement to the effect that Pharaoh himself was drowned, It tells only about Pharaoh's people. Rabbinic sources,¹¹ however, tell that Pharaoh was saved in order to relate to the Egyptians the great miracles God had shown His people. Similarly does the Koran (8:56; 11:99) talk about the Egyptians and state that Pharaoh was saved because he began to believe in God and in order that he might be an example for future generations.

According to Zamakhshari, the Israelites saw how the Egyptians were drowned and all their doubts disappeared.¹² The same idea is found in the Aggadah: The Israelites saw the Egyptians dead in order that they should not say that the Egyptians escaped from the other side of the sea just as the Israelites came out from this side. ¹³

The Koranic expression "which you looked on" recalls the following legend: "Rabbi Simon said: On the fourth day the Israelites encamped by the edge of the sea... The Egyptians were floating... upon the surface of the waters, and a north wind went forth and cast them opposite the camp of Israel, and the Israelites went and saw them, and they recognized them..."¹⁴

Notes:

1 P.R. E., pp. 329-30

2 Ibid., p. 331; cf. [W]

3 Tabari, Vol. I, p.210: Cf. Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 75:

4

5 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p75:

6

7 Cf. Grunbaum, op. cit., p. 167

8 [W] ; cf. B. Pes. 118b

9 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 211: Tabari's reference to Michael recalls the following Midrash:

10 P.R.E., p. 331; cf. ; Grunbaum, op. cit. p. 166; 10:90-2; Geiger, op. cit., p. 162; Aggadath Shir ha-Shirim (Sch.), p. 17

11 However Hirschberg (op. cit., p. 237) and Horovitz (Kor. Unt., pp. 23f.) see in this story Islamic influence. See Ps. 136:15;

12 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 75:

13

14 P.R.E., p. 332

SURA II – VERSES 48-51

When we treated with Moses forty nights, then ye took the calf after he had gone and ye did wrong. Yet then we forgave you after that; perhaps ye maybe grateful. And when we gave Moses the Scriptures and the Discrimination; perhaps ye will be guided. When Moses said to his people. 'O my people! Ye have wronged yourselves in taking this calf; repent unto your Creator and kill each other!'

The Talmud relates: "When Moses ascended on high, he said to Israel, I will return at the end of forty days, at the beginning of the sixth hour (at midday). At the end of forty days Satan came and confounded the world. Said he to them: 'Where is your teacher Moses?' 'He has ascended on high,' they answered him. 'The sixth (hour) has come,' said he to them, but they disregarded him... (Thereupon) he showed them a vision of his bier, and this is what they said to Aaron, for this Moses, the man, etc."² Thus, upon Moses' seeming disappearance, the people sought a divine substitute to "go before us" (Exod. 32:1).

The Koran speaks here of forty nights only, ignoring the biblical forty days: "And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights" (Ex. 24:18). This is perhaps explained by an interpretation found in Rashi² in his comment on Exodus 32:1, which most likely is taken from early Midrashic sources: "When Moses went up to the mountain, he said to them, 'At the end of forty days I shall return within (the first) six hours (of the day).' They thought that the same day that he went up was part of the number (of forty); but he had said to them whole (days), (i.e.) forty days and their nights together with them, but the day of his ascent did not (include) its night together with it"...³ Thus it happened that when Moses did not return at the expected hour, the Israelites made the golden calf. This may be the reason why Muhammad refers to the forty nights only, since it was the fortieth night that caused Israel's sin.⁴ The Midrash also relates the Moses "burnt the calf with fire, and powdered it, like the dust of the earth, and he cast its dust upon the face of the waters... He made Israel drink the water (with the dust of the calf). Everyone who had kissed the calf with all his heart, his upper lips and bones became golden, and the tribe of Levi (which did not associated itself with the affair of the calf) slew him, until there fell of Israel about three thousand men."⁵

Comparably with these details the Koran says: "then ye took the calf after he had gone and ye did wrong." In 2:87, repeating the sin of the calf, the Koran states: "and they were made to drink the calf down into their hearts for their unbelief," – a detail found in Exodus 32:20: "And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." This would indicate that the Koranic calf, like the biblical one, was not a live on.

The Koranic statement: "Yet then we forgave you after that; perhaps ye may be grateful," is also paralleled in the Midrash. "By the merit of the three patriarchs, the three angels. Wrath, Anger and Temper, were restrained from (doing harm to) Israel. But two (angels) remained. Moses spake before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all the Universe! For the sake of the oath which Thou didst swear unto them, keep back (the angel) Destruction from Israel... and Destruction was kept back from Israel, as it is said 'But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not' (Ps. 78:38) Moses spake before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all worlds! For the sake of Thy

great and holy Name, which Thou didst make known unto me, hold back from Israel (the angel called) Glow of Anger... What did Moses do? He dug into the earth in the possession of Gad, as (though the foundation of) a large dwelling, and he buried 'Fierce Anger; in the earth, like a man who is bound in the prison. Every time Israel sins it arises and opens its mouth to bite with its breath, and to destroy Israel. Moses pronounced against it the (divine) Name, and brought it back beneath the earth. Therefore is its name called Peor (the one who opens)."⁶

The Koranic reference to the Book points to the verse: "And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel" (Deut. 4:44). Scholars and commentators have been puzzled by the meaning of the term Furqan.⁷ Some have rendered it as the illumination (3:2), deliverance (8:29), Mosaic Revelation (2:50, 21:49, 25:1), distinction (between right and wrong) (2:181), or divine help (21:49). Professor Margoliouth suggests: "there is some probability that the 'Sayings of the Fathers' called by the Jews Perakim lies hidden in the name of a sacred book which he (Muhammad) calls Furqan."⁸ Baidawi suggests that it means the Psalms.⁹ Our present study shows a large number of references in the Koran to Pirke Aboth and to the Psalms,¹⁰ which would lead us to the conclusion that Muhammad was aware of those books since they were used reverently by the Jews in Arabia. They were read by the latter in their Synagogues, taught by them in their schools and were considered a guide for ethical conduct. According to Horovitz: "it is not quite out of place to call attention to the Aramaic form 'pirkin', which Mohammed may have changed into 'furkan' and the word 'pirkin' would be even still closer to the Koranic form, which form 'pirkan' is repeatedly mentioned in the Baraita Erubin 54b and which is there employed with reference to the doctrines handed over by Moses to the individual groups and to the people as a whole."¹¹

As for the clause, "and kill each other," the original reads faqtula anfusakum¹² which may also mean "kill yourselves." In Baidawi and Zamakhshari we find two explanations: one, that those who did not worship the golden calf should kill those who did;¹³ the second, that they should destroy their evil inclinations, for he who never chastises himself never pleases himself, and he who never kills himself never lives.¹⁴ The first explanation has a counterpart in rabbinic literature. The Talmud¹⁵ states that Levi's tribe did not worship the golden calf and therefore was told to kill the sinners.

Regarding the expression "kill each other," Baidawi comments, "Kill yourselves so that you may live."¹⁶ This is a counterpart of the Talmudic statement: "What shall a man do to live?" They replied: 'Let him mortify himself.'¹⁷

As to thumma 'afauna 'ankum¹⁸ (then we forgave you). Zamakhshari states that it refers to the Israelites making atonement¹⁹ for the sin of the golden calf. A broader concept of the efficacy of repentance, no matter how grievous the sins might be, is constantly stressed by the rabbis: "The Israelites made the (golden) calf only in order to place a good argument in the mouth of the penitents."²⁰

Notes:

1 B. Shab. 89a; cf. notes to 2:52, 53, 54, 57, 80, 86, 87, 102.

2

3 P. R. C., Vol. II, p. 399

4 Cf. Zamakhshari and Baidawi ad loc., about the forty nights

5 P. R. E., pp. 356-57; cf. Targum Yerushalmi, Exod. 32:20

6 Ibid., pp. 357-58. Cf. also:

7 Gieger, op. cit., p. 55; Hirschfeld, New Researches... p. 68; Margoliouth, E.R.R. Vol. X, p. 539;

Noldeke, Neue Beitrage... p.234.; J. Wensinck, Furkan, E. I., Vol. II (1927); Mark Lidzbarski, "Islam und Salam" in ZSVG, Vol. I, p. 92. J. Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 216-18; R. Dvorak, "Uber die Fremdwörter im Koran," in Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie, Philos-hist. Klasse, Bd. 109 (Wien, 1885), p. 499

8D. S. Margoliouth, op.cit., p. 145

9 Baidawa, 3:2 However, Naidawi, Vol. I, p.24, in his comment on this verse, explains the term as a derivation from the verb i.e. "to separate", which denotes the Torah, since the Torah distinguishes between truth and falsehood and between things permitted and prohibited. Zamakhshari gives the same explanation, Vol. I, p. 75. Cf. Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 205-6; Frankel, Fremdwörter, p. 248; 4:163; Tabari, Tafsir, Vol. 6, p. 18.

10 Many of the sayings and ideas in Suras two and three appear to be a replica of Psalm 104-8. In another place in the Koran, Muhammad states, "and already we have written in the Psalms after the reminder that 'the earth shall my righteous servants inherit'" (21:105). The latter phrase repeats Ps. 37:29, "the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever." Cf. Schwally, ZDMG, LII, p. 133; Is. 60:21

11 Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 217-18. It is possible that Muhammad adopted the term furqan from the word in the Talmudic passage: Of interest is the phrase yauma 'l-fuqani in 8:42 which is identical with the expression in the Targum I Sam. 11:13, , meaning "deliverance". See, however, J. Rivlin, in Gotthold Weil Jubilee Volume, pp. 24-33

12

13 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 75:

14 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 25

15 B. Yom. 66b

16 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 25

17 Literally, "kill himself," with study and hard work," Cf. 2:149, note 7

18

19 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 73

20

SURA II – VERSE 52

And when ye said to Moses, 'O Moses! We will not believe in thee until we see God Manifestly,' and the thunderbolt caught you while ye yet looked on.¹

This story is found in the Midrash: "The voice of the second (commandment) went forth, and they (the Israelites were quickened (after they were alive and had fallen on their faces and died), and they stood upon their feet and said to Moses: Moses, our teacher! We are unable to hear any more the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, for we shall die, even as we died (just now), as it is said, 'And they said until Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die' (Exod. 20:19). And now, why should we die as we died (just now)?"²

Sifre³ takes the Hebrew word Bamar'ah in Num. 12:6 to mean the vision of the word and not of the Shekinah. According to Sa'adia Gaon and others, the various allusions in the Bible to "seeing God" refer to a special light created for the vision of the prophets.⁴ The phrase "They saw the God of Israel" (Ex. 24:10) is explained by Abraham Ibn Ezra to mean "They saw in a vision."⁵ In like manner Isaiah and Ezekiel "saw" the throne of God. The Talmud states that at "every word which went forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, the souls of Israel departed, for it is said, My soul went forth when he spake (Cant. 5:6)... He brought down the dew with which He will resurrect the dead and revive them, as it is said: Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary" (Ps. 68:10).⁶

According to Baidawi and Zamakhshari, seventy⁷ leaders requested of Moses to see God, otherwise they would not believe in Him. This probably is based on the story in the bible that seventy of the elders of Israel saw the God of Israel: "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel..." (Exod. 24:9-10).

Notes:

1 Cf. notes to 2:26, 60; and 4:152.

2 P.R.E., p. 325. According to Reckendorf, "Muhammad invented this story about the Israelites' desire to 'see God manifestly,' but they were unable to see his vision and died. Then Moses interceded for them and God revived them,"

3 [F] ; B. Shab. 88b-89a

4 V/ Aptowitzer, , Tarbiz, Vol. II, #3, 1931, pp.278 f.

5

6 B. Shab. 88b; cf. Geiger, op cit., pp. 161-62, quoting the following rabbinical story: . However, Hirschfeld in New Researches..., p. 107n, claims that Geiger misunderstood verse 52. For, says he, in

the Koran “it is the people who desire to see God, whilst Mohammed confounded Ex. 20:19 with 33:18 and Num. 16:22-35.” Cf. also [W] ; [B] ; and A.S. Yahuda, “A Contribution to Qur’an and Hadith Interpretation” in Goldziher Memorial Volume, Budapest, 1948, Part I, pp. 286 f. 7 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 76: Cf. Baidawi, ad loc.

SURA II – VERSE 53

Them we raised you up after your death; perhaps ye may be grateful.

According to Moslem commentators, when Moses saw his seventy companions stricken dead he immediately “interceded for their restoration to life, on the ground that the people might suspect him of their murder.” God then restored them to life.¹ This Koranic verse seems to refer to the legend in the Talmud² that the Israelites, upon hearing the divine voice, died and were later restored to life. Another version in the Talmud states that the Israelites were restored by the intercession of the Torah itself.³

Tabari comments: After the seventy were restored to life, they gazed at each other with amazement and said (to Moses): All your requests from God are fulfilled; pray that we too may become prophets. Moses implored God, whereupon they were inspired with prophecy. This is the meaning of the Koranic sentence: “Then we raised you up after your death.”⁴ This tradition about the seventy people who became prophets probably has its origin in the biblical story (Num. 11:25): “and the Lord came down in the cloud,... and took of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders...” According to Baidawi,⁵ they were punished because of their insistence on seeing God or comprehending Him in corporeal form, imagining that God possesses dimensions and is comprehensible to the human senses. He adds that some Moslem traditionalists maintain that a fire descended from heaven and killed them.⁶ This very same idea is found in Maimonides’ Guide: “But the ‘nobles of the Children of Israel’ were impetuous, and allowed their thoughts to go unrestrained: what they perceived was but imperfect” “They are blamed for the nature of their perception, which was to a certain extent corporeal – a result which necessarily followed, from the fact that they ventured too far before being perfectly prepared. They deserved to perish, but at the intercession of Moses this fate was averted by God for the time. They were afterwards burnt at Taberah, except Nadab and Abihu, who were burnt in the Tabernacle of the congregation, according to what is stated by authentic tradition.”⁷

Notes:

1 Tafsir-i-Raufi, quoted by Wherry, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 309

2 B. Shab. 88b; cf. notes to 2:52; B. Hag. 12b

3 2:52 note 3; cf. Ps. 106:8; “Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake...” Ps. 106:23 “Had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn back His wrath, lest He should destroy them.” Also ; and Jellinek, op. cit., Part I, p. 69

4 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 224:

5 Referring to 2:52

6 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 25:

7 Moses Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, tr. By M. Friedlander, London, 2nd ed. 1942, pp. 18-19. Cf.

SURA II – VERSE 54

And we overshadowed you with the cloud, and sent down the manna and the quails; ‘Eat of the good things we have given you.’ They did not wrong us, but it was themselves they were wrongdoing.

In this verse,¹ the Koran mentions the great events in the life of the Israelites in the desert, the pillars of cloud, the manna and the quails. The former served as a protection and the latter provided them with sustenance.

The Talmud declares that the pillar of cloud completed² the pillar of fire, and the pillar of fire completed the pillar of cloud. According to a Jewish tradition, when Israel was almost overtaken by the Egyptians before they reached the Sea of Reeds, the pillars changed direction. “And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them” (Exod. 14:19).³ This, the Midrash explains, was due to the approach of the Egyptians who had been throwing arrows and stones at the Israelites. The pillar of cloud served as a protection by intercepting the missiles.⁴

The pillar of cloud (one of seven) that moved in front of Israel also served to level hills⁵ and to fill valleys so that Israel might have an easier road on which to travel.⁶

Regarding the second part of the Koranic⁷ verse, we find a comparable idea in the Talmud: “The flesh for which they asked improperly was given to them at an improper time; whereas the bread for which they asked properly was given to them in its proper time.”⁸

The Moslem commentators who discuss this Koranic verse about the miracles in the desert reveal a thorough acquaintance with rabbinic lore. Zamakhshari writes that the clouds came down to Israel as a protection and followed the Israelites in all their vicissitudes in order to protect them against the sun. Likewise, a pillar of fire descended in the night to illuminate their way. Also their apparel was protected from mud or being worn out.⁹ Each one of these remarks is traceable to rabbinic sources. The rabbis tell us that the clouds formed a canopy,¹⁰ that is, a protection against the sun,¹¹ and also served to protect the clothing of the Israelites.¹² “The clouds encased them, preventing their apparel from wrinkling and protecting them from dust, thus avoiding the need for laundering.”¹³

According to Tabari, the clothing also expanded in proportion with the growth of the people.¹⁴ This tradition, too, has its origin in Jewish sources, which claim that “The Divine clouds of glory rubbed the dirt from their garments and bleached them so that they looked like new; and as the children grew, their garments grew with them.”¹⁵

In discussing the manna, Zamakhshari and Tabari quote a tradition to the effect that it was the kind of food called Taranjabin in Persian.¹⁶ In Jewish literature, the heretic Hiwi al-Balkhi, who lived in the 9th century, expresses the same opinion.¹⁷

Zamakhshari also adds that the south wind gathered the manna daily for the Israelites.¹⁸ Since there is no mention of a wind in the Bible in connection with the manna, it would appear that Zamakhshari confuses this with the quails, about which it is stated in the Bible: "And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought across quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp..." (Num. 11:31) This is also in line with Tabari's comment that the south wind gathered the quails.¹⁹

Notes:

1 Compare Ps. 105:39-40, "He spread a cloud for a screen; And fire to give light in the night. They asked, and He brought quails, And gave them in plenty the bread of heaven."

2 I.e. overlapped (). B. Shab. 23b. Cf. also

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4 Also "...If one of the Israelites dropped out from under the wings of the cloud, the pillar of cloud gathered him from behind until he joined the main body." M.S.N., p. 61

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6 M.S.N., p. 61: "Every hilly place it (the cloud) levelled, and every depression it raised, and it killed the serpents and the scorpions..."

7 The Koranic terms for "manna" and "quails" (Mann and Salwa) are similar to the Hebrew man and selaw and always occur together. The Aramaic is Salwe or Salwai (Targum Jonathan Num. 11:32). Cf. Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 210, 222.

8 B. Yoma 75a-75b

9 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 77

10

11 Cf. B. Suk. 2a

12

13

14 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 227:

15 S. Ch., p. 1035n.; cf.:

16 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 77:

17 J. Rosenthal, "Hiwi al-Balkhi," in JQR (New Series), XXXVIII #3, p. 18; cf. Ibn Ezra to Exod. 16:13

18 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 77:

19 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 226:

SURA II – VERSE 57

When Moses, too, asked drink for his people and we said, 'Strike with thy staff the rock,' and from it burst forth twelve springs; each man among them knew his drinking place. 'Eat and drink of what God has provided, and transgress not on the earth as evildoers.'

In one place in the Bible, Moses was directed to strike the rock: "And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said: 'Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?' And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying: 'What shall I do unto this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' And the Lord said unto Moses: 'Pass on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand and go. Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink'" (Exod. 17:3-6). In another passage, however, Moses was told to speak to the rock: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: 'Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, that it give forth water; and thou shalt bring for the to them water out of the rock; so thou shalt give the congregation and their cattle drink'" (Num. 20:7-8). In this Koranic verse Muhammad uses the first version.¹

Zamakhshari seems to be aware of both references in the Bible and comments that first Moses struck the rock and water emerged, but then the Israelites said, 'Should the rod be lost, we too will be lost.' Therefore, God said to Moses, 'Speak to the rock but do not use the rod to strike it; perhaps they will be instructed.'²

The references in the Bible about "striking" or "speaking" to the rock are also discussed by the rabbis. According to them, just as punishment and coercion are required in the training of a child and whereas words are used when he is mature, so here, too, Moses was directed to "strike" the rock when it was a small stone, but to "speak" to it when it developed into a rock.³ A less naïve explanation is found in the Midrash Lekah Tob. There we find that God's miracles assumed different meanings. At the beginning, God told Moses to "strike the rock," and later on to "speak to it," in order to prove the might of God as it reveals itself in different forms.⁴

Another interesting tradition is found in Zamakhshari, viz. that Adam brought the rock down from Paradise. From him it passed through many hands and finally fell into the hands of Jethro,⁵ who gave it to Moses, his son-in-law, together with the rod. There is no mention of the rock⁷ in rabbinic literature, but we do find reference to the rod.⁸ The rod was one of the ten things created by God at twilight on the eve of the Sabbath.⁹

The reference here to "twelve springs" is probably based on the story in the Aggada about the travels of the Israelites in the desert when rivers were said to have formed around each tribe.¹⁰

Notes:

1 Cf. Ps. 105:41: "He opened the rock, and waters gushed out; They ran, a river in the dry places."

2 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p.78:

3

4

5 Shu'aib ; cf. Noldeke-Schwally, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 151 note 9; Horovitz, HUCA, p.172

6 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 78:

7 The rock could, however, be identified, and it was so pointed out to Moses by God (Pessikta Num. 20). According to the Talkut (763), mentioned in footnote 3 of this verse, it was the same rock that Moses used in Horeb and in the Wilderness of Zion. Thus, the Moslem idea of the rock having passed through many hands may have some relation to the rock carried around by Moses. Zamakhshari (ibid.) also relates that the rock had four corners (square), and out of each corner there flowed three springs, one for each tribe. The Israelites, he says, were 600,000 in number, and camped on a plain twelve miles long. That the camp of Israel occupied a space of twelve miles is found in Talmud Yerushalmi where his teacher resides, unless there is a distance of twelve miles between them, comparable to the space occupied by the camp of Israel. Cf. B. Sanh. 5b; B. 'Erub. 55b, and Maimonides, Hilkot Talmud Torah, V, Halakah 3.

8

9 Cf. Grunbaum, op. cit., p. 163

10 Cf. Exod. 15:27 and Rashi ad loc.

SURA II – VERSE 58

And when they said, 'O Moses, we cannot always bear one kind of food; pray then thy Lord to bring forth for us of what the earth grows, its green herbs, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, and its onions.' Said he, 'Do ye ask what is meaner instead of what is best? Go down to Egypt, - there is what ye ask.' Then they were smitten with abasement and poverty, and met with wrath from God. That was because they had misbelieved in God's signs and killed the prophets undeservedly;¹ that was for that they were rebellious and had transgressed.

In the Yalkut it is stated that the Israelites were afraid that the manna would cause their intestines to burst, and kill them.² Commenting on the first part of the Koranic sentence Tabari writes: "Moses said to the Israelites: 'Would you prefer a thing of importance though small and limited in its nutritious value?'"³ This tale parallels the story found in Sifre.⁴ which reads as follows: "R. Shimeon says: 'The manna tasted according to their fancy, except for those five kinds of food (viz. melons, cucumber, leeks, onions and garlic)... The sages say: 'The manna tasted according to their fancy, but they saw only manna, as it is said: Our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all save this manna to look upon.'"⁵

The Koranic expression, "Go down to Egypt,"⁶ is reminiscent of Moses' admonitions, where the great leader rebukes the Israelites for their disobedience, and threatens: "And the Lord shall bring thee back into Egypt in ships, by the way whereof I said unto thee: 'Thou shalt see it no more again..." (Deut. 28:68)

As for the last part of this Koranic verse, telling of the unjust slaying of the prophets, Geiger thinks that it is probably a reference to Jesus.⁷ However, there is in the Aggada, a comparable story that the Israelites, during Moses' first stay on Mount Sinai, called upon their Elders to make a god for them. When the Elders refused, Israel killed them outright; they also killed Hur, the prophet, son of Miriam, for the same reason.⁸

The Talmud comments on the biblical verse, "And when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it" (Exod. 32:5), as follows: "What did he (Aaron) actually see?... He saw Hur lying slain before him and said (to himself): if I do not obey them, they will now do unto me as they did unto Hur, and so will be fulfilled (the fear of) the prophet, Shall the priest and his prophet be slain in the sanctuary of God?" (Lam. 2:20).⁹

Notes:

1 Cf. 3:20, 108. 177.

2

3 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 237:

4 Cf.

5 M.S.N., p. 68; cf. B. Yom. 75a

6 Ali, op. cit., p. 36n., considers the translation “Go down to Egypt” as erroneous and renders the phrase as “Enter a City,” since the word *misr* is used here as a common noun. This city would probably refer to Hazeroth (Num. 11:35).

7 Geiger, op. cit., p.196, “Was sich wohl auf Jesus bezieht.”

8

9 B. Sanh. 7a: cf. Rashi to Exod. 32:5.

SURA II – VERSE 60

And when we took a covenant with you and held the mountain over you; ‘Accept what we have brought you with strong will, and bear in mind what is therein, haply ye yet may fear.’

According to Zamakhshari, Moses brought the tablets to the Israelites and when they became aware of the burdening and taxing precepts contained therein, they refused to accept them. Whereupon, God commanded Gabriel to uproot the mountain and hold it over their heads, saying, “Accept them (the precepts) lest I shall drop it (the mountain) on you”¹

A counterpart to this interpretation is found in the Talmud: “R. Abdimi b. Hama b. Hasa said: ‘This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an (inverted) cask, and said to them, ‘If ye accept the Torah, ‘tis well; if not, there shall be your burial.’”²

Tabari calls attention to the fact that the word *Tur*, used here for mountain, is of foreign (Syriac) origin. He states that some maintain that this is the mountain Moses spoke from.³ This is merely a further illustration of the linguistic influence of Judaism on the Koran which is evidenced by the Koranic use of many biblical terms and names such as: *Saum* (*Zom* – fast); *Sadaqah* (*Zedakah* – righteousness, charity); *Malak* (*Mal’ak* – Angel); *Shaitain* (*Satan* – leader of the devils); *Kitab* (*Ketab* – Scriptures); *Taurat* (*Torah* – Torah); *Hai* (*Hay* – Living); *Qayyum* (*Kayyam* – Abiding); *Al-Wahid* (‘*Ehad* – the one); *Sabt* (*Shabbat* – Sabbath); *Khatiah* (*Het* – sin); *Jahannam* (*Gehinnom* – hell); *Din* (*Din* – judgement); *Jannah* (*Gan* ‘*Eden* – Paradise); *Adam* (*Adam* – Adam); *Nuh* (*Noah* – Noah); *Ibrahim* (*Abraham* – Abraham); *Lut* (*Lot* – Lot); *Ismail* (*Yishma’el* – Ishmael); *Ishaq* (*Yishak* – Isaac); *Ya’qub* (*Ya’akob* – Jacob); *Yusuf* (*Yosef* – Joseph); *Musa* (*Moshe* – Moses); *Harun* (‘*Aharon* – Aaron); *Aiyub* (‘*Iyob* – Job); *Da’ud* (*David* – David); *Sulaiman* (*Shelomoh* – Solomon); *Ilyas* (‘*Eliahu* – Elijah); *Alyasa’* (‘*Elisha*’- *Elisha*)’ *Yunus* (*Yonah* – Jonah); ‘*Uzair* (‘*Ezra* – Ezra).⁴

Here Muhammad uses the term *Tur* for mountain because it is called *Tura* in the Targumim.⁵

1 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 80:

2 B. Shab. 88a; cf. As for the people who refused to accept the Torah because of the many precepts they would have to fulfill, see Mekilta, Yithro, ch. 5 [W].

3 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 247:

4 Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 145-87; cf. David Kuenstlinger, "'Kitab' und 'ahlu l-kitab' im Kiran," in Rocznik Orientalistyczny, Lwow, 1928, Vol. IV, pp. 238-47; 2:1-2; 2:20; 2:28-30; 179-81.

5 Exod. 19:18. See however, A. Mingana, Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'an, reprint, 1927, pp. 11-17; A.S. Yahuda, Goldziher Memorial Volume, Part I, p. 282 f.; A Geiger, ZDMD, Vol. XXI, p. 688; Noldeke-Schwally, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 112 f.; Hirschfeld, Beitrage..., p. 38; Lidzbarski, "Neue Gotter," Nachrichten historische Klasse, 1916, Berlin, p. 90; David Kuenstlinger, "Tur und Gabal im Kuran," ibid., pp. 58-67.

SURA II – VERSE 61

Then did ye turn aside after this, and were it not for God's grace towards you and His mercy, ye would have been of those who lose. Ye know too of those among you who transgressed upon the Sabbath,¹ and we said, 'Become ye apes, despised and spurned.'

Torrey states that there is no Aggadic source for "the incident of the Breakers of the Sabbath, who changed into apes."² However, it is possible that Muhammad derived this bit of legend from the story in the Talmud about the transformation of a class of sinners into apes, wild beasts and other wild animals.³ "R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: They split up into three parties. One said, 'Let us ascend and dwell there;' the second, 'Let us ascend and serve idols;' and the third proposed, 'Let us ascend, and wage war (with God).' The party which proposed, 'Let us ascend, and dwell there' – the Lord scattered them; the one that said 'Let us ascend and wage war' were turned to apes, spirits, devils and night demons...."⁴

The word Sabt⁵ (used in Arabic for the seventh day) is the equivalent of the Hebrew Shabbat⁶ and the Aramaic Shabta⁷ (Exod. 20:8).⁸ Muhammad, perhaps relying upon Ex. 16:4,⁹ considered only the Jews to be obligated to observe the Sabbath as stated in Ex. 30:13, 17¹⁰ and in the Midrash.¹¹ Though Muhammad chose Friday to take the place of the Jewish Saturday and the Christian Sunday, yet this day on which Moslems are allowed to work, unlike the Jewish Sabbath, is not called the day of rest, but the "day of assembly,"¹² being the holy day of the week.¹³ In the time of Muhammad, Jews in Arabia observed the Sabbath early on Friday.¹⁴ It is quite possible that Muhammad took this pattern as a model for his "day of assembly."¹⁵ For he accepted the Jewish idea of making Friday a day of special prayers and also followed the Jewish practice of including a sermon in the service and making his followers bathe their bodies and wear special attire for the "day of assembly."¹⁶ Yet the spirit of a complete day of rest as practiced by the Jews was alien to Muhammad.¹⁷

As for the Koranic statement about the Jews having transgressed the Sabbath, Baidawi says that this happened in the reign of King David, when a Jewish community dwelt in the city of Elath on the Red Sea. The Jews of Elath dug pits on the eve of the Sabbath so that on the day of rest the fish flowed

abundantly into them. (God did this in order to tempt the people). And on Sunday the Israelites drew them out.¹⁸

It is possible that this legend came into Moslem tradition through Karaite literature. For, according to Talmudic and post-talmudic Halakah, it is permissible to spread “snares for wild beasts, fowls and fish” on the eve of the Sabbath.¹⁹ Nets for wild animals may not be spread, however, unless they may be caught the same day. But the school of Hillel permit it,²⁰ so that they could be caught naturally in the net on the day of rest.²¹ It is only according to the Karaite Halakah that the spreading of nets for fish on the eve of the Sabbath was prohibited unless they could be caught while it is yet day.²²

Notes:

1 Cf. 4:153; 7:163-166; 16:125. Cf. Hirschberg, *op. cit.*, p. 316 note 41

2 *Op. cit.*, p. 68; Torrey's statement is based on Geiger's remark (p. 181) that no trace is to be found of such a transformation in Jewish writings.

3 Hirschfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 108, doubts whether Muhammad knew of this legend. He claims that “The matter seems to me to rest on a misunderstanding on the part of the compilers, or those who copied the revelations from the original notes. The word in question, qiradatan, is recorded in the dictionaries as plural of qird, meaning an ape. If we read qiradam, vermin (and in the archetype of that passage the difference between these two readings was probably difficult to distinguish), the verse would be a mistaken rendition of Exod. 16: 20, 24. The mistake was probably caused by the circumstance that the transformation of living human beings into apes seemed much more fitting than into worms. Now the reason of the transformation is, in the Qoran, disobedience in connection with the Sabbath, which is the same cause as mentioned in the Pentateuch. Instead of the food left over night, Muhammad has the disobedient persons transformed. The words, ‘those who go too far’, are perhaps a rendering of Exod. 16:29, and refer to a given space of ground in the sense of the Rabbinical interpretation (Mishnah Erubin, 2:3).”

4 Cf. B. Sanh. 109a; Hirschfeld, *Judische Elemente...* p. 65

5

6

7 Cf. Horowitz, *Koranische...*, p. 96.

8 Dozy (p.177) claims that the Arabs adopted the names of the week-days from the Jews. The seventh day they call Sabt only. Cf. J.J. Rivlin, *Gesetz im Koran*, p. 29n: “Es verdient immerhin Beachtung, dass der feierlichste Sabbatgottesdienst, die , schon am Freitag, und zwar bei den jemenitischen Juden am frühen Nachmittag, stattfindet. Vielleicht ist diese in der von Becker Islam III 379, zitierten Tradition gemeint, in der M. sagt ‘wähle den Tag aus, an dem die Juden ihren Sabbat vorbereiten.’”

See, however, I. Goldziher, "Die Sabbatinstitution im Islam" im Sefer Hazikaron D. Kaufmann, Breslau, 1900, p. 6.

9 Cf. Goldziher, *ibid.*, pp. 86 f.

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11 [W] Cf. also ; and the Sabbath Prayer Book:

12

13 Even in the Jahiliyah period the term was used for Friday, which is derived, according to Rivlin, from the Hebrew was probably influenced by the Hebrew and Aramaic Cf. J.J. Rivlin, *Gesetz im Koran*, p. 20 n.

14

15 (congregation) is the term used for the sixth day of the week and every Moslem is commanded by Muhammad to observe it (62:9). Muhammad also ordered his followers not to fast on Fridays, which follows the Jewish practice in connection with the Sabbath. Hirschberg, *op. cit.*, p. 196, cites a Moslem tradition that Muhammad told his followers that the commandment not to engage in war on the Sabbath was given to the Jews alone. Cf. Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

16 According to Moslem tradition each service must be preceded by a sermon which is considered part of it. Cf. Bu., Vol. I, p. 233:

17 Wellhausen, *Reste...*, Vol. I, p. 142; Pollack, *pp. cit.*, p. 133; I. Goldziher, "Die Sabbatinstitution im Islam," in *Gedenkbuch...* D. Kaufmann, pp. 86-91; M. Steinschneider, *Polemische und Apologetische Literatur in Arabischer Sprache*, Leipzig, 1877, pp. 320 f.; A. Strauss, , Jerusalem, 1950, pp. 46 f.; Mittwoch, *op. cit.*, pp.27 f.

18 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 26:

19

20 *Ibid.*,

21 It seems unlikely that the Moslems were aware of the non-accepted opinion of the school of Shammai.

22

SURA II – VERSES 63-66

And when Moses said to his people. 'God bids you slaughter a cow,' they said. 'Art thou making a jest of us?' Said he, 'I seek refuge with God from being one of the unwise.' They said, 'Then pray thy Lord for us to show us what she is to be.' He answered, 'He saith it is a cow, nor old, nor young, of middle age between the two, so do as ye are bid.' They said, 'Pray now thy Lord to show us what her colour is to be.' He answered, 'He saith it is a dun cow, intensely dun, her colour delighting those who look upon her.' Again they said, 'Pray thy Lord to show us what she is to be; for cows appear the same to us; then we, if God will, shall be guided.' He answered, 'He saith it is a cow, not broken in to plough the earth or irrigate the tilth, a sound one with no blemish on her.' They said, 'Now hast thou brought the truth.' And they slaughtered her, though they came near leaving it undone.

It is apparent that we have here a mixture of the story of the heifer in Num. 19 with the story of the calf mentioned in Deut. 21:1-9. In Jewish sources the red cow appears to be insensitive.¹ The

expression “not broken in to plough the earth or irrigate the tilth” recalls the words in Num. 19:2, “faultless, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke,” as well as the discussion in the Talmud² about the prohibition of doing other work. Sifre compares the red cow with the heifer “which hath not been wrought with (Deut. 21:3)” and whose neck was broken in the valley.³

As for the age of the cow there are two opinions in the Talmud. Rabbi Jose says she must be two years old, but the sages maintain that she maybe three years old, and the prevailing law is that of the sages.⁴ It seems likely that the frequent Talmudic comparisons between the red cow and the heifer caused Muhammad the confusion.

Zamakhshari says that the cow had to be “dun” completely, even to its horns and hooves,⁵ and a similar statement is found in the Mishnah.⁶

Tabari relates: “There was a man in Israel who proudly honored his father. Once a man passed by him and offered to sell him precious stones. The father was then asleep and had the key to the money under his head. The man said, ‘I will sell you the pearls for 70,000 worth of currency if you pay it immediately.’ But the devoted son answered, ‘Wait until my revered father will awaken and then I’ll pay you 80,000.’ The man said, ‘Wake him up right now and I’ll sell them to you for 60,000,’ and so he went on until he offered them to the son for 30,000. The son refused, however, to awaken his father and increased the price to 100,000 if the man would wait. Finally the son said, ‘For no price I will disturb the sleep of my father.’ The reward of the pious son was that a red cow was born among his herd for which Moses gave him a very high price.”⁷

This story with slight variations recalls the legend in Kiddushin: “It was propounded of R. ‘Ulla: How far does the honour of parents (extend)? – He replied, Go for the and see what a certain heathen, Dama son of Nethinah by name, did in Askelon. The Sages once desired merchandise from him, in which there was 600,000 (gold denarii) profit, but the key was lying under his father, and so he did not trouble him. Rab Judah said in Samuel’s name: R. Eliezer was asked, How far does the honour of parents (extend)? – Said he, Go forth and see what a certain heathen, Dama son of Nethinah by name, did in Askelon. The Sages sought jewels for the ephod, at a profit of 600,000 (gold denarii) – R. Kahana taught: at a profit of 800,000 – but as the key was lying under his father’s pillow, he did not trouble him. The following year the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him his reward. A red heifer was born to him in his herd.”⁸

Notes:

1

2 B. Sot. 4a; cf. Rashi, ad loc.; [F] ; [B]

3

4 Mishnah, Par. 1:2. Cf. Sifre, ibid.

5 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, pp. 82-83:

6 Mishnah, Par. 2:2:

7 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 258:

8 B. Kid., 31a.

SURA II – VERSE 69

Yet were your hearts hardened even after that, till they were as stones or harder still, for verily of stones are some from which streams burst forth, and of them there are some that burst asunder and the water issues out, and of them there are some that fall down for fear of God; but God is never careless of what ye do.

Compare: “Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people might drink...” (Exod. 17:6); “And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said unto them: ‘Hear now, ye rebels; are we to bring you forth water out of this rock?’” (Num. 20:10). The Koranic phrase “your hearts hardened”¹ recalls the Biblical words in Deut. 10:16.² Similarly the idea that the heart hardens as stone recalls Ezekiel: “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 11:19).³ A parallel to the Koranic idea that man’s heart is harder than stone is found in Rashi’s commentary on Num. 20:12: “For if you had spoken to the rock and it had brought forth (water), I would have been sanctified in the eyes of the congregation, and they would have said; If this rock, which does not speak and does not hear, and does not require sustenance, fulfills the word of the Omnipresent, then certainly we (should do so).”⁴

According to Rashi’s interpretation, which is undoubtedly based on Midrashic lore, man can learn a lesson from the stone. Though a stone does not depend much on God’s support, yet it readily fulfills His will, a fortiori a human being, who is sustained by God.

Notes:

1

2 ; cf. Zech. 7:12 and Jer. 5:3

3 Cf. Ezek. 30:26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Also Targum, ad loc.:

4 P.R.C., Vol. IV, pp. 204-5.

SURA II – VERSE 73

And some of them there are, illiterate folk, that know not the Book,¹ but only idle tales; for they do but fancy. But woe to those who write out the Book with their hands and say 'this is from God'; to buy therewith a little price! And woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they gain!

Zamakhshari commentating on "illiterate folk", states that they are unable to write well, hence they consult the Torah to verify its contents.²

Rodwell and Land hold that the word "illiterate"³ (ummiyun, plural of ummi) refers to a non-Jew, who is unaware of or does not possess the Scriptures. Torrey, upholding this view, suggests that this is "simply the transfer into Arabic of the Hebrew goi, goyim. It was not coined by Mohammed, but was taken over by him from the speech which he heard. It designated any and all who were not of the Israelite race (as has already been said, and is well known, Mohammed does not distinguish Christians from Israelites). The passage 2:73, which has made trouble for previous explanations of the problematic term, expresses the indignation and scorn with which the prophet replies to certain proselytes in one of the Medinese tribes, who had tried to trick or ridicule him by means of some 'scripture' of their own composition – a most natural proceeding for would-be Israelites. He has just been speaking of the Jews, and now continues: 'And among them there are certain goyim, who do not know the scriptures, but only hope to appear to, and who think vain things. Woe to those who write out scriptures with their hands and then, say, This is from God!' Here the adjective is plainly used in reproach and contempt; elsewhere, it means precisely 'Gentile', most obviously in 3:69!⁴ The Koran, then, gives no ground whatever for supposing Mohammed unlettered."⁵

Horovitz thinks that in this verse "it is possible that the word might have been confused with the 'amme ha-'ares,' those among the Jews who do not know the law."⁶... However, in 62:2 "Allah is praised for having raised up among the 'ummiyun' a prophet who was one of their midst, and for this reason Mohammed calls himself 'an-nabi al ummi' in 7:156, 158, because he came from the ranks of the Arabs, i.e., from one of the 'ummot ha-olam,' and not from Israel..."⁷ Muhammad "learned of the 'umoot ha-olam' through the Jews in Medina and formed the word 'ummi' in accordance with this term."⁸

Thus it is possible that the term ummiyun here and in 7:156⁹ is derived from the Hebrew "Ummot ha'Olam." Muhammad in announcing himself "the seal of the prophets" wished to indicate that he is the "prophet unto all the nations."¹⁰

Notes:

1 Cf. the expressions:

2 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 86:

3 i.e. “gentile, non-Jew or heathen.”

4 Cf. Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Gastfreund, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 12.

5 Torrey, *op. cit.*, o. 38. Torrey also quotes Noldeke-Schwally, *op. cit.*, p. 14, who maintain that the term ummi refers to those “who do not have (‘or know’) the ancient holy scriptures.” Cf. Bu., Vol. IV, p. 400.

6 Horovitz, HUCA, p. 191.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 190

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91. As to the term Nabi, see Horovitz, HUCA, p. 223 and Noldeke-Schwally, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 159f., and notes to 2:254; 3:4, 75.

9

10 Jer. 1:5, ; cf. 7:156, 158, “Whom they find written down with them in the law ()... Say, ‘O ye folk! Verily I am the apostle of God unto you all,’ – of Him whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth...”

SURA II – VERSE 74

And then they say, 'Hell fire shall not touch us save for a number of days.'¹ Say, 'Have ye taken a covenant with God?' but God breaks not His covenant. Or do ye say of God that which ye do not know?

The Koranic reference to "a number of days" recalls the Talmudic statement that the trial of the transgressors in hell lasts twelve² months.³ In 2:161 Muhammad states: "When those who are followed clear themselves of those who followed them, and see the torment, and the cords are cut asunder." This idea brings to mind the rabbinic statement that on the Day of Judgement God will separate (untie) the (bad) followers from their leaders who will not be able to be helped by the latter.⁴

Notes:

1 Cf. 3:23

2 According to R. Johanan b. Nuri the judgment of certain sinners will last “(only) from Passover to Pentecost,” i.e. seven weeks. Mishnah ‘Eduy, 2:10 [D].

3 cf. 2:160.

4 The Talmud distinguishes incidental sinners from heretics and consigns to never extinguished fire those who misled others and caused them to sin, and those who isolated themselves from the community (B, R. H. 17a).

SURA II – VERSE 77

And when we took¹ from the children of Israel a covenant, saying, ‘Serve ye none but God, and to your two parents show kindness, and to your kindred and the orphans and the poor, and speak to men kindly, and be steadfast in prayer, and give alms’; and then ye turned back, save a few of you, and swerved aside.

Chapter nineteen in Leviticus, which, as the rabbis rightly note, contains the major principles of Judaism,² embraces almost every precept enumerated in this Koranic verse, i.e., monotheism, covenant, honorable dealing, no talebearing or malice, reverence for parents, consideration for the poor, for the needs and for the stranger.³ Though prayer is not explicitly mentioned in Leviticus 19, the precept has been deduced from the biblical command, “Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2).⁴ As to “speak to men words kindly,” we may find a parallel in the rabbis’ interpretation of the words “not (to) bear sin” (Lev. 19:17). According to them even as admonition to improve one’s deeds should be uttered in a friendly way.⁵ Other parallels are found in Aboth: “and judge all men in the scale of merit,”⁶ and in the Talmud, where it is stated that “addressing words of comfort² is even higher than charity.”⁷

Other relevant biblical passages are: “And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform...” (Deut. 4:13). “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3). “And ye shall serve the Lord your God” (Ex. 23:25). “Honor thy father and thy mother” (Ex. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16)... “Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy poor and needy brother, in thy land” (Deut. 15:11). “When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithe of thine increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be satisfied, then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God: I have put away the hallowed things out of my house, and also have given them unto the Levite and unto the stranger, to the fatherless and to the widow, according to all Thy commandments which Thou hast commanded me...” (Deut. 26:12-14). “At the end of every three years, even in the same year, thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase, and shalt lay it up within thy gates. And the Levite, because he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hand which thou doest” (Deut. 14:28-29).⁸

Notes:

1 Ali, Holy Qur-an, p. 44, translates “we made a covenant with.”

2 Rashi to Lev. 19:2:

3 Ibid.; the Midrash, too, equates the precepts enumerated here to the ten commandments ([B])

4 Kedushah (holiness) is attained by “doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God,” P. H., p. 498 n.

5

6 Mishnah Ab., 1:6

7 B. Shab. 127a; cf. also the following: “Good manners are preferred for you,” By., Vol. IV, p. 167,

8 Cf. Is. 1:17, “Learn to do well; Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” For an elaborate discussion on prayers and charity in Islam see notes to 2:1-2, 172, 211, 239, 240, 246, 272, 273, 280; 3:128.

SURA II – VERSE 80

Those who have bought this worldly life with the Future, the torment shall not be lightened from them nor shall they be helped.¹

Baidawi interprets the words, “have bought this worldly life,” to mean that they give preference to the values of this world.² A striking parallel to this Koranic verse as well as to Baidawi is found in the Talmud: “They forsake life eternal and engage in life temporal!”³ Other parallels are also found in Jeremiah 12:1: “Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?” and in the Talmud: “...why is it that (righteous men)... are in adversity, (and)... wicked men prosper?...”⁴ According to Targum Yerushalmi, God pays to those who dislike him the reward for the minor good deeds they have done in this world so as to destroy them in the world to come.⁵

The Talmud interprets the biblical phrase: “which I command thee this day, to do to them” (Deut. 7:11) as “‘This day (you are) to do them’ but you cannot postpone doing them to tomorrow (after death); this day (you are in a position) to do them and tomorrow (after death is reserved) for receiving reward for (doing) them.”⁶ A closer parallel is found in the Mishnah: “For in the hour of the departure of a man (from the world), there accompany him neither gold nor silver, not precious stones nor pearls, but Torah and good deeds alone...”⁷ The Midrash also states that wealth is of no avail on the day of judgment and only deeds of merit “shall come to meet thee there even before thou hast arrived, for it is said, thy righteousness shall go before thee.”⁸

Notes:

1 Cf. 3:14

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 30:

3 B. Shab. 33b.

4 B. Ber. 7a.

5

6 B. 'Erub. 22a.

7 Mishnah Ab. 6:9.

8 Cf. [F] and "R. Joshua b. Levi also said: 'All the good deeds which Israel does in this world will bear testimony unto them in the world to come.'" B. 'A.Z. 4b.

SURA II – VERSE 86

Moses came to you with manifest signs, then ye took up with the calf when he had gone and did so wrong.¹

The Bible records that when God told Moses to bring forth the children of Israel, the latter said: "'But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say: 'The Lord hath not appeared unto thee'" (Exod. 4:1). It was then that God gave several signs into the hands of Moses with the promise that: "...if they will not believe thee, neither harken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign" (ibid., verse 8).

The Midrash argues that Moses was wrong in assuming that Israel will not believe him, after God has said: "And they shall hearken to thy voice" (Exod. 3:18). God, however, responded to Moses' thinking and gave the signs to him.²

The Koranic verse also recalls the biblical statements: "And the people believed" (Exod. 4:31)... "and made it a molten calf" (Exod. 32:4).³

According to the Moslem commentaries,⁴ the signs mentioned here refer to the miracles in connection with the Exodus which Moses performed before Pharaoh and the Israelites.⁵ Among these miracles, according to Tabari,⁶ are: the rod turning into a serpent, the hand of Moses turning again "as his other flesh", and the crossing of the Red Sea. The miracles were performed to testify to the truth of Moses' prophecy.

Notes:

1 Cf. 3:184

2

3 Cf. 2:48-51.

4 Cf. Baidawi, ad loc., Vol. I, p. 31:

5 These miracles, according to Baidawi and Zamakhshari, are: Moses casting the rod, stretching forth his hand, bringing up the frogs, the dust of the earth becoming gnats, bringing up the locusts, the waters in Egypt becoming blood, the smiting of the rock, the crossing of the sea and the raising of the mountain over the Israelites.

6 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 317:

SURA II – VERSE 87

And when we took a covenant with you and raised this mountain over you, ‘Take what we have given you with resolution and hear;’ they said, ‘We hear but disobey’; and they were made to drink the calf down into their hearts for their unbelief. Say, ‘And evil thing is it which your belief bids you do, if ye be true believers.’

Muhammad here¹ connects the acceptance of the Torah with the making of the molten calf, whereas in 2:285 he refers to the acceptance of the Torah only.²

According to the Aggadah, when Moses told the Israelites that God would give them the Torah, they said: “We will do, and obey.”³ The rendition in 285, “We will hear and obey,” reverses the biblical statement, “We will do, and obey.”⁴ In Shabbath 88b the biblical expression is given special emphasis.⁵ However some noted Hebrew grammarians and commentators do not see any difference between “we will do, and obey” and “we will obey, and we will do.” Sa’adia in his Tafsir (commentary) renders the phrase na’aseh wenishma’ as nekablah venizna’ah.⁶

The Koranic expression, “And they were made to drink the calf down...” recalls the verse in Exod. 32:20: “And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.”

Tabari comments that they drank the water in which the ashes of the burnt calf were mixed. In a more detailed explanation, Tabari writes, that when Moses came and saw the Israelites assembled around the calf, he burnt it, put the ashes into the water and commanded them to drink it.⁷ Those who participated in the making of the calf received a sign of gold on their lips and in this way Moses was able to recognize them. ⁸ The Talmud, too, states that they were tested by the drinking of the water as was the Sotah.⁹

Notes:

1 Cf. 2:60, 285 and Ali's commentary, p. 48n.: "We hear the words and disobey the command." See also Rashbam's commentary to Exod. 24:7: "We will do what He has said and obey what He will command us in the future."

2 There the statement, "We hear and obey" (2:285), is like the Hebrew (Deut. 5:24), "And we will hear it, and do it."

3 Exod. 24:7, "we will do, and obey."

4 According to Hirschfeld, *New Researches...* p. 109, Muhammad identified 'asunu () (we do it) with Arabic 'asaina (), which has an opposite meaning. Sometime later he became aware of the error, "To correct it was however, impossible, since the true version did not suit his purposes at all. He therefore replaced the faulty word by 'we obey', placing this avowal into the mouth of the Believers who believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers (we make no difference between any of His messengers) and they say: We hear and obey" (2:285). However, in view of note 1, there is no need to attribute a different meaning to the Koranic text. Cf. Horovitz, *HUCA*, p. 214.

5

6 (Exod. 24:7), J. Derenbourg (ed.), *Les Oeuvres complètes de Saadia*, Paris, 1893. Jonah Ibn Janah in his *Sefer Hariqma*, ed. M. Wilensky, Berlin, 1924, p. 360, writes .

7 This is also the line with the Targum commentary on Song of Songs, 1:14,

8 Tabari, Vol. I, p. 318: Cf. Exod. 32:20: "And he (Moses) took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." According to Ibn Ezra, ad loc., "the water had a visible effect upon the guilty which the Levites were able to detect." S. Ch. P. 552 n.

9 Cf. Rashi to Exod. 32:20 . See also ad loc.,

SURA II – VERSES 88-89

Say, 'If the abode of the future with God is yours alone and not mankind's: long for death then if ye speak the truth.' But they will never long for it because of what their hands have sent on before; but God is knowing as to the wrong doers.

Muhammad seems to reject the idea that all Israel have a portion in the world to come.¹ Nor is he aware of the liberal Talmudic concept as found in early rabbinic literature, that if "a gentile occupies himself with the study of the Torah he equals (in status) the High Priest," for it is said: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and Mine ordinances, which if a man do, he shall live by them; I am the Lord" (Lev. 18:5). This is based on the fact that the Bible does not say "'priests, Levites and Israelites,'

but 'a man.'”² Here Muhammad accuses the Jews and the Christians of maintaining that they alone are entitled to Paradise and of considering themselves specially favored by God.³

Notes:

1

2 B.B.K. 38a; cf. B. Sanh. 59a.

3 Cf. 3:59; 5:72

SURA II – VERSE 91

Say¹ “Who is an enemy to Gabriel?” for he hath revealed² to thy heart, with God’s permission, confirmation of what had been done before, and a guidance and glad tidings to believers.

According to Moslem tradition, the Jews objected to Muhammad’s assertion that Gabriel revealed the Koran to him, because they considered Gabriel an enemy and a messenger of wrath who announced

the destruction of the first Temple, whereas that angel Michael was their friend, who brought them prosperity and plenty.³

Moslem commentators and exegetes also maintain that Gabriel “was charged to convey the gift of prophecy to the Israelites, and he conveyed it to another people, i.e. the Ishmaelites.”⁴

Zamakhshari relates that Omar owned a piece of land in Medina and in order to approach it he had to pass synagogues. From time to time he would visit a synagogue and listen to the discussions there. Once the Jews remarked to him, “We love you and desire you,” to which Omar remarked that he had some doubts pertaining to religious matters and came to seek more knowledge and information. He also inquired about angel Gabriel and was told that Gabriel was the enemy of the Jews because he disclosed their secrets to Muhammad. They further told him that Gabriel to the Jews, is the messenger of affliction and punishment, whereas, Michael is their bearer of prosperity and peace. Omar then inquired: “How are they (the angels) placed with God?” They replied: “Gabriel is on the right hand of God and Michael on the left.”⁵

Geiger,⁶ relying on a Responsum⁷ of Rabbi Solomon ben Adret of Barcelona (1225-1310), sees some justification for Moslem tradition about Gabriel, but attributes it to the fact that the Moslem exegetes perverted the truth and failed to realize that to the Jews Gabriel is the messenger of God for the punishment of sinners only. In fact, Geiger argues that the Talmud presents Gabriel as one who “hides the sins of Israel,”⁸ i.e. wipes them away.

Although at times Gabriel’s mission is that of destruction as is the case when he came to Abraham to inform him that he would overturn Sodom,⁹ there is no source found in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature that would indicate in any way that Gabriel was an enemy of the Jews.¹⁰ On the contrary, Gabriel is known in the Talmud as the “intercessory spirit” who always intercedes on behalf of Israel.¹¹ He is also known in rabbinic literature as the angel who pleads for mitigation of punishment and as the bearer of good tidings.¹² He is one of the four angels surrounding the throne of the Almighty and is the recorder of all human deeds and thoughts.¹³ All angels, states the Talmud, are created for specific missions; but Michael and Gabriel are eternal.¹⁴ Even though, in Jewish tradition, Michael is placed on the right side and Gabriel on the left side of the Almighty,¹⁵ both share equally in importance and function,¹⁶ and very often Gabriel’s position is featured. Thus, Gabriel was the first to be sent by God to fetch the dust collected from the corners of the earth for the creation of man, ¹⁷ a legend quoted by Tabari.¹⁸

The Midrash relates that Abraham “was still communing with himself when the angel Gabriel approached him and met him with the greeting, ‘Peace be with thee,’ and Abraham returned, ‘With thee be peace,’ and asked, ‘Who art thou?’ And Gabriel answered, and said, ‘I am the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God,’ and he led Abraham to a spring of water near by, and Abraham washed his face and his hands and feet, and he prayed to God, bowing down and prostrating himself.”¹⁹ It was Gabriel who bade Abraham “to proclaim the true faith to his father and his mother.”²⁰ Gabriel also dwelt with Abraham in prison and provided him with food and water.²¹ Similarly when Abraham proclaimed God when still a babe it was Gabriel, according to Jewish tradition, who was sent to assist and care for him.²² The Midrash abounds in legends designating Gabriel as the protector of Abraham during the vicissitudes of his life. ²³

Similarly we observe the importance of Gabriel's position in the life of Moses.²⁴ Gabriel was a witness when God proclaimed the New Moon before Moses and Aaron,²⁵ and was appointed by God to take charge of it.²⁶ It was through Gabriel that Pharaoh's daughter had compassion on Moses when she found him, since he caused Moses to cry.²⁷ Later on as a child in Pharaoh's home, when seated in the lap of the king, Moses changed to remove the crown from the head of the Egyptian ruler and placed it on his own head. Pharaoh then became alarmed and sought advice from his counsellors,²⁸ who interpreted this as a threat to Pharaoh's crown. He was therefore urged to test Moses' intelligence by placing before him two bowls; one full of gold coins and the other full of live coal. Should the infant reach for the gold it would prove his superior intelligence and he would be put to death. In order to save Moses' life Gabriel directed the infant's little fingers to the live coal. The child threw the hot coal into his mouth, burnt his tongue, and remained tongue-tied for life.²⁹

According to Jewish tradition, the angel of the Lord who appeared before Moses in the flame of fire from the midst of the bush was the angel Gabriel,³⁰ and in crossing the Red Sea it was Gabriel who kept the waters from drowning the Israelites.³¹ At the revelation on Sinai, Michael and Gabriel took hold of the two hands of Moses,³² and it was Gabriel who taught him how to fashion the candlestick.³³

As for Gabriel's mission in the future, the Talmud relates that both Michael and Gabriel will appear before God to plead for the restoration of the Jewish people.³⁴ Similarly in the world to come when God will bring the righteous to Paradise, Gabriel will be instructed by God to greet them in His name. "Soon Gabriel together with Michael, as the angels of Israel, will proceed to the entrance and welcome them."³⁵

It appears, in view of the above, that the real reason for choosing Gabriel as the angel of Muhammed's revelation was Gabriel's unique position in the lives of Abraham and Moses, the expounder of Monotheism and the author of the Mosaic Law, respectively.

As in Jewish tradition, Muhammad, too, treats Moses and Abraham as well as Joseph³⁶ as teachers and great leaders. It is interesting that in the Mecca Suras, when Islam is still in the embryonic stage, Gabriel is not mentioned at all. Only later in the Medina period, when Muhammad crystallized his theory on Islam, does Gabriel appear.³⁷ In Judaism Moses is considered superior to all the prophets. Similarly in the Koran, Muhammad is considered "the Seal of the Prophets,"³⁹ and like Moses, a shepherd⁴⁰ chosen in the desert,⁴¹ a messenger of God to lead his people,⁴² Muhammad, too, calls himself Rasul,⁴³ the messenger of God.

To establish that he was the first and true monotheist, Muhammad claimed that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, ⁴⁴ but the true expounder of monotheism and that the Koran as revealed to him by Allah through the angel Gabriel⁴⁵ embodied the true monotheistic teachings which the Jews and the Christians had failed to follow.⁴⁶ Tracing his genealogy to Abraham⁴⁷ through his son Ishmael. Muhammad seemed to have selected Gabriel as the angel of Revelation because to him Gabriel was the only one closely associated with the exalted of all the prophets and with the "father of monotheism,"⁴⁸ the law giver⁴⁹ and expounder of the "true" revelation, respectively.⁵⁰

Notes:

1 recalls the biblical which appears often in the Bible, or

2 i.e. the Koran

3 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 32: Zamakhshari, ad loc. And Margoliouth, Mohammed..., p. 91, "The angel (Gabriel) who is in the New Testament conveys messages." In Luke 1:11-38 Gabriel appears as the angel of Annunciation, informing of the births of John the Baptist and of Jesus. Cf. H.L. Strack, and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, Munich, 1922, Vol. I, pp. 59-60. Although one rabbinic source claims that Gabriel set fire to the Temple at Jerusalem (L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Philadelphia, 1925, Vol. V, p. 71), and another source maintains that Michael and Gabriel "carried out the work of the destruction" (ibid., Vol. VI, 1928, p. 392), the authorities are unanimous in their opinion that both Michael and Gabriel were the keepers of the Temple, which was indestructible as long as they watched over it (ibid.).

4 Ali, op cit., p. 50 n. 40. Cf. Tabari, Vol. I, pp 324 f

5 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 92: Cf. Tabari, Vol. I, p. 327.

6 Geiger, op. cit., pp. 13-14

7 On B.B.B. 74b:

8 "Und allerdings demnach manches Wahre in dieser Geschichte enthalten ist, so ist doch selbst der angefuhrte Ausspruch verdreht, indem Gabriel als Boten Gottes bloss die Bestrafung der Sunder obliegt und von ihm sogar an einer andern Stelle des Talmud Sanh. 44 gesagt wird, er heisse 'Verstopfer' 'weil er verstopft die Sunden Israels', sie verwischt, also den Israeliten durchaus nicht also Feind dargestellt wird," ibid., p. 14.

9

10

11 B. Sanh. 44b; cf. "Itmon" in *Aruch Completum*, ed. A. Kohut, Vienna, 1878 and

12 Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Vol. VI, p. 434. Cf. ; B. Yom. 77a.

13

14

15 and Mahzor Yom Kippur.

16 ; cf. S. A. Horodetzky, "Michael und Gabriel," *MGWJ* (1928), pp. 449-50; Ginzberg, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 71

17 M. Gaster, *The Chronicles of Yerahmeel*, London, 1899, p. 15/

18 Tabari, *Annals*, Vol. I, p.87:

19 Ginzberg, op.cit., Vol. I, 1913, pp. 189-190

20 Ibid., p. 193

21 Ibid., p. 198

22 Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 210 f.; cf. R. Margaliyuth, Jerusalem, 1935, p.32. Gabriel also acted as a guide to Ishmael in his ascension to heaven (J. D. Eisenstein, 'Opar Midrashim, New York, 1918, p. 400). He was also the protector of Isaac ().

23 Cf. "(For) when the wicked Nimrod cast our father Abraham into the fiery furnace, Gabriel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Sovereign of the Universe' Let me go down, cool (it), and deliver that righteous man from the fiery furnace.' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'I am unique () in My world, and he is unique () in his world: it is fitting for Him who is unique () to deliver him who is unique ().' But because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not withhold the (merited) reward of any creature, he said to him, 'Thou shalt be privileged to deliver three of his descendants'" (B. Pes. 118a). Simon the Shilonite remarked: "When the wicked Nebuchadnezzar cast Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah into the fiery furnace, Yurkami, Prince of hail, rose before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said to Him: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Let me go down and cool the furnace and save these righteous men from the fiery furnace.' Said Gabriel to him, 'The might of the Holy One, blessed be He, said to He, is not thus (manifested), for thou art the Prince of hail, and all know that water extinguishes fire. But I, the Prince of fire, will go down and cool it within and heat it without (to burn those who threw them into it), and will thus perform a double miracle ().' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him, 'Go down.' It was then that Gabriel commenced (with praise) and said, 'And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever'" (P. Pes. 118a-118b); see also [B] .

24 Ginzberg, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 331, pp. 440, 472; Vol. V, p. 415; cf. R. Margaliyuth, op. cit., p. 35.

25 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 362.

26 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 164.

27

28 Ginzberg, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 274

29

30

31

32

33

34 B. Pes. 118b; cf.

35 R. Margaliyuth, op. cit., p. 44.

36 Gabriel taught Joseph seventy languages (B. Sot. 36b). Similarly to Jewish tradition, Muhammad emphasizes Gabriel's important role in the life of Joseph. In the Koran he devotes a whole Sura (XII) to Joseph. Islamic tradition, too, knows of Joseph's knowledge of seventy languages. Zamakhshari, (Vol. I, p. 663) states: . Mohammad was thus much impressed by Joseph and no wonder that he refers to the story of Joseph in the Koran as "the most beautiful". Cf. Schapiro, I., Die haggadischen Elemente..., Leipzig, 1907, p. 51.

37 Hirschfeld, Neue Beitr..., p. 19; Horovitz, HUCA, p. 158 and Koranische..., p. 107. Abraham and Moses are the most frequently mentioned biblical personages in the Koran. Abraham is mentioned about seventy times, and Moses over one hundred and thirty times.

38 ; Maimonides, ; cf. "And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10); notes to 2:254. See also ; B. Yeb. 49b and

- 39 33:40. Cf. Hag. 2:23: ; Hirschfeld, op. cit., p. 22. Re the discovery of the Seal of Prophecy by the Christian monk Bahira.
- 40 Exod. 3:1-2 "...and he let the flock to the farthest end of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush..." Cf. Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 147, and 16:121; 20:13.
- 41 Exod. 3:1 ; cf. Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 147-62. A tradition from the prophet states that "'God has never chosen a man to be a prophet, who has not herded sheep,'" Bu., 26:2; 60:29; 70:50, quoted by W. Thomson, op. cit., p. 99.
- 42 Muhammad considered himself closer to Moses than the Jews (Bu., Vol. I, p.498): Cf. Ps. 106:23: "...Had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach..." Cf. Exod. 7:16... and Deut. 34:11: 2:125, 179-181; 7:141 and compare with . See also A. Sprenger, *Das Leben...*, Vol. II, p. 251f.; Horovitz, *Kor. Uni...* p.44; Wensinck, "Rasul," *Acta Orientalia*, Vol. II, 1922, p. 168; S.D. Goitein, "Who were Muhammad's Chief Teachers?" in *Weil Jubilee Volume*, Jerusalem, 1953, p. 20 n. 37.
- 43 2:101 (Ali ed.): .Cf. A. Jeffery, *The Qur'an....*, p. 19.
- 44 3:60, 89. Cf. 2:118, 125
- 45 Bu., Vol. I, p. 6:
- 46 Jalalain 2:141:
- 47 Cf. 2:129, 134; 3:60; 6:79; 16:121, 124; Gen. Rab. 14,6.
- 48 According to Baidawi, Vol. I, p.80, the sect of Islam is essentially the sect of Abraham:
- 49 Cf. Maimonides,
- 50 See notes to 2:118-19, 125, 260, 262. Cf ; Mishnah Kid. 4:14 and B. Ber. 13a: ; and B. Ber. 7b: . Also Maimonides

SURA II – VERSE 96

And they follow that which the devils recited¹ against Solomon's kingdom,² – it was not Solomon who misbelieved, but the devils who misbelieved, teaching men sorcery, - and what has been revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut; yet these taught no one until they said, "We are but a temptation,³ so do not misbelieve." Men learn from them only that by which they may part man and wife; but they can harm no one therewith, unless with the permission of God, and they learn what hurts them and profits them not. And yet, they knew that he who purchased it would have no portion in the future; but sad is the price at which they have sold their souls, had they but known.

The story of the two angels Harut and Marut teaching men sorcery but which they might cause division between man and wife is ascribed by Geiger⁴ to the Jewish legend about the two angels Shamhazai and 'Azael⁵ who in the time of Noah lived in immortality with the daughters of men, for these were beautiful and they could not tame their lust.⁶ The angel Shamhazai later repented and hung himself up between heaven and earth.⁸

Zamakhshari and Baidawi assign this story to the era of Solomon's kingdom. According to these commentators the devils eavesdropped and told their exaggerated lies to the priests who in turn wrote them down in books to be taught to the people. The dissemination of lies by the devils and the priests was so widespread that it was claimed that the reign of Solomon became perfect only because of his contact with the devils and his dominion over them.⁸

Arabic tradition also relates that: "The devils, having, by God's permission, tempted Solomon without success, they made use of a trick to blast his character. They wrote several books of magic, and hid them under the prince's throne, and after his death told the chief men that if they wanted to know by what means Solomon had obtained his absolute power over men, genii, and the winds, they should dig under his throne; which having done, they found the aforesaid books, which contained impious superstitions. The better sort refused to learn the evil arts therein delivered, but the common people did; and the priests published this scandalous story of Solomon, which obtained credit among the Jews, till God, say the Muhammadans, cleared that king by the mouth of their prophet, declaring that Solomon was no idolater."⁹

This recalls a Jewish legend about King Solomon whose pride, when he was on the throne, swelled because of his wealth and he over-stepped the command of God (Deut. 17:16-17), and collected many horses and horsemen, amassed much silver and gold, and took many wives of foreign nationalities. Soon the wrath of God came upon him. He sent Ashmedai, king of the evil spirits, who drove Solomon off the throne, robbed him of his signet ring, and left Solomon wandering about in punishment for his folly. Solomon thus went from town to town in Judah and Israel crying: "I, Solomon, have been king over Israel and Jerusalem."¹⁰

Another Jewish legend relates that Ashmedai was chained by Benaiah son of Jehoiada' at the request of King Solomon. Ashmedai then demanded to be brought before the king and later challenged Solomon to free him. When Solomon complied with his request, Ashmedai hurled the king to a distance of four hundred parasangs. Ashmedai meanwhile took possession of the king's throne, his household and his wives. Finally he was detected and reported to the religious authorities.

Following the rumors about a wandering beggar who claimed that he was the king of Israel, Solomon was finally restored to the throne.¹¹

The Koranic notion of magic power ascribed to Solomon is variously found in early Jewish traditions.¹² Flavius Josephus alludes to it in the legend that God endowed Solomon with the ability to turn the vicious power of the demons in to a power working to the advantage of man; that he mastered incantations by which diseases were cured and by which demons were exorcised.¹³

Notes:

1 Ali, op. cit., p. 51, translates "the devils fabricated,"

2 Ibid., p. 52, "prophethood,"

3 Ibis., "a trial,"

4 Geiger, op. cit., pp. 105-6. Cf. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 146. For an elaborate discussion on angels in Jewish and Christian traditions who rebelled against God and were cast down as Satan, see B.J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, Philadelphia, 1952, pp. 113-17. Also B. Heller, "La Chute des Anges: Schmhazai, Ouzza, et Azael," *R.E.J.*, Vol. I, 60 (1910), pp. 201-3; L. Jung, "Fallen Angels," *JQR N.S.* (1926), 295-310; E. Littma, "Harut und Marut" in *Festschrift Friedrich Carl Andreas zur Vollendung des Siebzigsten Lebensjahres*, Leipzig, 1916, pp. 70 ff.; H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, Vol. I, pp. 384-85; Weinsinck, "Harut," *E.I.* (1927), Vol. II, pp. 272-73.

5 According to the Talmud: "'Sihon and Og were the sons of Ahijah the son of Shamhazai' (one of the fallen angels referred to in Gen. 6:2, 4 as 'sons of God' or 'Nephilim')" (B. Nid. 61a). Cf. Gen. Rab. 26.7.

6 Geiger, op. cit., p. 105:

Geiger, *ibid.*, p. 107, claims that the similarity between the Koranic statement and the midrashic story receives full corroboration from later Moslem authors, who, quite in harmony with the midrashic legend, speak in similar vein about these angels. He quotes the following statement from Maracci, *Prodromi IV*, 82:

7 Cf. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, pp. 147 f., and *HUCA*, pp. 164-65.

8 *Zamakhshari*, Vol. I, p. 94: . Cf. Baidawi, *ad loc.*

9 Wherry, op. cit., p. 326, quoting Yahya and Jalaluddin.

10

11 B. Git. 68a-68b: ; cf. B. Sanh. 20b; *Yalkut Shime'oni Ecc.* 1, 967.

12

13 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Vol, VIII, 2, 5.

SURA II – VERSE 101

Dost thou not know that God's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? Nor have ye besides God a patron or a help.

The main idea here that only God, the king of the universe, can be of real help to man, abounds in the Bible and in the Aggada. The Psalmist exclaims: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains; From whence shall my help come? My help cometh from the Lords, Who made heaven and earth" (Ps 121: 1-2). The Midrash commenting on this verse states that Israel well knows that help can come from the Creator only.¹ Numerous references are found in the Bible and the Midrash which portray God as the ruler of the heavens and the earth. Thus in Deut. 10:14, "Behold, unto the Lord thy God belongeth the heaven, and the heaven or heavens, the earth, with all that therein is." Also Ps. 89:12: "Thine are the heavens, Thine also the earth; The world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them."² That besides God there is no "patron or help," is also expressed in the Bible: "...And beside Me there is no saviour" (Is. 43:11).³

Notes:

1 Cf. notes to 2:1-2, 109, 256.

2 Cf. Ps. 24:1; 50:12.

3 Cf. Jer. 17:7, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, And whose trust the Lord is."

SURA II – VERSE 102

Do ye wish to question your apostle as Moses was questioned aforetime? But whoso takes misbelief in exchange for faith has erred from the level road.

Muhammad, who, as already indicated in this study, compared himself to Moses, seems to allude here to Moses' dispute with Korah whom the earth swallowed up.¹ Like Moses,² Muhammad was challenged by his opponents.³

Korah was not the only one to speak to Moses in a rebellious spirit. There were others who revolted against the authority of Moses, as is indicated in the biblical verses: "And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh; and they said unto them: 'The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us'" (Exod. 5:20-21) or as in Numbers 14:2-3: "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them: 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore doth the Lord bring us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will be a prey; were it not better for us to return into Egypt?'"

According to rabbinic lore the Israelites in the desert accused Moses of exploiting them and waxing fat on the food and drink he took away from them.⁴ The Talmud also tells of the Korahites who questioned Moses' morality, suspecting him of adultery with their wives.⁵ There is thus a similarity between the Koranic verse and the challenge of Moses as described in the Bible.

Notes:

1 Num. 16

2 B. Sanh. 11a

3 Gastpremd, op. cit., p.19

4

5

SURA II – VERSE 109

God's is the east and the west, and wherever ye turn there is God's face; verily, God comprehends and knows.

The Psalmist, too, talks in identical words about God's omnipresence: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in the netherworld, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there would Thy hand lead me, And Thy right hand would hold me" (Ps. 139:7-10).¹ Commenting on these verses the Midrash states that David addressed God as follows: "Thou knowest my sitting down and my rising up. Even the step I intend to make is not hidden from you."²

Notes:

1 Cf. Amos 9:2-3,6 See also 2:256

2

SURA II – VERSE 111

The Originator of the heavens and the earth, when He decrees a matter He doth but say unto it, 'Be,' and it is.

Close parallels to this verse are: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6)... "For He spoke, and it was; He commanded, and it stood" (Ps. 33:9). According to the Talmud, the world was created by ten sayings.¹ The Midrash relates that: "The Holy One, blessed be He, spake one word and the heavens were created² as the residence of the Throne of His Glory... He blew with His mouth the wind of the breath of life and all the host of heaven were created simultaneously)." ³

In 50:38 Muhammad states: "We did create the heavens and the earth and what is between the two in six days and no weariness touched us." This idea that "no weariness touched" God in the creation of the universe and that everything was achieved by the Word is also found in the Midrash.⁴ It is interesting to note that Jewish philosophers of the middle ages were disinclined to ascribe to God even the act of speaking,⁵ and therefore translated the word wayy'omer,⁶ in connection with creation, by wayirzeh,⁷ meaning willed.⁸

Notes:

1

2 Cf. Is 45:12: "I, even I, have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, And all their host have I commanded." See also John 1:3 about the Word or the Logos being the Creator.

3 P.R.E. p. 41. Cf. also, Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (ed. J.Z. Lauterbach), Philadelphia, 1933, Vol. II, p. 62: "... He by whose word the world came into being spoke the ten commandments in one utterance."

4 Gen. Rab. 3,2,

5 Ibn Ezra's Commentary to Gen. 1:3: Cf. Ramban ad loc:...

6

7

8 Arabic (willed). As to the terms bara' and halak, see A. Jeffery, The Foreign Vocabulary... p. 76.

SURA II – VERSE 118

And when his Lord tried Abraham with words, and he fulfilled them, He said, 'Verily I will set thee as a high priest¹ for man.' Said he, 'And of my seed?' God said, 'My covenant touches not the evil-doers.'

The story about Abraham's righteousness is found in the Bible and in rabbinic sources: "because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen. 26:5). The Mishnah states that: "With ten trials was Abraham, our father, proved, and he stood (firm) in them all; to make known how great was the love of Abraham, our father (peace be upon him)."²

The story that Abraham became a priest stems also from the Talmud: "R. Zachariah said on R. Ishmael's authority The Holy One, blessed be He, intended to bring forth the priesthood from Shem, as it is written, and he (Melchizedek) was the priest of the most high God (Gen. 14:18). But because he gave precedence in his blessing to Abraham over God (Gen. 14:19), He brought it forth from Abraham..."³

Notes:

1 i.e. . “The primary sense [of Imam] is that of being foremost; hence it may mean: (1) leader in religion; (2) leader in congregational prayer; (3) model, pattern, example; (4) a book of guidance and instruction.” A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur-an, New York, 1934, Vol. I, p. 52 n. According to Palmer it is “the name given to the priest who leads the prayer,” p. 15 n. In his lifetime, Muhammad also acted as Imam (Bu. Vol. I, p. 175).

2 Mishnah Ab. 5:3. In Abot de R. Nathan the ten trials with which Abraham was tempted and stood steadfast in them all are enumerated: . Cf. 11:73; 15:53; 37:99-113, etc. See also Isa. 41:8, II Chron. 20:7; 2:91, and

3 B. Ned. 32b; cf.

SURA II – VERSE 119

And when we made the House a place of resort, unto men, and a sanctuary,¹ and (said) take the station of Abraham² for a place of prayer; and covenanted with Abraham and Ishmael, saying, ‘Do ye two cleanse my house³ for those who make the circuit, for those who pay devotions there, for those who bow down, and for those too who adore!’”

According to Baidawi and Zamakhshari, Abraham ascended the mountain Abu Kobeis (near Mecca), and exclaimed: “Oh, people, go up to the sanctuary of your Lord.”⁴ Similarly, the Talmud relates that Abraham “caused the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, to be uttered by the mouth of every passer-by.⁵ How was this? After (travellers) had eaten and drunk, they stood up to bless him; but, said he to them, ‘Did you eat of mine? You ate of that which belongs to the God of the Universe. Thank, praise and bless Him who spake and the world came into being.’”⁶

The Talmud also states: “Whosoever has a fixed place for his prayer has the God of Abraham as his helper.”⁷ According to the rabbis, “there was no man that called the Holy One, blessed be He, Lord,⁸ until Abraham came and called Him Lord.”⁹

An Arabic tradition concerning the “station of Abraham” runs as follows: “Abraham visited the house of Ismail in his absence, but not liking the treatment he received from his wife, left with her a message for his son, which was understood by Ismail to express a desire that he should divorce his wife. This he did, when we married another. Abraham came again in the absence of his son, and being urged by his daughter-in-law to descend from his camel and to permit her to wash his head, he declared that, owing to a vow not to leave his camel till he had completed his journey, he could not get down. Being pressed, however, he so far consented, that with one foot on his camel and the other on a stone he had his head washed! This is ‘the place of Abraham.’”¹⁰

The above story undoubtedly stems from Jewish tradition. A counterpart is found in Jewish lore about the time when Abraham, against his own will, exiled his servant-wife, Hagar, and their son, Ishmael. At first, Sarah did not allow Abraham to visit either his wife or his son. After many years of pleading Sarah permitted Abraham such a visit on condition that he remain atop his camel. When Abraham thus came to Ishmael’s house, he was not in. Abraham called to his daughter-in-law for a drink of water. She refused to give it to him or even to look at him. She was beating the children and cursing them as well as her husband, Ishmael. Abraham became angry and left a message for his son saying: “An old man from the house of Canaan was here, and asked you to remove the main pillar of your tent and to replace it by a good one.” When Ishmael came home and received the message he understood that his father had been to see him and that he was mistreated by his wife. He, therefore, divorced his wife, and married another one. Three years later, Abraham again, under identical circumstances, set out to visit his son, and did not find him home. Ishmael’s wife came forth insisting that Abraham partake of food and drink. He refused to get off the camel; the good woman brought forth some food and Abraham ate and drank. Upon leaving he left a message for his son. “The pillar of your tent is very good, keep it.” Ishmael now knew that his wife treated her father-in-law respectfully. He then took his whole family and returned to Abraham and remained with him many days.¹¹

It is not unlikely that the Koranic verse has its antecedent in the famous prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple at Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:22-53). Processions are not strange to either Judaism or Christianity. In the latter there is the practice of street processions. A procession is also staged by Jews in the synagogue during the holiday of Tabernacles.¹²

The phrase “cleanse my house,” is comparable to Exod. 19:10: “and sanctify them to-day and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments.” Similarly, the phrase, “a place of worship,” is comparable to 1 Kings 8:42-3 where it is stated that the Temple too was supposed to be a place of worship, “when he shall come and pray toward this house”... “and that they may know that Thy name is called upon this house which I have built.”¹³

Notes:

1 As to the relationship between the Hebrew and the Koranic Majam consult Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 219-20 and Grimme, Mohammed, Munster, 1892, Vol. II, p. 46.

2 Cf. notes to 2:91, 118. Abraha, and Isaac are, according to Jewish tradition, the two originators of the sanctuary: . Muhammad here replaces Isaac by Ishmael.

3 Palmer (p. 15 n.) states that "the Kaabah or square temple at Mecca is spoken of as Bait Allah = Bethel, 'the house of God.'" Cf. Mishna Ber. 11:5. and Ps. 30:1. Compare, also, the biblical expression (Deut. 26:2)

4 M. Grunbaum, Neue Beitrage... p. 104: The expression 'thy God' in Deut. 26:3, 4 is used because the priest is "conceived as standing in a special relationship to God; cf. 'the God of Abraham' in the Liturgy." Cf. P.H., p. 859 n.; Targum Onkelos, Gen. 22:14:

5 Based on the biblical sentence in Gen. 21:33; "And Abraham planted a tamarisk-tree in Beer-sheeba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God."

6 B. Sot, 10b; cf. Targum Jonathan, Gen. 21:33:

7 B. Ber. 6 b.

8

9 B. Ber. 7 b.

10 Tafsir-i-Raufi, quoted in Wherry, op. cit., p. 335 n.

11

12 Cf. Mishnah Suk. 4:5.

13 Cf. E. Landau, Synonyma fur Gott in der new-hebrasischen Litteratur, Zurich, 1888, pp. 30-45

SURA II – VERSE 125

When his Lord said to him, 'Be resigned' he said, 'I am resigned unto the Lord of the worlds.'

Ali translates Islam as a term denoting "submission."¹ Some scholars suggest that Muhammad's use of this verb-stem conveys the idea of "coming into the condition of security," which would render

Islam as “safety,”² Torrey claims that the term Islam was adopted by Muhammad because his two noted ancestors, Abraham and Ishmael, yielded and surrendered themselves to the divine will.³ Grimme renders its meaning, “man’s salvation as a result of his purification.”⁴ Bravmann interprets Islam to mean “readiness for defiance of death” or “self-sacrifice (for the sake of God and his prophet),” which would be related semantically to jihad (warlike efforts for Allah and his Prophet).⁵ The latter interpretation of the term Islam seems most plausible and is similar to the concept in Judaism of Kiddush ha-Shem, i.e. the sublime duty of every Israelite to hallow the Name of God by his life and if necessary by his death.⁶

In view of verses 118 and 119 it is possible that we may have here an allusion to Deut. 26:3, “I profess this day unto the Lord thy God (the God of Abraham),” and to Deut. 27:6, “Abanim Shelemot (unknown stones), i.e. “whole or peaceful stones.”⁷ The adjective shelemot is of the same root as “shalom” (peace, salvation) or of the cognate Arabic slam meaning “peace.”

Moslem tradition maintains that Abraham was the first to employ the term Islam in connection with monotheism.⁸ The Bible as well as the rabbis also stressed the idea that Abraham was the first true monotheist: “The Lord appeared to Abraham and said unto him: ‘I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be thou wholehearted’ (Gen. 17:1).⁹ The Talmud, commenting on Psalm 15, writes: “He who walks uprightly” refers to Abraham,¹⁰ who by virtue of his circumcision, became upright according to God’s command.¹¹ This idea is found in the Koranic expression, “Resign thyself (to God).”

Abraham in the Bible uses the expression Yir’ at ‘Elohim¹² (the fear of God), which connotes “submission”¹³ or unquestioning obedience to God.¹⁴ To Muhammad this expression would have meant a great deal in formulating his new religion.¹⁵ It is interesting that the Koran refers to God as the “Peace-Giver”¹⁶ which is identical with the biblical and Talmudic concept that God is Shalom.¹⁷

Notes

1 Op. cit., p. 55; cf. T.W. Arnold, “Islam,” EU, pp. 539f.; Ch. Lyall, JRAS (1903), p. 784; Horovitz, Koranische Untersuchungen... p. 54.

2 M. Lidzbarski, “Islam und Salam,” Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete, I (1922), pp.85 f.

3 Ibid., pp. 101 f; cf. Noldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans*, Vol. II, p. 206, and Martin Hartmann, *Der IslamL Geschichte – Glaube – Recht*, Leipzig, 1909, pp. 26 f.

4 Grimme, *op. cit.*, I, p.16; Tor Andrae, *Mohammed*, pp. 55 f.

5 M. Bravmann, "On the Spiritual Background of Early Islam and the History of its Principal Concepts" in *Museon*, LXIV, Louvain (1951), pp. 325 f. Cf. Tarbiz, XVIII (1946-47), pp. 69-79.

6 B. Sanh. 74a. Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his life in order to hallow the name of God is also expressed in the Midrash, [B]

7 As to the Hebrew Shalom, see M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Talmud...*, Horeb ed. (1926), Vol. II, p. 1579 and Eliezer Ben Yehuda, *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew*, edited by Prof. N.H. Tur-Sinai, Jerusalem, 1952, Vol. 14, pp. 7130-35.

8 Baidawi, 3:89: "(the sect of) Islam is essentially the sect of Abraham." (Cf. Jalalein, 2:141: "Abraham being of the supreme faith.")

9 Cf. Thomson's statement that Abraham is considered "the pattern of all true believers in the New Testament, and that for Philo he is the type of the man who abandons home for the sake of God," *op. cit.*, p. 132. See also M. Friedlander, *Geschichte der judischen Apologetik*, Zurich, 1903, pp. 306 f.; and H.A. Wolfson, *Philp*, Vol. I, pp. 876 f.

10 cf. Maimonides,

11

12

13

14 Gen. 20:11: ; cf. Gen. 15:6:

15 Cf. 2:106; 3:17, 78; and Gen. 22:12.

16 59:23, . Cf. Is. 42:19 , which is explained by Rashi *ad loc.*, thus: . The interpretation of the commentators on corresponds to the Koranic ides of Islam. See , *ad loc.*,

17 B. Shab. 10b: . Cf. Judg. 6:24, and Rashi, *ad loc.*

SURA II – VERSE 127

Were ye then witnesses when Jacob was facing death, when he said to his son, ‘What will ye serve when I am gone?’ They said, ‘We will serve thy God, and the God of thy fathers Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, one God; and we are unto Him resigned.’

A similar story about Jacob is found in the Talmud: “R. Simeon b. Lakish said: And Jacob called unto his sone, and said: Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you (the which shall befall you in the end of the days) (Gen. 49:1). Jacob wished to reveal to his sons the ‘end of the days’ (Dan. 12:13), whereupon the Shechinah departed from him. Said he, ‘Perhaps, Heaven forbid! There is one unfit among my children, like Abraham, from whom there issued Ishmael, or like my father Isaac, from whom there issues Esau.’ (But) his sons answered him, ‘Hear O Israel (Jacob), the Lord our God the Lord is One: just as there is only One in thy heart, so is there in our heart only One.# In that moment our father Jacob opened (his mouth) and exclaimed, ‘Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever...’”¹

The Targum Yerushalmi is more descriptive of Jacob’s position at the time. It repeats the story almost exactly with one exception. It adds to Abraham’s unworthy seed all the children of Keturah, Abraham’s second wife, who were born to him after the death of Sarah.² It is understandable that the many legends originally related in rabbinic lore to Isaac, should later be attributed by Muhammad to Ishmael.

Baidawi writes that here Jacob designates Ishmael as one of the Patriarchs. The reason given is that Muhammad considers an uncle (i.e. Ishmael) to be “a part of the father.”³

1 B. Pes. 56a. Cf.

2

3 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 39:

... But the faith of Abraham the 'Hanif, he was not of the idolators.'

In this verse as well as in 3:89; 4:124; 6:162; 16:121, 124, Muhammad refers to Abraham as hanif (pl. hunafa'), whereas in 6:79; 10:105; 30:29, he claims himself to be one of the hunafa' and requests his followers to join him in their ways and customs, since the hunafa' possessed the real and true religion. Scholars are puzzled by the origin and meaning of the term hanif. According to Torrey, the word "came originally from the Hebrew , hanef; and probably its employment by him (Muhammad) as a term of praise, rather than of reproach, indicates that in his mind it designated one who 'turned away' from the surrounding paganism.¹ Nicholson suggests that it is "connected with the Hebrew hanef" (profane).² However, Wellhausen thinks that hanef originally meant a Christian ascetic and regards it as a native Arab development.³

In describing his condition when the angel appeared to him, Muhammad used the word Tahannuth.⁴ Hirschfeld states: "The term has caused the traditionalists some embarrassment. I. Ish. explains it by tahannuf (to profess to be a Hanif), and adds a remark which is interesting from a linguistic point of view, viz., that th and f interchange in Arabic. This remark is welcomed with satisfaction by Sprenger, who finds it a support of his Hanyferei. I believe, however, that tahannuth is nothing but the Hebrew pluralis t'ehinnoth, 'prayers,' a word very common among Jews to express voluntary devotions apart from the official liturgy. There is little doubt, that Muhammad heard this word often in Medina before he framed his report of this affair, and employed it readily on account of its strange and sacred character."⁵

Noldeke defines the root hannath⁶ as "leading a solitary life," which the Hanifs must have followed. According to the Talmud,⁷ the devotee who spends the night studying the Torah is commended. Similarly, Muhammad states: "Of the people of the Book there is a nation upright reciting God's signs through the night, as they adore the while." (3:109)

Notes:

1 Torrey, op. cit., p. 87.

2 Nicholson, op cit., p. 149.

3 Reste..., II, pp. 238 f.; cf. J.A. Montgomery, "Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism," JBL, Vol. LI (1932), pp. 183 f.

4 Numerous articles have appeared on this word. Cf. Faris-Glidden, JAOS Vol. 19 (1939), pp. 1f., who consider the term to stem from Greek; A.J. Wensinck, Acta Orientalia, Vol. II, p. 191; Ahrens, op. cit.,

p. 14; D.S. Margoliouth, JRAS 1903, pp. 467-93; J. Horovitz, Koranische Untersuchungen, p. 56; A. Jeffery, Foreign Vocabulary..., pp. 112-15.

5 Hirschfeld, New Researches..., p. 19 n.; cf. Tor Andrae, Der Ursprung des Islam und das Christentum, Uppsala, 1926, p. 40; Charles Lyall, "The Words 'Hanif' and 'Muslim'," JRAS (1903), p. 772; Sprenger, Das Leben... ol. I, pp. 45-134; Bravmann, op. cit., p. 342.

6 Geschichte des Qorans, p. 67; cf. Hirschberg, op. cit., pp. 211 f.

7 B. Tam. 32b.

SURA II – VERSE 136

The fools among men will say, 'What has turned them from their quiblah,¹ on which they were agreed?' Say, 'God's is the east and the west, He guides whom He will unto the right path.'

Muhammad never intended to make Islam a new religion.² At the beginning he considered himself "a guardian over it,"³ to preserve the truth and "confirming what was before it."⁴ It is for this reason that at first he saw no difference between Christianity and Judaism⁵ and, according to scholars, was almost converted to Judaism,⁶ He believed that both Jews and Christians would welcome him as the "Seal of the Prophets."⁷ It was only later, when he realized that he could gain support from neither camp, that he presented Islam as a new faith,⁸ and changed the quiblah from Jerusalem to Mecca.⁹ Jalaluddin¹⁰ writes that after the hijrah, Muhammad, in order to please the Jews, instructed his followers to turn the quiblah to Jerusalem¹¹ rather than to Mecca, the place which the ancient Arabs had always regarded as holy. Only later on, when he was convinced of his failure to conciliate the Jews did Muhammad change back to the original direction.¹²

According to Moslem tradition, "the whole earth is a mosque and if there is no house of worship, prayers may be offered anywhere."¹³ This follows the Jewish tradition that Divine presence is everywhere.¹⁴ As to the last phrase in the Koranic verse, "God's in the east and the west..." Jewish tradition abounds in references praising the universality of God.¹⁵

Notes:

1 Qiblah is the place towards which prayer is to be made. Cf. Wensinck, "Ka'ba," E.I., pp. 583 f.; Grimme, Mohammed, p. 45; Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, p. 73; J.L. Burckhardt, Travels in Arabia, London, 1928, Vol. I, pp. 87f.

2 Cf. 51:50; 74:2; 88:21-22; J.A. Montgomery, Arabia and the Bible, Philadelphia, 1934, pp. 31 f.

3 5:48, . Cf. Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 131:

4 3:2; Muhammad is quoted to have said: "Transmit (what you hear) from me, be it only a verse; relate also (what you hear) from the children of Israel; thereby is no sin incurred." Bu., 60:589, cited by W.R. Taylor, op. cit., p. 196.

5 Cf. 2:285; 3:2, 78; cf. Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 70: "He has sent down to thee the Book in truth...to Moses and Jesus respectively."

6 Margoliouth, Relations... p. 67

7 33:40 . Cf. 2:91.

8 3:61 f.

9 J. Rivlin, "Muhammad Hamehokek," in Keneset (1933), p. 295 n.L

10 Quoted by Geiger, op. cit., p. 19:

11 Dan. 6:11; cf. Ben-Zeeb, op. cit., p. 29 quoting Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 217, 314.

12 The Jews of Arabia were never pleased with Muhammad's order to turn to Jerusalem. Cf. Tabari, Vol. II, p. 12; Wensinck, op. cit., pp. 105, 133; Noldeke-Schwally, p. 74; Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 317 note 47, and Polack, op. cit., p. 68:

13 Bu., Vol. I, p. 93:

14

15

SURA II – VERSE 137

Thus have we made you a middle nation,¹ to be witnesses against men, and that the Apostle may be a witness against you.²

Translators vary as to the meaning of the phrase, “a middle nation.” Some take it to mean an “intermediate people” or “a chosen people or a most good and just nation.”³ The last explanation seems plausible. The Arabs, no less than other nations, boasted of being a chosen people, in direct imitation of the biblical statements: “then ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples” (Exod. 19:5) and “and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests” (ibid. 19:6).⁴

Some Moslem commentators also explain the meaning of the above words as “a well balanced nation.” That is, the midst is equally distant from all extremities.⁵ A similar explanation is found in Judah Hallevi’s *Kitab Al-Khazari*,⁶ in connection with the high qualities of Israel and the Holy Land. Being situated in the midst of the world,⁷ the Holy Land enjoys the most well-balanced climate.⁸

Notes:

1

2 Cf. 3:106

3 Ali, op. cit., p. 66, note 182.

4 Compare Deut. 14:2 and notes to verse 44.

5 Zamakhshari, Vol. II, p. 110:

6 Translated by Hartwig Hirschfeld, London 1931 (rev. edition); cf. A. Zifroni ed., (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1948.

7 Ibid. p. 85: “All roads lead up to Palestine.” Cf. Ez. 5:5 , and Mishnah Ket. 13:11; Yalkut Ezekiel, 336

8 Ibid., p. 78: "Priority belongs, in the first instance, to the people which... is the essence and kernel (of the nations)... No other place (than Palestine) would share the distinction of the divine influence..." Cf.: See also B. Sanh., 38a; B. Yom. 56b and Rashi to Ezek. 5:5

SURA II – VERSE 144

From whencesoever thou comest forth, there turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque, for it is surely truth from thy Lord; God is not careless about what ye do.

Compare the Mishnaic dictum: "If he is riding on an ass he dismounts and prays. If he is unable to dismount he should turn his face (toward Jerusalem); and if he cannot turn his face he should concentrate his thoughts on the Holy of Holies."¹

Similarly, the rabbis teach that: "If one is standing outside Palestine, he should turn mentally towards Eretz Israel... If he stands in Eretz Israel he should turn mentally towards Jerusalem... If he is standing in Jerusalem he should turn mentally towards the Sanctuary... If he is standing in the Sanctuary, he should turn mentally towards the Holy of Holies... R. Abin... said What text confirms this? – Thy neck is like the tower of David builded with turrets (talpioth) (Cant. 4:4), the elevation (tel) towards which all mouths (piyyoth) turn."²

Notes:

1 Mishnah Ber. 28b.

2 B. Ber. 30a

SURA II – VERSE 147

Remember me, then and I will remember you; thank me, and do not misbelieve.¹

Moslem commentators interpret this Koranic verse as follows: “Remember me with gifts, that I may remember you with favours; or remember me with worship, that I may remember you with benefits; or remember me with prayer, that I may remember you with blessings; or remember me among the people, that I may remember you among the angels.”²

To remember God’s favors is also a biblical command, The Psalmist urges: “Remember His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth” (Ps. 105:5). Similarly, David, giving thanks to the Lord, says: “Remember His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth” (1 Chron. 16:12). At Mount Sinai God speaks to Moses to tell the children of Israel, “in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned³ I will come unto thee and bless thee” (Exod. 20:21).

The Talmud Yerushalmi⁴ interprets the words, “I cause to be mentioned,”⁵ as if they were written in the second person,⁶ i.e. remembering God in the sense of prayer.

Notes:

1 i.e. “be not ungrateful,” Palmer, p. 19 n; cf. notes to 2:38, 44, 3:11.

2 Tafsir-i-Raufi, quoted by Wherry, op. cit., p. 345 n.

3 Cf. Rashi, ad loc.:

4

5

6

SURA II – VERSE 149

And say not of those who are slain in God's way¹ (that they are) dead, but rather living; but ye do not perceive.

A similar statement is found in 3:163: "Count not those who are killed in the way of God as dead, but living with their Lord." Baidawi, commenting on the verse in Sura 3, writes that they are "alive"² rather than "dead."³

The Talmud, too, emphasizes the greatness of those who die in order to sanctify God's name.⁴ Similar to the Koranic expression, is the rabbinic one: "The righteous in their death are called living,"⁵ and "The righteous, whom the Holy One, blessed be He, will resurrect, will not revert to dust...just as the Holy One endures for ever, so shall they endure for ever."⁶ In 3:151 Muhammad states: "And if, indeed, ye be killed in God's way or die, surely forgiveness from God and mercy is better than what ye gather; and if ye die or be killed it is to God ye shall be assembled." To this Baidawi comments, "kill yourselves so that you may live,"⁷ which recalls the Talmudic statement: "What shall a man do to live? They replied: Let him mortify himself."⁸

Notes:

1 i.e. "in the cause of religion," Palmer, p. 19 n.

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 90:

3

4

5 B. Ber. 18a

6 B. Sanh. 92a; cf.

7 Cf. notes 16-17 to 2:48-51

8 B. Tam. 32a; cf. 2:48-51 n. 14. To "mortify himself" means to "kill himself," with study and hard work."

SURA II – VERSES 154-55

Verily, those who hide what we have revealed of manifest signs and of guidance after we have manifested it to en in the Book, then God shall curse, and those who curse shall curse them too. Save those who turn and do right and make (the signs) manifest; these will I turn to again, for I am easy to be turned and merciful.

A similar pronouncement against those who do not obey God's precepts is found in the following passages of the Pentateuch: "But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall reject My statutes, and if your soul abhor Mine ordinances, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but break My covenant; I will do this unto you...." (Lev. 26:14-43). "...Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say: Amen." (Deut. 27:15-26; 28:15-66)

The Koranic phrase "for I am easy to be turned and merciful" recalls the biblical: "Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy loving kindness, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said: 'I have pardoned according to thy word'" (Num. 14:19-20)! Compare also: "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to pardon, And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Ps. 86:5).

SURA II – VERSES 156-157

Verily, those who misbelieve and die while still in misbelief, on them is the curse of God, and of the angels, and of mankind altogether; to dwell therein for aye; the torment shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be looked upon.

A similar expression is found in the following two biblical passages: “See now that I, even I, am He, And there is not God with Me; I kill, and I make alive; I have wounded, and I heal; And there is none that can deliver out of My hand” (Deut. 32:39_ / “And they shall go forth, and look Upon the carcasses of the men that have rebelled against Me; For their worm shall not die, Neither shall their fire be quenched; And they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Is. 66:24). Likewise the Talmud states: “the thoroughly wicked will forthwith be inscribed definitively as doomed to Gehinnom.”¹ Wrongdoers... “after twelve months their body is consumed and their soul is burnt and the wind scatters them under the souls of the feet of the righteous.”²

Those “who rejected the Torah and denied the resurrection of the dead,... and those who ‘spread their terror in the land of the living,’ and who sinned and made the masses sin, like Jeroboam the son of Nebat and his fellows – these will go down to Gehinnom and be punished there for all generations...”³

Notes:

1 B.R.H. 16b

2 Ibid., 17a

3 Ibid.

SURA II – VERSE 159

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alteration of night and day, and in the ship that runneth in the sea with that which profits man, and in what water God sends down from heaven,,, and in the shifting of the winds,... are signs to people who can understand.

The expression “the ship that runneth in the sea” recalls the biblical expression, “The way of a ship in the midst of the sea” (Prov. 30:19). Similarly does the Psalmist declare: “They that go down to the sea in ships, That do business in great waters – These saw the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep;”... “Let them give thanks unto the Lord for His mercy, And for His wonderful works to the children of men” (Ps. 107:23, 31).¹

The belief that rain and wind are a manifestation of the power of the true God abounds in Jewish tradition.² Thus, Amos declares: “For, lo, the God of hosts, is His name.” The prophet Jeremiah pronounces: “Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art not Thou He, O Lord our God, and do we not wait for Thee? For Thou hast made all these things” (Jer. 14:22).

The Talmud, too, attributes the phenomenon of rainfall to divine power,³ “Because it is put on a level with the resurrection of the dead, therefore, it⁴ was inserted in the benediction of the resurrection.”⁵

Notes:

1 Cf.:

2 See notes to 2:20, 27, 111

3 Cf. the second benediction in the Shemone 'Esre: ; and compare in the Prayer Book with the Koranic expression "and the alternation of night and day." See also Is. 55:10-11

4 The formula "Thou causest wind to blow," cited in the Daily Prayer Book.

5 B. Ber. 33a

SURA II – VERSE 160

Yet there are some amongst mankind who take to themselves peers other than God; they love them as they should love God; while those who believe love God more. O that those who are unjust could only see, when they see the torment, that power is altogether God's! Verily, God is keen to torment.

Some translators render the word *andad*¹ as "objects of worship," which may refer to "idols" or to "the leaders who lead their followers into evil."²

The expression here about man's love for Allah is reminiscent of numerous biblical passages. The injunction to love God is a cardinal principle in Judaism and it occupies an essential place in the *Shema*.³ The commandment "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God..." (Deut. 6:5, 11:1) is considered in the Talmud as the first commandment.⁴ The Psalmist expresses the same idea in his own language: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after Thee, O God (Ps. 42:2)"⁵

The idea that those who follow other gods will be punished severely by God is also expressed in the Midrash: "(When) the men of Israel depart from their Creator and trust in the statutes of the nations, they are bad, accursed, and bitter, and there is no benefit in them for the world. Just as the waters of the rivers (are) the food of the waters of the sea, so are (the sinners destined to be) fuel for Gehinnom."⁶

Muhammad never specified the time at which the Day of Judgment would take place. He is sure of its coming and of the punishment of the sinners. Similarly to the Psalmist's expression that with God one day means a thousand years: "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, And as a watch in the night" (Ps. 90:4), Muhammad, too, states in 22:46. "They will bid thee hasten on the torment, but God will never fail in his promise; for, verily, a day with thy Lord is as a thousand years of what ye number."⁷

Notes;

1 Peers

2 Ali, op. cit., p. 73; cf. 2:20 and B. Sanh. 74a concerning idolatry.

3 cf. notes to 2:1-2

4 Cf. Deut. 10:12 and the prayer in the Siddur: "Enlighten our eyes in Thy Torah, and let our hearts cleave to thy commandments, and unify our hearts to love and reverence Thy Name" (...)

5 Cf. B. Ber. 10b

6 P.R.E., p.63

7 A similar idea is also found in 32:4, "He governs the affair from the heaven unto the earth; then shall it ascend to him in a day, the measure of which is a thousand years of what ye number." Compare B. Sanh. 971 and consult Ibn Ezra's commentary on Ps. 90:4

SURA II – VERSE 167

O ye who do believe! Eat of the good things wherewith we have provided you, and give thanks unto God if it be Him ye serve. He has only forbidden for you what is dead, and blood, and flesh of swine, and whatsoever has been consecrated to other than God.

In 5:4 Mohammad adds the following to the above forbidden things: "that which dies of itself.. and the strangled and the knocked down, and that which falls down, and the gored, and what wild beasts have eaten – except what ye slaughter in time – and what is sacrificed to idols, and dividing carcasses by arrows."¹

All these prohibitions are found in the Bible and in rabbinic literature.² The Bible rules against eating that which dies of itself, and advises that one give it... "unto the stranger that is within thy gates, that he may eat it" (Deut. 14:21). The reason for the prohibition is given in the same verse: "for thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God." The Talmudic law also prohibits the meat of an animal that has not been slaughtered according to the Jewish law. According to the Sifra,³ Moses was holding the animal⁴ and showed it to Israel, saying, this you may eat and this you may not eat."

In Jewish tradition there is a specific branch of law concerning food which had been consecrated or intended to be consecrated to idol worship. The law prohibits wine which has remained under the sole care of idol-worshippers long enough to have been dedicated to idols, even if such a dedication is not formally established.⁵

Tabari, commenting on the Koranic expression, "and (has forbidden) whatsoever has been consecrated to other than God," states that whenever they (Arab idolators) slaughtered a an animal to offer a sacrifice to their gods, they named the animal by the name of the god to whom they sacrificed.⁶ This corresponds to the Mishnaic prohibition that "if a man slaughtered in honour of mountains or of hills or of seas or of rivers or of wilderness, what he slaughters is invalid."⁷

Similarly to the Jewish law⁸ that is “ravenous hunger seize a man he may be given even unclean things to eat...” Muhammad, too, states that if in time of emergency⁹ or by compulsion a man eats some of the unlawful things, it is no sin.¹⁰

Muhammad, greatly influenced by Jewish law, prohibits food used by Arab idolators, and orders abstention from “flesh of swine”¹¹ and “what is dead and blood!”¹² According to Torrey, Muhammad evidently intended “in a general way to imitate them (the Jews). Conditions and customs in Arabis necessitated some differences, however, The laws of Israel are now superseded by the Muslim enactments...¹³ He insists, however, both here and in other passages, that these prohibitions were not originally given, but were of the nature of punishment.”¹⁴

The Koranic idea that the forbidden food in the Mosaic law was a punishment for the Jews for being rebellious, is undoubtedly of Christian influence. St Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with Trypho writes that circumcision “is not essential for all men, but only for the Jews, to mark you off for the suffering you now so deservedly endure.”¹⁵ And he goes on to say that the Jews were “forbidden to eat certain kinds of meat, so that when you ate and drank you would keep God before your eyes, for you have always been disposed to forget Him.”¹⁶

This idea, however, is in contradiction to the Midrash and other rabbinic sources which emphasize that the prohibition was not a punishment for misbehavior but rather a willingness on the part of the Jews to indulge more in the precepts of the Lord.¹⁷

Regarding the phrase, “consecrated to other than God,” Palmer remarks that “At the time of slaughtering the animal the Muslims always repeat the formula bishmi’llah, in the name of God.” This is similar to the Talmudic law of pronouncing a benediction before the slaughtering of an animal for food or sacrifice.¹⁸ This law extends to the pronouncement of a benediction before the partaking of food.¹⁹ In killing the animal the Moslem, like the Jews,²⁰ must be careful that the jugular vein of the throat be cut and not the sinew cord.²¹

The expression Inna ‘laha ghafurun rahim recalls the liturgical expressions ‘Adonai mohel wesoleah and ‘El rahum wehannun.²² The Talmud also states that when the Israelites were slaughtering their Passover sacrifices, the Levites would recite the Hallel.²³

Hirschfeld commenting on 3:87 - “Bring the law and recite it, if ye speak the truth” – writes: “It is, therefore, not quite clear what Muhammad meant by this remark, except that he wished to parade his intimate acquaintance with the Pentateuch, and the passages in Gen. 9:4 and 32:33²⁴ in particular.”²⁵ According to Baidawi, Jacob suffered from a severe pain in the sciatic nerve. He made a vow that if he were cured he would never eat the food he liked best and that²⁶ was what he liked most. Hence the prohibition of the sinew of the thigh.²⁷ The Koranic expression, “bring the law and recite it,” recalls the well-known Talmudic phrase nete sefer wenehze.²⁸ It is not unlikely that Muhammad used a common expression which prevailed among the Jews in Medina, in order to show them that now only was he well versed in the Torah but that he alone possessed the true revelation.²⁹ He, thus, challenged them to deny his statement.

Notes:

1 Cf. 3:87, “All food was lawful to the children on Israel save what Israel made unlawful to himself before tat the law was revealed.” Cf. 6:119; 16:115; 22:35-36

2 Yoreh De’ah. Chs 13-17; Maimonides ; B. Hul. 39a, b.

3 ; cf. B. Hul. 42a and Gen. 9:4; 32:33

4 Referring to the biblical phrase in Deut. 14:4: “These are the beasts which ye may eat.”

5 Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, ch. 11 re. ; cf. notes to 2:216.

6 Tabari, Vol. II, p. 258:

7 Mishnah Hul. 2:8 [D]. The Talmud interprets the Mishnaic sentence as follows

8 Cf. Hirschberg, op. cit., pp. 197-8: Cf. also, 4:158; 16:119.

9 6:146

10 Ibid.; cf.

11 The pig is the only one singled out in the Koran. (6:146). The prohibition of the flesh of the donkey or ass came later. Rivlin, Gesetz.... Pp. 67 ff; Leszynsky, op. cit., p. 26

12 In 6:146 the prohibition is against “dead (of itself), or blood that has been shed, or the flesh of swine – for that is a horror – or an abomination that is consecrated to other than God.” The expression recalls the phrase in Gen. 43:32, . Compare the laws of , B. Hul. 43a; cf. Yahuda, in Goldziher Memorial Volume, pp. 303 f.

13 5:7, “the food of those to whom the Book has been given is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them.” Cf. 6:147.

14 Torrey, op. cit., pp. 151-52; cf. 3:87, 4:159 and Geiger, op. cit., pp. 135-37.

15 Writings of Saint Justin Martyr, ed. by Thomas B. Falls, Christian Heritage, Inc., New York, 1948, p. 175.

16 Ibid., p. 177; cf. M. Zucker, in Festschrift Armand Kaminka, Wien, 1937, pp. 31-48; I. Goldziher, “Über Mohammedanische Polemic gegen Ahl al-Kitab,” ZDMG, Vol. XXXII, p. 372; Steinschneider, op. cit., p. 34

17 Cf. Moshe Zucker, in PAAJR, Vol. XX (1952), pp. 35-6.

18 Palmer, p. 21 n.; B. Ber. 35a; Yoreh De’ah, ch. 1; B. Hul, 17b; B. Pes. 7b

19 B. Ber, 35a; cf. Nu. 18:14, , and Talmud Yerushalmi,

20 Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, , ch. 1.

21 Bu., Vol. IV p. 14,

22

23 B. Pes. 64a.

24 Gen. 32:33

25 Hirschfeld, New Researches..., p. 114.

26 i.e., the sciatic nerve

27 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 80:

28

29 3:106; 20:112; 75:16

SURA II – VERSE 172

Righteousness is not that ye turn your faces towards the east or the west, but righteousness is, one who believes in God, and the last day, and the angels, and the Book, and the prophets, and who gives wealth for His love to kindred and orphans, and the poor, and the son of the road, and beggars, and those in captivity; and who is steadfast in prayer, and gives alms; and those who are sure of their covenant; and the patient in poverty, and distress, and in time of violence; these are they who are true, and these are those who fear.

The basic tenets of Islam and their relation to Judaism have been discussed elsewhere. They are represented by those who express faith in Allah,¹ in the Last Day;² in the angels;³ in the Book;⁴ in the prophets;⁵ as well as by those who take care of the needy,⁶ of the wayfarer,⁷ and of those in captivity;⁸ also by those who are steadfast in prayer,⁹ give charity¹⁰ and abide by the covenant.¹¹ Similar attempts to enumerate the essentials of true piety are found in the Bible and in the Talmud, Thus, according to the rabbis, King David reduced the essential precepts to eleven,¹² as enumerated in Ps. 15: “Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, And speaketh truth in his hear; That hath no slander upon his tongue, Nor doeth evil to his fellow, Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour; In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honoureth them that fear the Lord; He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not; He that putteth not out his money on interest, Nor taketh a bribe against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.” Came Habakkuk “and based them all on one (principle), as it is said, ‘But the righteous shall live by his faith (Hab. 2:4)’”¹³ The Koranic verse also recalls Isaiah i:11, 17 where God abhors “the multitude of your sacrifices,” and requests: “Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

Notes:

1 2:12, 101, 109, 111, 256

2 2:74, 160.

3 2:28=30

4 2:1, 48-51, 209; 3:2

5 2:254; 3:75

6 2:1-2, 211

7 2:1-2, note 61

8 2:1-2, 211, 273, 280

9 2:1-2, 239, 240, 3:7

10 2:1-2, 211, 273, 280

11 2:1-2, 87 2:1-2, 211, 273, 280

12 "Leading virtues." Cf. B. Mak. 24a.

13 Ibid.

SURA II – VERSE 173-75

O Ye who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you for the slain: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the female for the female; yet he who is pardoned at all by his brother, must be prosecuted in reason, and made to pay with kindness. That is an alleviation from your Lord, and a mercy; and he who transgresses after that for him is grievous woe. For you in retaliation is there life, O ye possessors of minds! It may be ye will fear.

In the Jahiliyah period, retaliation was not only against the person who committed the crime but against the next of kin as well.¹ The new religion, however, prescribed that retaliation (oisas) is only against the one who committed the crime. This innovation by Mohammad recalls the biblical law in Deut. 24:16: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin." Sa'adia Gaon, too, states that in the pre-Islamic period the Arabs retaliated not only against the criminal but also against his relatives, and it was later prohibited by God.² The Koranic recommendation to be lenient in retaliation and to accept ransom instead, is not in accord with the Bible which prohibits ransom in the case of murder.³ It is possible that Muhammad expresses here the biblical idea of "an eye for an eye" (Exod. 21:24 and Lev. 24:20), which is based on the principle that the punishment must be equal to the crime committed and prohibits doing more harm than the criminal had done.⁴

Notes:

1 Th. W. Juynboll, *Handbuch des islamischen Gesetzes...*, Leiden-Leipzig, 1910, p. 289.

2 This remark, which is attributed to Sa'adia Gaon, is quoted in Ibn Bal'am's commentary on the Pentateuch: . Solomon Fuchs, *Studien uber Abu Zakaria Jachja Ibn Bal'am*, Berlin, 1893, p. xxi

3 Num. 35:31: "Moreover ye shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer, that is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death." Cf. Num. 35:33 and Maimonides, *Guide...* (Friedlander ed.), p. 344.

4 Maimonides, *ibid.*, "injuries that cannot be reproduced exactly in another person, are compensated for by payment." Cf. 4:94.

SURA II – VERSES 179-81

O ye who believe! There is prescribed for you the fast as it was prescribed for those before you; haply ye may fear. A certain number of days, but he amongst you who is ill or on a journey, then (let him fast) another number of days. And those who are fit to fast (but as not) may redeem it by feeding a poor man; but he who follows an impulse to a good work it is better for him; and if ye fast it is better for you, if ye did but know.

At first Muhammad accepted the Day of Atonement¹ as a day of fast. It was known as 'Ashura',² meaning the tenth day and corresponding to the Jewish Day of Atonement, which occurs on the tenth of Tishri. Muhammad later³ substituted for it the month of Ramadan,⁴ and required every Moslem to fast a whole month.

Torrey thinks that the fast of Ramadan is "very probably patterned on the Lenten fast of the Christians."⁵ He adds, however, that "the manner of fasting, abstaining altogether during the day, and eating and drinking after sundown was Jewish."⁶

It is probable that Muhammad took for his pattern the Jewish month of 'Elul which precedes Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, a month devoted to repentance and asking for forgiveness.⁷ Perhaps we have here an allusion to the forty days which Moses spent on the Mountain and to the day he descended, i.e. on the Day of Atonement.⁸ Ramadan is considered a month devoted to prayer for redemption and deliverance from sin.⁹ The idea of fasting¹⁰ as an expression of submission to the divine Being is Jewish.¹¹ The practices and ceremonies that Moslems must observe during the month of Ramadan are likewise traceable to Jewish sources. Thus, a Moslem, like a Jew on Yom Kippur, must abstain during his fast from food, drink, falsehood and foul talk.¹² Though fasting is one of the pillars of Islam, excessive fasting is prohibited. Similarly one who is ill or of old age or on a journey, or a pregnant woman may be excused and is permitted to keep the fast at another time.¹³ Likewise when one eats or drinks, forgetting that he is fasting, the fast is not broken.¹⁴

The Koranic phrase, "God desires for you what is easy," recalls the Talmudic statement that the Sages declared not to "trouble the community unduly."¹⁵

The exact date on which the Koran was revealed is stated by Muhammad to be in the month of Ramadan, in the Night of al-Qadr.¹⁶ "The Night of Power is better than a thousand months! The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by the permission of their Lord with every bidding" (97:3-4). In Jewish tradition, too, the date of the giving of the Torah is fixed. It was the sixth day of the month of

Siwan, the date of the Feast of Weeks.¹⁷ The Midrash also speaks of thousands of angels that ascended with God upon Sinai to witness the revelation of the Torah.¹⁸

Notes:

1 See Miamonides, Cf. Bu., Vol. I, p. 498:...

2 From the Hebrew , which connotes the Day of Atonement; cf. Rashi on Exod. 18:13. 'Ashura' coincided with the fast of Yom Kippur. Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 196; Wensinck, op. cit., pp. 12, 136-37.

3 'Ashura was never abolished and is still practiced today as a voluntary fast but for a different reason; cf. Noldeke-Schwally, Vol. I, p. 179; A. Sprenger, Das Leben..., Vol. III, p. 539; Margoliouth, Mohammed und Mohammedanism, p. 250; Geiger, op. cit., p. 37.

4 Cf. Simon Duran (op. cit., p. 14), who claims that Muhammad substituted it for the Jewish Day of Atonement:

5 Torrey, op. cit., p. 131; cf. Rivlin, op. cit., p.11; and Duran, op. cit., p.14.

6 Ibid., p. 138; cf. Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 196: .

7 See also Zohar (): . The suggestion that Muhammad, in establishing the fast of Ramadan, has in mind "the fast of the tenth" mentioned in Zech. 8:19, rather than the "fast of the tenth" of Lev. 16:29 is untenable, since the Zechariah reference is to Tehet, the tenth month of the Hebrew calendar, commemorating the destruction of the Temple, whereas in Leviticus the reference is to the tenth day of the month.

8 Rashi on Exod. 18:13: . According to the Bible: "(Moses) was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water" (Exod. 34:28). Compare 2:91, notes on Moses and 7:138: "And when we appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed them with ten (more), so that the time appointed by his Lord was completed to forty nights." See also:

9 Rivlin, op. cit., p. 15; M. Plessner, "Ramadan," E.I., 1929, Vol. III, p. 1111.

10 Cf. 2:183 f.; Bu., Vol. I, p. 473 quotes the Prophet, in the name of Abu Huraira, that "the odour of the mouth of one fasting is tastier in the estimation of God than the odour of musk."

11 Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 197: . Cf. Wensinck, op. cit., pp. 125 ff.; F. (S. D.) Goitein, "Zur Entstehung des Ramadan," in Der Islam, Vol. XVIII (1929), pp. 189 f.; Wellhausen, Reste..., 2nd edition, p. 97.

12

13 Bu., Vol. III, p. 202. The provision to fast at another time for one who is sick or who is on a journey resembles the biblical prescription in Num. 9:9-13 about the "second Passover," ; cf. Torrey, op. cit., p. 138; B. Yom. 83b.

14 Bu., Vol. I, p. 471:

15 B. Ta'an. 14b Cf. Talmud Yerushalmi, Rosh H, 1, 4.

16 Cf. 44:2; 97:1. Re. the calendar in Islam, see Rivlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-7.

17 According to Jewish tradition, Moses received the second tablets from God on Yom Kippur, Rashi to Exod. 31:18. Goitein, in his article on Ramadan in *Der Islam*, XVIII, calls attention to the parallelism between Muhammad's mission and the handing of the second tablets of the law to Moses on the tenth day of the month. He claims that Ramadan, the successor to 'Ashura', was at first a fast lasting ten days and not a whole month (2:184), which paralleled the practice of the Jews to observe ten days of penance preceding the Day of Atonement. *Cd.*

18 Exod. Rab. 29,9; cf. Obermann, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

SURA II – VERSE 182

When My servants ask thee concerning me, then, verily, I am near; I answer the prayer's prayer whene'er he prays to me. So let them ask me for an answer, and let them believe in me; haply they may be directed aright.

Similar words are found in the Bible: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, To all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that dear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Ps. 145:18-19).

The Koranic verse recalls also the words of Isaiah: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, Call ye upon Him while He is near" (Ps. 55:6).¹

Notes:

1 Cf. 2:1-2, 77.

SURA II – VERSE 183

Lawful for you on the night of the fast is commerce with your wives; they are a garment for you, and ye are a garment unto them. God knows that ye did defraud yourselves, wherefore He has turned towards you and forgiven you; so now go in unto them and crave what God has prescribed for you, and eat and drink until a white thread can be distinguished by you from a black one at the dawn. Then fulfil the fast until the night, and go not in unto them, and be at your devotions in the mosques the while. These are the bounds that God has set, so draw not near thereto. Thus does God make manifest His signs to men, that haply they may fear.

Within Jewish tradition the expression, “Ye shall afflict your souls” (Lev. 16:29), entails five prohibitions: eating and drinking, bathing, anointing, wearing shoes and sexual intercourse.¹ Muhammad here pronounces fasting and sexual intercourse as prohibited for the days and not for the nights. This is contrary to Talmudic law which prohibits cohabitation on the eves of the fast days of Yom Kippur and the Ninth of 'Ab, since the nights are counted as part of the fast days themselves. Muhammad identifies daybreak in the manner prescribed in the Mishnah: “So soon as one can distinguish between blue and white (thread).”² However, the Koranic statement is in connection with fasting, whereas the Talmudic expression deals with the time of reciting the Shema'. Also, the identification mark in the Koran is between “white and black,” whereas in the Mishnah it is between “blue and white.”

Notes:

1 Mishnah Yom. 8:1

2 Mishnah Ber. 1:2 [D]

SURA II – VERSE 185

They will ask thee about the phases of the moon; say 'They are indications of time for men and for the pilgrimage.' And it is not righteousness that ye should enter into your houses from behind them, but righteousness is he who fears; so enter into your houses by the doors thereof and fear God; haply ye may prosper yet.

A counterpart is found in the Talmud Yerushalmi, where the moon is an indication of the time for holidays¹ and pilgrimages.² Similarly, do we find in the Midrash that the moon serves as an indicator for pilgrimages and festivals.³

Notes:

1 Cf. Gen. 1:14; Ps. 104:19:

2

3

SURA II – VERSE 186

Fight in God's way (cause) with those who fight with you, but transgress not (by beginning the fight yourselves); verily, God loves not those who do transgress.

According to Zamakhshari, the prohibition to commence a fight or to wage war applies to those who might attack people incapable of fighting, such as women, old men and children. This prohibition included also war against those with whom a covenant had been made.¹

The Bible, too, states: "When thou drawest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it...And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it... but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle... shalt thou take for a prey unto thyself" (Deut. 20:10-14). Zamakhshari's view is also expressed in the Mishnah:² "ye draw nigh unto battle this day against your enemies – and not against your brethren."³

Notes:

1 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 132:

2 Mishnah Sot. 8:1 [D]

3 Cf. 2:187 and See, also, Mainonides, 6, 1,

SURA II – VERSE 187

Kill them whenever ye find them, and drive them out from whence they drive you out; for sedition is worse than slaughter; but fight them not by the Sacred Mosque until they fight you there; then kill them, for such is the recompense of those that misbelieve.

That “sedition is worse than slaughter” is expressed in identical words in the Sifre on Deut. 23:8.1 The Talmud deals with the seducer more severely than with other criminals: “For all whom the Torah condemns to death no witnesses are hidden to entrap them, excepting for this one (seducer).”² If the seducer is a layman he is stoned. But if he be a prophet he is strangled.³

The Koranic statement not to fight at the Sacred Mosque recalls the biblical verse I Exod. 21:14 that “if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from Mine altar, that he may die.” A specific example of the custom of the guilty to seek refuge at the altar, in order to escape death, is found in 1 Kings 2:28: “...And Joab fled unto the Tent of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.” The presumption behind this practice was that no religious man would desecrate the altar by committing murder upon it. To the Moslems, Mecca served as a “city of refuge” (Num. 35:6).

The statement in 2:186, “fight in God’s way,” and the phrase here, “kill them wherever you find them,” may have their antecedents in the biblical verses dealing with milhemet mizwah⁴ and milhemet reshul⁵ which are found in Exod. 17:14-16⁶ and in Deut. 20:1.⁷

The Talmud states: “(A war) which is (designated) voluntary according to the Rabbis is commanded according to R. Judah, and (a war) which is (designated) commanded according to the Rabbis is obligatory according to R. Judah. Raba said: “The wars waged by Joshua to conquer (Canaan) were obligatory in the opinion of all; the wars waged by the House of David for territorial expansion were voluntary in the opinion of all; where they differ is with regard to (wars) against heathens so that these should not march against them. One calls them commanded and the other voluntary, the

practical issue being that one who is engaged in the performance of a commandment is exempt from the performance of another commandment.”⁸

Jihad (Holy War)⁹ is one of the main pillars of Islam,¹⁰ and he “who loses his life in the struggles enters Paradise as a martyr of the faith.”¹¹

Notes:

1

2 Mishnah Sanh. 67a; cf. notes to 2:213

3 *ibid.*; cf. Deut. 13:2-13

4 Sifre on Deut. 19:19; B. Sanh. 20b.

5 B. Sot 44b; Sifre *ibid.*

6

7

8 B. Sot. 44b. The biblical injunction “When thou drawest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it” (Deut. 20:10), is referred to in Yalkut Shim’oni as , which according to the Talmud, needs the approval of the Sanhedrin (B. Sanh. 20b).

9 Bu. Vol. II, pp. 198-99: “show me a deed which is equal to jihad. He said I can not find one” Cf. 22:76 and 60:2 “and fight strenuously for God,” . See also notes to 2:125 and SHEI, p. 89.

10 Ph. Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 136f.

11 G. von Grunebaum, *op. cit.*, p. 9; cf. H.U.W. Stanton, *The Teaching of the Qur’an*, London, 1919, p. 65; and Bu. Vol. II, p. 206: “He who dies in jihad enters paradise,”

SURA II – VERSE 193

The pilgrimage¹ is (in) well-known months: whosoever then makes it incumbent on himself (let him have neither) commerce with women, nor fornication, nor a quarrel on the pilgrimage; and whatsoever of good ye do, God knoweth it; then provide yourself for your journey; but the best provision is piety. Fear ye me ye who possess minds.

The Bible states: “Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep; seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, at the time appointed in the month of Abib – for in it thou camest from Egypt; and none shall appear before Me empty; and the feast of the harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours, which thou sowest in the field; and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year, when thou gatherest in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God” (Exod. 23:14-17). “Three times a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose; on the feast of unleavened bread, and on the feast of weeks and on the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee” (Deut. 16:16-17).² In the Talmud we find the following: “Beth Shammai says: The pilgrimage offering must be worth (at least) two pieces of silver and the Festival offering one ma’ah of silver.” But Beth Hillel says: “the pilgrimage-offering must be worth (at least) one ma’ah of silver and the festal sacrifice two pieces of silver.”³

The Koran, following the biblical injunction regarding pilgrimage, prescribes that every Moslem, except those physically and financially unable, visit Mecca at least once in his lifetime; and, again, as in the biblical practice, an offering to God⁴ must be rendered at the pilgrimage: "And proclaim amongst men the Pilgrimage; let them come to you on foot and on every slim camel, from every deep pass, that they may witness advantages for them, and may mention the name of God for the stated days over what God has provided them with of brute beasts, then eat thereof and feed the badly off, the poor" (22:29)⁵

A prohibition against cohabitation during the days of the pilgrimage is not known in Jewish law. It is possible that the Koranic prohibition against dealing with women,⁶ fornication and quarrel, stem from the Talmudic command. "a man should purify himself for the festival."⁷

In early days the Hajj was associated with great fairs. "These fairs were probably the main thing to Muhammad's contemporaries, as they still are to many Muslims. For the significance of the religious ceremonies had even then lost its meaning for the people. The following may be stated. A main part of the ceremony was the wukuf 'the halt' in the plain on 'Arafat; in Islam the Hadj without wukuf is invalid. This can only be explained as the survival of a pre-Muslim notion. Houtma has compared the wukuf with the stay of the Israelites on Mount Sinai. The latter had to prepare themselves for this by refraining from sexual intercourse (Ex. 19.15) and the washing of their garments (Exod. 19.10, 14). Thus they waited upon their god) 11, 15). In the same way the Muslims refrain from sexual intercourse, wear holy clothing and stand before the deity (= stand) at the foot of a holy mountain."⁸

The institution of Hajj has been serving as a major influence upon Moslems congregating in Mecca from all over the world. Rich and poor fraternize in company on the common ground of faith. Each pilgrim enters "the holy precincts as a muhrim (wearing a seamless garment) and performs the seven-fold circumambulation of the Ka'bah (tawaf) and the seven-fold course (sa'y) between the adjacent al'Safa mound and the Marwah eminence lying opposite. The hajj proper begins with the march to 'Arafah, which lasts from the seventh to the eighth of dhu-al-Hijjah. The halts (wuquf) take place at the outlying sanctuaries of 'Arafah, namely, al-Muzdalifah and Mina. The stone-throwing ceremony takes place on the way to the valley of Mina at Jamrat al'Aqabah. With the sacrifice at Mina of a camel or of a sheep or other horned domestic animal (Koran 22:34-37), which always takes place on the tenth of dhu-al-Hijjah and is celebrated throughout the Moslem world as 'Id al-Adha (the festival of sacrifice), the whole ceremony formally ends. After the shaving of the head the garment (ihram) is discarded and the ihlal (secular condition) resumed."⁹

Notes:

1 Hebrew . Cf. Jud. 21:19; 1 Kings 8:2. The Hajj is to be undertaken at the time of the new moon of the twelfth month Dhu'lhijjah.

2 Later on, 'after the destruction of the first temple in 586BCE, when the Jews were no longer able to travel to Jerusalem, the Synagogue was established. S. Zeitlin, The History of the Second Commonwealth, Philadelphia, 1933, p. 52

3 Cf. Mishnah Hag. 2s.

4 Mishnah Yom, 83b

5 Compare Exod. 34:23 and

6 Bu., Vol. I, p. 408: They did not mix with them (wives)." Cf. notes to 2:179-81

7 B.R.H. 16b

8 Wensinck, E. I. (1927) Vol. II, p. 200; cf. B. Shab. 87a

9 Hitti, op. cit., pp. 133-34. As to the Jewish origin of the practices of the hajj see Dozy, op. cit., pp. 120 f.

SURA II – VERSE 196

And when ye have performed your rites, remember God as ye remember your fathers, or with a keener memory still.

This verse alludes, according to Rivlin,¹ to the Jewish practice of reciting the Kaddish² by the Reader or mourner at the close of each section of a public service.³ To remember God after performing "the rites," may also refer to the word 'Amen⁴ which is included in the Kaddish, or to the custom in the Synagogue of having the assembly of worshippers respond to the prayer: "'Amen , may God's great Name be praised for ever and ever."⁵ According to the Talmud, "He who responds 'Amen!' with all his

might has the sentence against him annulled.” Similarly, the Islamic tradition maintains that “a correct observance of the ritual of prayer brings about the cancellation of sin. When the Imam says, ‘Not of those with whom thou art angered nor of those who go astray,’ say ‘Amen,’ for whosoever says ‘Amen’ at the same time as the angels shall have his past sins remitted him.”⁶

Notes:

1 Rivlin, op. cit., p. 109.

2 Lit. “Holy.” It is a brief prayer, written in Aramaic, magnifying and hallowing the great name of God.

3 B. Ber. 21b; cf. Rivlin, op. cit., p. 109 n, who refers to Juynboll, op. cit., p. 78: “Vor dem Ruk’u, sowie vor und nach jedem Sudjud hat man ein Takbit ubereinstimmt.”

4 Cf. notes to 2:1-2, note 28; Ps. 89:53.

5 B. Shabb. 119b ; cf. B. Ber. 16b “Rab on concluding his prayer added the following: May it be Thy will (), O Lord our God, to grant us long life..., a life in which Thou shalt fulfil all the desires of our heart for good!” This prayer is now a part of the Sabbath prayers and recited when the New Moon is announced. Cf.

6 Quoted by Taylor, op. cit., pp. 198-99

SURA II – VERSE 206

What can they expect but that God should come unto them in the shadow of a cloud, and the angels too? But the thing is decreed, and unto God do things return.

Sa'adia Gaon, in his translation of the biblical phrase in Lev. 23:43, "...to dwell in booths...",¹ employs the identical words² used in the Koran.³ The Talmud refers to the booths as "clouds of glory."⁴ Identical descriptions are employed by Rashi⁵ and in the tannaitic literature.⁶

Notes

1

2

3 i.e. "in the shadow of a cloud"

4 B. Suk. 11b. This view is not accepted by R. 'Akiba who maintains: "they made for themselves real booths" (ibid).

5 Rashi on Lev. 23:43,

6 The opinions of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiba are reversed in the Sifra. In the latter, R. Akiba maintains that the booths were “clouds of glory.”

SURA II – VERSE 209

Men were one nation once, and God sent prophets with good tidings and with warnings, and sent down with them the Book in truth, to judge between men in that wherein they disagreed.

According to some Moslem commentators the expressions, “Men were one nation once,”¹ refers to the ten generations from Adam to Noah,² whose people followed the true faith and were like one single religious community. This thought is likewise expressed in Jewish tradition,³ which maintains that from Adam to Enosh all people worshipped the one true God and only in the time of Enosh⁴ did idolatry emerge.⁵

Notes:

1

2 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 143:

3 Compare Mishah Aboth 5:2: “(There were) ten generations from Adam to Noah, in order to make known how long-extended is long-suffering with him; for all those generations were repeatedly acting provokingly, until He brought upon them the waters of the flood.”

4 See Targum Jonatha and Gen. Rab. 23, 6; compare also Maimonides, , 1, 1; cf. Gen. 4:26

5 Rashi to Gen. 4:26: . The expression: is from , i.e. profane. See however, Ibn Ezra and Sforno, ad loc., who claim that is derived from , and the meaning is that this was the beginning of worshipping the true God.

SURA II – VERSE 211

They will ask thee what they are to expend in alms: say, ‘Whatsoever good ye expend it should be for parents and kinsmen, and the orphan and the poor, and the son o the road; and whatsoever good ye do, verily, of it God knows.’

The place of charity¹ in Islam is discussed in 2:1-2 and elsewhere.² In Jewish tradition the laws pertaining to obligatory “alms,” i.e. the one-tenth of the yearly produce and the unharvested edges of the fields and orchards, were supplemented by other laws in the Bible, e.g. “If there be among you a needy man,... thou shalt not harden thy heart, not shut thy hand... lend him sufficient for his need” (Deut. 15:7-8). Islamic tradition, too, elaborates on the Koranic Zakah³ and urges helping “the distressed one who is in need,” “as well as the giving of charity in secret.”⁴

The sequence of the Koranic verse implies that “parents and kinsmen” have priority with regard to alms. The same is true in the case of the orphan and the widow.⁵ This corresponds to Jewish law.⁶ The Talmud provides that: “If an orphan applied for assistance to marry, a house must be rented for him, a bed must be prepared for him and (he must also be supplied with) all (household) objects (required for) his use, and then he is given a wife in marriage...”⁷ The rabbis add: “You are commanded to maintain him and supply him even with a horse and a servant (if he were used to such luxuries), but you are not commanded to make him rich.”⁸

Regarding “the son of the road,” Jewish tradition, too, puts great stress on the obligation to take care of the wanderer and to provide him with board and lodging as well as an escort in case of danger.”⁹

Notes

1 Sadaqah,

2 Cf. notes on 2:172, 246, 273, 280; 3:128 and T.H. Weir, “Sadaka,” E.I., Vol. IV, pp. 33 f.

3 Bu. Vol. I, p. 377: “in the produce derived from the watering of heaven and springs or in what is watered by water running on the surface of the ground is one-tenth...” Cf. Deut. 26:12: “When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithe of thine increase in the third year, which is the year of

tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be satisfied.”

4 Bu. Vol. I, pp. 359 f. Cf. notes 53-4 to 2:1-2

5 Bu. Vol. III, p. 485; cf. Al-Ghazali, Ihya, ‘Ulum al-Din (Cairo, 1326 A.H.), Vol. I pp. 149f.; T.W. Juynboll, op. cit., pp. 109 f.

6 Malmonides,

7 B. Ket. 67b. According to the Bible, the giving of approximates a loan to God. “He that is gracious unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord, And his good deed will He repay unto him.” Prov. 19:17; cf. Lev. R. 34, 15; B.B.B. 9b. The Koran, too, states: “Verily, those who give in charity, men and women, who have lend to God a goodly loan, - it shall be doubled for them, and for them is a generous hire.”

(57:17_

8 B. Ket. 67b; Sifre on Deut. 15:6

9 Sifre to Deut. 21:7: Cf. B. Sot. 48b and

SURA II – VERSE 213

They will ask thee of the sacred month, - of fighting therein. Say, ‘Fighting therein is a great sin; but turning folks off God’s way, and misbelief in Him and in the Sacred Mosque, and turning His people out therefrom, is a greater sin in God’s sight; and sedition is a greater sin than slaughter.’

The Talmud too, discusses the problem of waging war on the Sabbath. According to the rabbis: “Gentile cities must not be besieged less than three days before the Sabbath; yet once they commence they need not leave off. And thus did Shammai say: until it fall, even on the Sabbath.”¹ Idolatry or sedition is considered by Muhammad, as in Jewish tradition,² to be a graver offense than fighting at the prohibited time and worse than slaughter. According to the Mishnah, “exile comes upon the world because of idolatry and incest and the shedding of blood.”³ The Talmud further stipulates: “in every (other) law of the Torah, if a man is commanded: ‘Transgress and suffer not death’ he may transgress and not suffer death, excepting idolatry, incest (which includes adultery), and murder.”⁴

Notes

1 B. Shab. 19a

2 Cf. notes to 2:187

3 Mishnah Ab. 5:9 [D]

4 B. Sanh. 74a

SURA II – VERSE 216

They will ask thee about wine and *el maisar*,¹ say, 'In them both is sin and profit to men; but the sin of both is greater than the profit of the same.' (GAMBLING)

The Bible prohibits the drinking of wine and other intoxicating beverages only in the case of priests and judges.² The Koranic prohibition of drinking wine applies only to the time of prayer,³ which corresponds to the Talmudic law "that a drunken person is forbidden to say the Tefillah."⁴ Wine was considered in the Talmudic period to be an intoxicating drink⁵ and was used moderately even for benediction.⁶ However, though the Jews looked upon wine as a serious evil,⁷ its usage in a temperate form was encouraged in the Bible.⁸

Notes:

1 A form of gambling, “the prize being a young camel, which was slaughtered and given to the poor.” Palmer, p. 29 n.

2 Lev. 10:9. Perhaps we have here an allusion to Deut. 28:39: “Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them, but thou shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worm shall eat them.” Compare with in Onkelos, Deut. 29:5.

3 4:46

4 B. Ber. 31a. Cf. Noldeke-Schwally, op. cit., p. 182 n.

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7 See the story of Noah in Gen. 9:20-24 and

8 Ecc. 10:19 “...And wine maketh glad the life...” Cf. Torrey, op. cit., p. 152

SURA II – VERSE 220

Wed not with idolatrous women until they believe, for surely a believing handmaid is better than an idolatrous women, even though she please you. And wed not to idolatrous men until they believe, for a believing slave is better than an idolater, even though he please you.

Compare: Ezra 9:13-14: “And after all that is come upon us for our evil deed, and for our great guilt, seeing that Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a remnant, shall we again break Thy commandments, and make marriages with the people that do these abominations? Wouldest not Thou be so angry with us till Thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape?”

The Mishnah prohibits inter-marriage with Nethinim¹ for all time, whether they be males or females.² Accordingly, “a female... Nethinah (is prohibited) to an Israelite³ and a daughter of an Israelite to a Nethin.”⁴

The rabbis interpret Lev. 18:21, “And thou shalt not give any of thy seed to set them apart to Molech...,” to mean “an Israelite who has intercourse with a Cuthean woman and he begets from her a son for idolatry.”⁵

Notes:

1 Descendants of the Gibeonites who deceived Joshua (Josh. 9:3 f).

2 Mishnah Yeb. 78b

3 "Who is forbidden on the ground of the sanctity of Israel to marry such types."

4 Mishnah Yeb. 20a.

5 B. Meg. 25a; cf. Targum Jonathan to Lev. 18:21 and B. Sanh. 64a.

SURA II – VERSE 222

They will ask thee about menstruation; say, 'It is a hurt.' So keep apart from women in their menstruation, and go not near them till they be cleansed; but when they are cleansed come in to them by where God has ordered you; verily, God loves those who turn to Him, and those who keep themselves clean.

According to the Talmud, "menstruation" is one of the ten curses inflicted on Eve for eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree (Gen. 3:6),¹ The Koranic expression, "it is a hurt," recalls the biblical words: "Unto the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy travail; in pain thou shalt bring forth children...' (Gen. 3:16).

Tabari, referring to the Koranic words, "and go not near them until they be clean," writes that Moslem commentators differ about the exact meaning of this sentence. Some maintain that the true meaning is to refrain from sexual intercourse, whereas others hold that any proximity to a woman during the menstruation period is prohibited.² Such an interpretation is also found in the Talmud: "Said I to her, 'My daughter! How was he (the husband) to thee in thy days of menstruation?' 'God

forbid!’ she rejoined; ‘he did not touch me even with his little finger.’”³ The Koranic phrase, *la taqrabuhunna*,⁴ is similar to the Hebrew, *lo tikrab*⁵ (Lev. 18:19). Likewise the term “clean,”⁶ used for purification and recovery, corresponds to the Hebrew *Tahor*⁷ (Lev. 15:13, 28). The expression, *fa’tazala*⁸ (go not near), recalls the Hebrew *parash*⁹ prohibition to approach women during their menstruation: “Rabbi Jeremiah observed, ... that they shall separate from their wives near their periods.”¹¹

Notes:

1 Cf. , chapter 1: Perek Adam ha-Rishon, in T.S., Vol. II, p.97.

2 Tabari, Vol. II, p. 217:

3 B. Shab. 13b; 195. . Cf. Lev. 18:19: “And thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness.” See also Lev. 15:19-30. The biblical prohibition is in agreement with most Moslem commentators who claim that Muhammad prohibited actual cohabitation during the period of menstruation. Compare Tabari (ibid) and Wensinck, “Die Entstehung der muslimischen Reinheitsgesetzgebung,” *Der Islam*, Vol. V (Strasburg, 1914), pp. 62-80

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10 Cf. Rashi, ad loc.: ; also, Onkelos, ad loc., . Compare Ibn Ezra, ad loc., ; and see B. Ket. 61a.

11 B. Nid. 63b.

SURA II – VERSE 223

Your women are your tilth, so come into your tillage how you choose; but do a previous good act for yourselves and fear God, and know that ye are going to meet Him; and give good tidings unto those who do believe.

That “women” are “tilth” is noted in the Talmud: “Esther was merely natural soil (which is tilled),”¹ The comparison of a woman with tilth occurs, also, in the El-Amarna tablets.² Similarly, the comparison between “sexual intercourse” and “plowing” is well known in rabbinic literature.³ The famed heretic and founder of the Karaite movement, ‘Anan ben David,⁴ interprets the biblical sentence, “...in plowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest” (Exod. 34:21), to mean abstention from

cohabitation on the Sabbath.⁵ Comparisons between the “woman” and the “field” abound in the Talmud: “If one has married a woman and has not found in her virginity (and) she says, ‘After thou hadst betrothed me (to thyself) I was violated and thy field has been inundated...’”⁶ In Song of Songs (4:12) the woman is described “As a garden shut up,” and as “A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” The expression here, *fa’atu harthakum*⁷ (so come into your tillage), recalls the biblical phrase: “...go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid...” (Gen. 16:2).⁸ Likewise the phrase, “how you choose,” is comparable to the Talmudic dictum: “.. a man may do whatever he pleases with his wife (at intercourse).”⁹ The latter view is not shared by R. Johanan b. Dahabai.¹⁰ Some of the Jewish practices regarding marriage are found in the Hadith. Bukhari’s statement not to force marriage against the woman’s will,¹¹ is in accord with the Talmudic statement: “One may not give his daughter in betrothal when a minor (but must wait) until she grows up and says ‘I want So-and-So.’”¹²

Notes:

1 B. Sanh. 74b

2 D. H. Muller, *Semitica*, Vol. I, p. 33; cf. O. Weber, *Die Literatur der Babylonier und Assyrier*, Leipzig, 1907, p. 307; S. Poznanski, in *Studies in Jewish Literature in honor of Kaufmann Kohler*, Berlin, 1913, p. 241.

3 Talmud Yerushalmi, Yeb. 1, 1:

4 Lived in Babylonia and died c. 800 C.E.

5 Ibn Ezra on Exod. 34:21:

6 B. Ket. 16a.

7

8 Cf. Gen. 16:4, ; and Gen. 29:21,

9

10 Ibid.

11 Bu., Vol. III, p. 430: . Cf. S. Bailoblocki, *Materialien zum Islamischen und Judischen Eherecht*, Giessen, 1928, p. 54 f.

12 B. Kid. 41a

SURA II – VERSE 224

Make not God the butt of your oaths, that ye will keep clear and fear and make peace amongst men, for God both hears and knows.

Almost all of the ten commandments in the Decalogue¹ have their counterpart in the Koran. In Sura verses 23-41 Muhammad commands, among others: “Put not with God other gods,” “ye shall not serve other than Him;” “kindness to one’s parents;” “give thy kinsman his due and the poor and the son of the road;”² “draw not near to fornication;” “slay not the soul that God has forbidden you, except for just cause;”³ and “draw not near to the wealth of the orphan.”

The Koranic phrase, “Make not God the butt of your oaths,” is comparable to the biblical: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exod. 20:7).⁴ Muhammad likewise commands his followers not to invoke the name of God in a false oath.

The phrase, “Make peace amongst men,” seems to be a replica of the statement in Sifre that peace is essential for the dead as well as for the living.⁵

Notes:

1 Exod. 20:2-18 and Deut. 5:7-18: Cf. 2L172. In 50:25 the expression, is comparable to Exod. 20:20,... Similarly, in 19:43 is identical with Deut. 4:28, . See also Rivlin, op. cit., p. 118 and notes to 2:1-2, 77, 211, etc.

2 Cf. Bu., Vol. IV, p. 109 – Respect for father and mother; Bu. Vol. IV, p. 128 – “Thou shalt not hate one another”; Bu., Vol. IV, p. 117 – “Be merciful to mem.”

3 Cf. ; also, (he shall live by them), Lev. 18:5. In Judaism Sabbath laws are suspended in the case of danger to human life. According to the rabbis, man shall live by the laws but shall not die because of them, B. Yom. 85a; cf. B. Ket. 5a.

4 Cf. B. Shab. 119b, 120a; Mishnah Sheb. 3:10 [D].

5 Cf. (Sifre on Deut. 20:10). Also Sifre on Num. 6:26:

SURA II – VERSE 226

Those who swear off from their women, they must wait four months; but if they break their vow God is forgiving and merciful.

The rabbis, too, set a limit to the time during which a husband may have no intercourse with his wife: "If a man vowed to have no intercourse with his wife, the School of Shammai say: "(she may consent) for two weeks. And the School of Hillel say: For one week (only). Disciples (of the Sages) may continue absent for thirty days against the will (of their wives) while they occupy themselves in the study of the Law; and labourers for one week..."¹ If the man oversteps the time limit, he is obliged either to grant his wife a divorce or revoke his vow.² This is in line with Baidawi's comment on the second part of the verse: "they retract their oaths by revoking it."³

The expression, "those who swear off from their women," recalls the biblical phrase in Deut. 24:1, "if she find no favour in his eyes."⁴

Notes:

1 Mishnah Ket. 5:6 (D)

2 B. Ket. 61b.

3 Baidawi, Vol. II, p. 56

4 Cf. Samuel Rosenblatt, "The Relation Between Jewish and Muslim Laws Concerning Oaths and Vows." In PAAJR, Vol. VII, (1935-36), pp. 229-43.

SURA II – VERSE 228

Divorced women must wait for themselves three courses; and it is not lawful to them that they hide what God has created in their wombs, if they believe in God and in the last day. Their husbands will do better to take them back in that (case) if they wish for reconciliation; for, the same is due to them as from them; but the men should have precedence over them. God is mighty and wise.

This verse and verse 233 are similar to the Talmudic laws, According to the rabbis, a divorced woman is not allowed to be married within ninety days of the date of the divorce. This is done in order to ascertain pregnancy, since it is presumed to take three months¹ to detect pregnancy.² The Mishnah, too, states: "widows may not (again) be betrothed or married before three months have passed..."³ Though the Koran, as in Judaism, gives the right of divorce only to the husband, divorce legislation in Islam as a whole differs greatly from Jewish practice.⁴

Notes:

1 Deduced from Gen. 38:24: "And it came to pass about three months after..."

2 B. Nid. 8b

3 Mishnah Yeb. 4:10 (D). Geiger, however, states: “und merkwürdig ist 11:230, wo es heist, der Mann durfe, nachdem er die Frau (zum zweiten Male) verstossen, sie nicht wieder heriathen, es musses sie den ein Anderer schon geheirarhet und wieder verstossen haben, in direktem Widerspruche mit 5 M, 1ff.” op. cit., p. 196.

It is worth noting that the list of the near relatives with whom marriage is not permitted according to the Koran (4:26-27) tallies with the list enumerated in Lev. 18:6-18, 20:11-21. Muhammad, however, unlike the biblical law, disallows marriage with a niece. Cf. R. Roberts, *The Social Laws of the Qoran*, London, 1925, p. 141 Torrey, op. cit., p. 149.

4 The Koran does not require the granting of “a bill of divorce” (2:229) as prescribed in the Bible and in the Talmud. See B. Git. 21b: . A written document, however, is required in monetary transactions, 2:283. For an elaborate discussion of the close relationship between Jewish and Moslem laws of marriage and divorce see Bialoblocki, op. cit., pp. 25 g., and D. B. Macdonald, *The Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, London, 1903, pp. 67 f.

SURA II – VERSE 233

Mothers must suckle their children two whole years for one who wishes to complete the time of suckling; and on him to whom it is born its sustenance and clothing are incumbent; but in reason, for no soul shall be obliged beyond its capacity. A mother shall not be forced for her child; nor he to whom it is born for his child. And the same (is incumbent) on the heir (of the father). But if both parties wish to wean, by mutual consent and counsel, then it is no crime in them. And if ye wish to provide a wet-nurse for your children, it is no crime in you when you pay what you have promised her, in reason, Fear God, and know that God on what ye do doth look.

A prescribed time for children's suckling is also found in the Talmud, which states that a baby sucks and may continue to suck until twenty-four months old. "From that age onwards he is to be regarded as one who sucks an abominable thing."¹

"If she (the mother) was divorced, he (her husband) cannot compel her; but if (the child) knows her (and refuses to be nursed by any other woman), (her husband) pays her the fee and may compel her to suckle it in order (to avert) danger."²

Notes:

1 B. Ket. 60a, . Compare Josephus, Antiquities, 2, 9; and 31:13, “and his (child’s) weaning is in two years.”

2 B. Ket. 59b.

SURA II – VERSE 239

Observe the prayers, and the middle prayer, and stand ye attend before God.

The Koranic phrase, “to observe the prayer,” recalls the Talmudic expressions lekayyem tefillah.¹ In 20:14 the term aqama s-salah² is similar to the Hebrew la ‘amod bitefillah.³ The Arabic term for prayer salah⁴ is identical with the Aramaic selota.⁵ “Stand ye attend before God” recalls the Mishnaic phrase: “None may stand up to say the Tefillah save in sober mood.”⁶

According to Islamic tradition: “The prayer in the midst of the congregation stands twenty-five degrees higher than the prayer one performs in his house or in the market place.”⁷ Similarly, the Talmud states: “A man’s prayer is heard (by God) only in the Synagogue... How do you know that the Holy One, blessed be He, is to be found in the Synagogue? For it is said: God standeth in the congregation of God (Ps. 82:1). And how do you know that if ten people pray together, the Divine Presence is with them? For it is said ‘God standeth in the congregation of God’ (and a congregation consists of not less than ten).”⁸

Notes:

1 cf. notes to 2:1-2, 172, 211, 246 and elsewhere. The Hebrew, Tefilla (prayer), which is derived from the root “to judge”, is taken as “self-examination” or as “an invocation of God to judge.” See Gen. 21:17; 25:21; 28:20; 32:11; 35:3; Deut. 9:25-26.

2

3 B. Sanh. 44b: . See, also, Geiger, op. cit., p. 84; Rivlin, Gesetz... p. 93; Mittwoch, op. cit., p. 16; Torrey, op. cit., p. 138n.; and 2:229-30 . Cf. B. Ber. 30a.

4 ; cf. William Rudolph, Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum, Stuttgart, 1922, p. 56; A.J. Wensinck, "Salat," EI, Vol. IV, pp. 99f.

5

6 Mishnah Ber. 5:1:

7 Taylor, op. cit., p. 200; cf. note 28 to 2:1-2.

8 B. Ber. 6a; cf.: See also Mishnah Meg. 4:3, B. Sanh. 2b and Juynboll, op. cit., p. 81.

SURA II – VERSE 240

And if ye fear, then afoot¹ or on horseback; but when ye are in safety remember God, how He taught you while yet ye did not know.

A similar verse is found in 3:188: "who remember God standing and sitting or lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth," to which Baidawi comments that Muhammad directed his followers to pray in any of these three postures depending upon their strength. That is, pray standing and if unable, sitting; and if still unable (to pray), leaning on one side.²

The Talmud, too, prescribes the position for prayer:³ "If one was riding on an ass and the time arrived for saying Tefillah, if he has someone to hold his ass, he dismounts and prays, if not, he sits where he is and prays."⁴ As in Judaism,⁵ so in Islam, prayer may be shortened in time of emergency,⁶ and in purification before prayers, sand⁷ may be substituted for water in time of need.⁸

Notes:

1 "That is, if ye are in danger, say your prayers, as best you can, on foot or horseback, not staying so as to endanger your lives," Palmer, p. 33 n.; cf. 4:46; 10:13.

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 93:

3 Cf. Mishnah Ber. 4:5 [D]

4 B. Ber. 30a.

5

6 4:102: "And when ye knock about in the earth, it is no crime to you that you come short in prayer." Cf. Geiger, op. cit., p. 86: "vergleich den ganz Gleichen Ausdruck ." See notes to 2:1-2, 147, 172, 182, 196 etc.

7 5:8: "But if ye are sick, or on a journey, or if one of you comes from the privy, or if ye have touched women and cannot find water, then take fine surface sand and wipe your faces and your hands therewith," cf. Bu., Vol. I, p. 98, and B. Ber. 15a:

8 In 5:8, the Koran prescribes the following: "O ye who believe! When ye rise up to prayer wash your faces, and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads, and your feet down to the ankles. And if ye are polluted, then purify yourselves." Such a practice was prescribed in Exod. 30:19 for Aaron and his sons to "wash their hands and their feet thereat." The Talmud refers to this practice as (B. Yom. 30b). Cf. B. Zeb. 19b: "Our Rabbis taught: How is the precept of 'sanctification' (fulfilled)? (The priest) places his right hand on his right foot and his left on his left foot, and sanctified them (so that he washes his hands and feet simultaneously, by pouring water on each pair with his fore hand). R. Jose son of Judah said: He places both hands on each other and on his two feet lying on each other, and sanctifies them." See also Rivlin, op. cit., p. 90.

SURA II – VERSE 244

Dost thou not look at those who left their homes by thousands, for fear of death; and God said to them "Die," and then He quickened them again? Verily, God is Lord of grace to men, but most men give no thanks.

Ezekiel¹ relates that the spirit of God had placed him in a valley that was filled with human bones, all very dry and numerous. Then the word of God came forth asking: Can these bones return to life? Ezekiel replied: Thou, Lord, thou knowest. God said: Prophecy over these bones, in the name of God, that He will enclose them with veins, flesh and skin, and the spirit of life, that they all come back to life. Ezekiel prophesied. A storm and noise of moving bones were heard; the bones neared to its parts, and they were clothed with skin and flesh. God then asked Ezekiel to call upon the wind from the four corners and blow into those killed ones. The winds brought the spirit and a very large army arose, standing upon their feet. God then said to Ezekiel: These bones are the children of Israel. They had said: Our hopes are lost, our bones are dried up.²

Notes:

1 Ezek. 17:1-14; cf. notes to 2:260, 261, 262.

2 Cf. B. Shab. 88b and B. Sanh. 92b: . Also Geiger, op. cit., p. 190n: "Auch arab. Ausleger wissen davon, jedoch halb traumend, sowie Ishmail ben Ali im Namen des Ibn Taleb angiebt, es sei dies in den Zeiten des Richters (?) der nach , Sohn des Caleb, diese Stelle bekleidet habe, vorgefallen (Mar. Prodr. IV, 83)." According to Moslem writers, Ezekiel was one of the judges of Israel.

SURA II – VERSE 246

Who is there that will lend to God a good loan? He will redouble it many a double; God closes His hand and holds it out, and unto Him shall ye return.

A similar verse is found in Sura 2:177: "God heard the speech of those who said, 'Verily God is poor and we are rich,'"1 Baidawi, commenting on the latter verse, writes that this was said by the Jews when they heard the word, 'Who then will lend a hand to God a good loan?' It is related that the Prophet once sent a letter to Abu Bakr to the Jewish tribe Banu Qainuqa' inviting them to accept Islam and to observe prayer and to give alms to lend to God a good loan. When Pinhas B 'Azura said, 'Then God must be poor, if He desires a loan!' Then Abu Bakr slapped him saying, 'Were it not for the covenant that is between us, I would have cut off your head.' Then Pinhas complained to the Prophet, claiming that he had not said it. Then this text was revealed which gave its meaning, that it is not hidden from God, and that He has prepared punishment for them on account of it.2

Talmudic law, too, reacts to people who are critical of the law of charity. The rabbis say "... The critic (of Judaism) may bring against you the argument, 'If your God loves the poor, why does He not support them?' If so, answer him, 'So that through them we may be saved from the punishment of Gehinnom.' This question was actually put by Turnus Rufus (Roman Governor of Judea) to R. Akiba: 'If your God loves the poor, why does He not support them?' He replied, 'So that we may be saved through them from the punishment of Gehinnom.' 'On the contrary,' said the other, 'it is this which condemns you to Gehinnom. I will illustrate by a parable. Suppose an earthly king was angry with his servant and put him in prison and ordered that he should be given no food or drink, and a man went

and gave him food and drink. If the king heard, would he be angry with him? And you are called 'servants' as it is written, 'For unto me the children of Israel are Servants' (Lev. 25:55). R. Akiba answered him: 'I will illustrate with another parable. Suppose an earthly king was angry with his son, and put him in prison and ordered that no food or drink should be given to him, and someone went and gave him food and drink. If the king heard of it, would he not send him a present? And we are called 'sons,' as it is written: Sons are ye to the Lord your God (Deut. 14:1)."³

The Koranic idea that giving charity makes man God's creditor may refer to the biblical verse in Prov. 19:17: "He that is gracious unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord, And his good deed⁴ will He repay unto him."⁵ Muhammad, probably aware of this Jewish precept, emphasized the importance of righteousness⁶ in helping the poor and the needy. This is clear from the other verses: "Verily, those who give in charity, men and women, who have lent to God a godly loan, - it shall be doubled for them, and for them is a generous hire" (57:17). Similar words are also found in 64:17; 73:21 and in 30:38, "... but what ye put out in alms, desiring the face of God - these it is who shall gain double."⁷ In Sura 3:177 Muhammad also states: "We will write down."⁸ This recalls the liturgical phrase in the prayer of the Eighteen Benedictions on the High Holy Days: "O inscribe all Thy children of Thy covenant for a happy life."⁹

Notes:

1 Compare: "And the Lord said unto Moses: 'Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Now shalt thou see whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not.'"

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p.92: Cf. M.C.B. p. 128

3 B.B.B. 10a.

4 Cf. Toyozo E. Nakarai, "The Prophetic Concept of Righteousness," in *The Shalom Quarterly*, Vol. XIII (1952), pp. 51-57.

5 Cf. B.B.B. 10a, b; Lev. Rab. 34,15; Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 212f

6 ; cf. notes to 2:1-2, 211, 240

7 Cf. Geiger, op. cit., p. 16, where he mistakenly relates 3:177 to 5:69: "the Jews say, 'God's hand is fettered.'"

8 Cf. 3:46: "So write us down with those which bear witness."

9 Cf.

SURA II – VERSE 247-48

Dost thou not look at the crowd of the children of Israel after Moses' time, when they said to a prophet of theirs, 'Raise up for us a king, and we will fight in God's way?' He said, 'Will you perhaps, if it be written down for you to fight, refuse to fight?' They said, 'And why should we not fight in God's way, now that we are dispossessed of our homes and sons?' But when it was written down for them to fight they turned back, save a few of them, and God knows who are evildoers. Then their prophet said to them, 'Verily, God has raised up for you Talut as a king;' they said, 'How can the kingdom be his over us; we have more right to the kingdom than he, for he has not an amplitude of wealth?' He said, 'Verily, God has chosen him over you, and has provided him with an extent of knowledge and of form. God gives the kingdom unto whom He will; God comprehends and knows.'

Muhammad does not specify the name of the prophet who was asked to "raise up for us a king." The reference is undoubtedly to Samuel who anointed Saul¹ "to be prince over His inheritance" (1 Sam. 10:1). Moslem commentators, however, disagree about the name of the prophet. Some maintain it was Samuel or Joshua² and others think it was Simeon.³

Regarding the birth of Samuel, Tabari⁴ relates an interesting legend: After Moses' death, the Israelites fought the Amalekites, and lost. Whereupon the Israelites besought God to send them a prophet who would lead them to victory. In the struggle with the Amalekites the tribe of Levi, which was the tribe of prophets, was, however, completely annihilated save for one pregnant woman. The Israelites took the woman and locked her up in a convent, so that in case she gave birth to a girl they would exchange the child for a boy. The woman prayed to God to grant her a son. Her plea was fulfilled, and she named the boy Simeon. When Simeon grew up, she sent him to study in the sanctuary where he also rendered services to an old man. When the boy reached maturity, the angel Gabriel called him one night. The boy, who slept in the same place with the old man, inquired of the latter if he had called him. The old man replied in the negative and ordered the boy to lie down again. This was repeated three times. On the third time, Gabriel revealed himself to the boy and told him to return to his people and serve as a prophet.

This story is a mixture of Jewish, Christian and Moslem traditions. The reference to the convent is obviously Christian. The reference to Gabriel is undoubtedly Moslem. The story about the boy in the sanctuary hearing the voice of God calling him several times recalls the tale in 1 Samuel, Chapter 3. As to the name Simeon, it is to be traced to the story of Leah, Jacob's wife, who called her second son Simeon,⁵ "because the Lord hath heard⁶ that I am hated" (Gen. 29:33). This reason is also given by Tabari, who comments that "she called him Simeon because God hearkened to her prayer."⁷ Moslem literature abounds in legends about King Saul. Some commentators explain that Talut (Saul) is derived from the Arabic Tul (long), because Saul was tall.⁸

The Koranic expression, "has provided him with an extent on knowledge and form," is explained by Tabari as meaning "head and shoulders above the people."⁹ This has its origin in the Bible (1 Sam. 9:2): "and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people."

Tabari also relates that God said to Samuel, after the latter had prepared oil to anoint the king, "that a man will appear in your house and if the oil will begin to flow over, you will know that this man is

appointed by Me to be king in Israel.”¹⁰ He adds another Moslem tradition that God gave Samuel a cane and told him that if the man’s height would measure up to the cane, it was a sign that he was the appointed king.¹¹

Moslem commentators attribute the people’s objection to the choice of Saul as king to his inferior ancestry, They maintain that from the tribe of Levi prophets emerged and from that of Judah came kings, but as for Saul, he was of the tribe of Benjamin and therefore was qualified neither for kingdom nor prophecy.¹² This tradition recalls Saul’s own words to Samuel: “Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?” (1 Sam. 9:21)

It is possible that the sentence, “Will you perhaps, if it be written down for you to fight, refuse to fight?” refers to the comment by the rabbis¹³ that he who becomes merciful at the wrong time will become cruel at the end.¹⁴

Notes:

1 In Arabic, Talut . Cf. B. Heller, “Talut;” EI, Vol. IV, 1931, pp. 642-43; Tabari, Vol. II, pp. 357 f.; Gustav Weil, *Biblische Legende der Muselmänner*, pp. 192-208

2 Baidawi, Vol. I. p. 61:

3 Cf. Zamakhshari, ad loc.; Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, pp. 39 f.

4 Tabari, Vol. II, p. 354:

5

6 From the Hebrew

7 Tabari, Vol. II, p. 354.

8 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 163 and Baidawi, Vol I, p. 61L . Cf. Grunbaum, op. cit., pp 185-87; Horovitz, HUCA, pp. 162-63; Noldeke-Schwally, op. cit., Vol. I p. 184. See also notes to 2:249, 250.

9 Tabari, Vol. II, p. 354:

10 Ibid. Vol. II, p. 355:

11 Ibid. Vol. II, p. 359:

12 Ibid., Vol. II, 353-54; cf. Zamakhshari and Baidawi, ad loc.

13 Based on the biblical verse in 1 Sam. 15:9: "But Saul and the people spared Agog." Cf. ; B. Yom. 22b; Ecc. Rab. 7.16.

14

SURA II – VERSE 249

Then said to them their prophet, 'The sign of his kingdom is that there shall come to you the ark with the shechina in it from your Lord, and the relics of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron left; the angels shall bear it.' In that is surely a sign to you if ye believe.

In Moslem tradition this ark¹ was sent down from heaven to Adam. In its wanderings it finally came to the Israelites who considered it extremely precious,² and carried it whenever they went into battle. In the wars led by Moses the enemy captured the ark from the Israelites. At the coronation of Talut (Saul)³ the ark, in sight of all the Israelites, was brought back by the angels and placed at the feet of Talut. Thereupon all Israel acknowledged king Saul as anointed by God himself.⁴

This tradition seems to spring from two distinct but unrelated Jewish sources. Rebecca, in outfitting Jacob to get the blessing from his father Isaac instead of Esau, dressed Jacob in the beautiful clothes that had been entrusted to her care (Gen. 27:15). According to Jewish commentators these clothes had been presented to Adam by God himself. The rabbinic sources vary as to how these clothes reached Esau. One source maintains that when Esau noticed Nimrod wearing the clothes God had made for Adam, he murdered him and robbed him of the clothes. Another source, however, claims that Adam received these clothes from God in order to function as high priest. By heredity they came down to Noah, and from him to Shem his oldest son, who was priest to the Almighty God. Shem, on surrendering the priestly privileges to Abraham, also surrendered his priestly clothes to him. From Abraham the clothes came to Isaac, thence to Esau, his first born. Rebecca, Esau's mother, thus became the custodian of these clothes. When Esau sold his birth-right to Jacob, Rebecca rightly assumed that the clothes thereafter belonged to Jacob, and she instructed him to wear them when he went to secure the blessing from his father.⁶

Moslem commentators interpret the relics ("of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron left") to mean the tablets, the broken tablets, the jar of manna (which Moses told Aaron "to lay...up before the Lord, to be kept throughout your generations")⁷ Moses' rod,⁸ and Aaron's rod and hat.⁹ Again we have here an admixture of Jewish and non-Jewish sources.¹⁰

As for the second source of the tradition concerning the ark, we find the following: "So I made an ark of acacia-wood... and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they are as the Lord commanded me" (Deut. 10:3-5). According to Talmud Yerushalmi¹¹ there were four tablets in the ark: the first, the broken ones, and the second set. The Sifre¹² comments that this ark, which went along with Israel in their engagements, housed the broken tablets. The Talmud Yerushalmi¹² adds that there were two arks with Israel in the desert; one in which the Torah was placed and the other containing the broken tablets. The former was in the Tabernacle, the latter went out in front of the armies. A precedent was established by the two sons of Eli, who took the gold-coated ark and carried it in front of the Jewish armies in their battle with the Philistines. The ark was later captured by the Philistines, and the Jewish armies were dispersed.¹⁴ The Moslem tradition, however, has it that the Amalekites, and not the Philistines, captured the ark.¹⁵

Notes:

1 is identical with the Hebrew or Aramaic . The expression here, “shall come to you (before) the ark,” recalls the Mishnaic phrase, “He that goes before the Ark” (Mishnah Ber. 5:4). Similarly, the term is identical with the Hebrew

2 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 166

3 The king who, according to verse 247, was not wanted by the people.

4 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 166: Cf. 2:250, 253.

5 As far as Moslem legends about Nimrod, see B. Heller, “Namrud,” EI Vol. III, pp 843 f.; Bernard Chapira, “Legendes Bibliques Attribuees a Ka’b el-Ahbar,” REJ, Vol. LXIX (1919), pp. 86-107; D. Sidersky, *Les Origines des Legendes Musulmanes*, Paris, 1933, pp. 31-35. Cf. notes to 2:260.

6 Cf. 2:118

7 Exod. 16:33-34.

8 Exod. 17:5

9 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 166

10 Dov Heller, in Hazofeh, 1926, pp. 138-39.

11

12 (Sifre on Num. 10:33)

13

14 ‘Eliahu Rab. 11, 10.

15 Cf. 1 Sam., chapters 3, 4, 5.

SURA II – VERSE 250

And when Talut set out with his soldiery, he said, 'God will try you with a river, and he who drinks therefrom, he is not of mine; but whoso tastes it not, he is of mine, save he who laps it lapping with his hand.'

According to Tabari, Saul (Talut) put his forces in water in order to test them, since they had complained about the shortage of water. He then urged them to pray to God to make a river flow between them and their enemies.¹

The Koranic story of Saul is confused with the biblical story of Gideon, who camped with his forces beside En-harod (the well of Harod) (Judg. 7:1), where God said to Gideon: "'The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there; and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee: This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and whomsoever I say unto thee: 'This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.' So he brought down the people unto the water; and the Lord said unto Gideon: 'Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.' And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink the water. And the Lord said unto Gideon: 'By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let all the people go every man unto his place'" (Judg. 7:4-7).

Tabari's statement that the soldiers were tried because they complained that there was no water to drink, is undoubtedly a reference to the Israelites' complaint in the desert: "Wherefore the people strove with Moses, and said: 'Give us water that we may drink.' And Moses said unto them: 'Why strive ye with me? Wherefore do ye try the Lord?'" (Ex. 17:2)²

Notes:

1 Tabari, Vol. II, pp. 369-70: Cf. notes to 2:247, 249, 250.

2 Cf. Hans v Mzik's "Die Gideon-Saul Legende und die Überlieferung der Schlacht bei Badr" in Festschrift Joseph Ritter v. Karabacek, pp. 63 f.

SURA II – VERSE 251

And they drank from it save a few of them, and when he had crossed it, he and those who believed with him, they said, 'We have no power this day against Jalut (Goliath) and his soldiery,' those who thought that they should meet their Lord said, 'How many a small division of men have conquered a numerous division by the permission of God, for God is with the patient.'

Muhammad seems to have had some knowledge (though not exact) of David's words to Saul as recorded in the Bible: "Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath taunted the armies of the living God" (1 Sam. 17:36).¹

Notes:

1 Cf. P. Jensen, "Das Leben Muhammeds und die David-Sage," in *Der Islam* (Berlin-Leipzig, Vol. 12, 1992), p. 84-97

SURA II – VERSE 253

And they put them to flight by the permission of God, and David killed Jalut, and God gave him the kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what he willed.

This story is related in detail by Tabari with some deviations from the biblical¹ narrative: i.e., a) David desired the king's daughter as a prize for fighting Goliath; b) following Goliath's death, many people claimed to have killed him; some brought his sword and some brought parts of his body, but King Saul announced that the real victor was the one who brought Goliath's head, and then David came and produced the Philistine's head.²

Zamakhshari,³ commenting on this Koranic verse, states that when David was on his way to kill (Goliath), he found three stones. Each one pleaded with him to use it in order to slay Goliath.

Tabari connects the three stones with the three patriarchs, i.e. Jacob, Isaac and Abraham,⁴

Mas'udi⁵ states that all three stones became one in David's bag. Grunbaum⁶ traces the latter legend to Gen. 28:11: "and he (Jacob) lighted upon the place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones⁷ of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep." Rashi, commentating on the latter verse, tells that the stones began quarrelling for the honor of having Jacob's head rest upon them, whereupon God made them all into one stone.⁸

The legend of the stones as related in Zamakhshari, Tabari and Mas'udi is found in the Midrash where it is related that David selected five stones to honor God, Aaron and the three patriarchs.⁹

Notes:

1 1 Sam., chapter 17: cf. 2:251

2 Tabari, Vol. II, p. 275L

3 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 168:

4 Tabari, Vol. II, p. 375:

5 Mas'udi, Vol. I, p. 107, quoted by Grunbaum, op. cit., p. 192

6 Ibid.

7 Literally, “of the stones of the place, “

8 Rashi, ad loc.:

9 Cf. L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Vol. IV, p. 87: “The stones turned into one pebble,” and “came of their own accord.” See also (*ibid.*)

SURA II – VERSE 254

These apostles have we preferred one of them above another. Of them is one to whom God spake; and we have raised some of them in degrees; and we have given Jesus the son of Mary manifest signs, and strengthened him by the Holy Spirit. And, did God please, those who came after them would not have fought after there came to them manifest signs. But they did not disagree, and of them are some who believe, and of them some who misbelieve, but, did God please, they would not have fought, for God does what He will.

This verse contradicts verses 2:140 and 3:78 where Muhammad states: “we will make no distinction between any of them.” Wellhausen,¹ relying on Baidawi, suggests that Jesus is considered in the Koran to have eclipsed all Jewish prophets. However, as Torrey already indicates, there is no reason for such a “hasty contention.”² On the contrary, Baidawi states that Moses and Muhammad were the only ones who spoke with God, whereas his reference to Jesus is in connection with the miracles he performed.³ Elsewhere⁴ we have shown that to Muhammad, Abraham and Moses were the two great leaders who served as examples for developing the religion of Islam.⁵ This view is corroborated in 3:30, where Muhammad states: “Verily, God has chosen Adam, and Noah, and Abraham’s people, and Imran’s people above the world...”

It seems that here, too, Muhammad is under the influence of Jewish tradition which considers Moses the greatest of all prophets.⁶ The rabbis discuss the various degrees⁷ of all prophets,⁸ and conclude that that of Moses was the highest.⁹

Notes:

1 Rest..., p. 205: “Judische Gesinnung verrät es nicht, dass Jesus im Quran hoch über alle Propheten des Alten Testaments gestellt wird,” quoted in Torrey, op. cit., p. 75

2 Ibid.: “Nowhere in the Koran is there any trace of a wish to give ‘Isa ibn Maryam especially high rank among the prophets.” Cf. note 4 to 2:136

3 Baidawi, Vol. I, p.63:

4 2:91

5 2:125

6 Cf. B. Yeb. 49b: “All the prophets looked into a dim glass (imagining like Isaiah that they saw the Deity), but Moses looked through a clear glass.” See also Horovitz, “Nabi,” ZDMG, Vol. LV, pp. 519 f.;

Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde*, Stockholm, 1918, pp. 32 f.; Noldeke-Schwally, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 159 f.

7

8

9

SURA II – VERSE 256

God there is no god but He, the living, the self-subsistent. Slumber takes Him not, nor sleep. His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. Who is it that intercedes with Him save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they comprehend not aught of His knowledge but of what He pleases. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and it tires Him not to guard them both, for He is high and grand.

Compare Isaiah 45:5-8: "I am the Lord, and there is none else, Beside Me there is no God... That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, That there is no one beside Me; I am the Lord and there is none else; I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am the Lord, that doeth all these things." Also the following: "Behold, unto the Lord thy God belongeth the heaven. And the heaven or heavens, the earth, with all that therein is" (Deut. 10:14). "He ... doth neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4); "...The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool..." (Is. 66:1); "For the Lord your God, He is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty..." (Deut. 10:17).

A similar idea is also found in the Midrash: "The Holy One, blessed be He, is One and there is no god but He, neither man, nor animals nor His serving angels know His whereabouts. He is all over."¹ The Koranic idea that the intercessor requires the sanction of the Lord is to be found in Jewish lore. According to the Aggadah, God revealed to Abraham his intention to destroy Sodom in order to provoke him to intercede.² Similarly, God encouraged Moses to intercede for the people of Israel.³

Notes:

1 Cf. notes to 2:1-2, 101, 109

2

3

SURA II – VERSE 260

Do you not look at him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, that God had given him the kingdom? When Abraham said, 'My Lord is He who giveth life and death,' he said, 'I give life and death.' Abraham said, 'But verily, God brings the sun from the east, do thou then bring it from the west?' And he who misbelieved was dumbfounded, for God does not guide unjust folk.

This verse and verses 21:69-70; 28:14-25; 37:81-99, stressing Abraham's faith in one God and his constant struggle against idolatry, are taken from Jewish sources. The legends concerning the relations between the impious Nimrod and the youth Abraham are many and are recorded in different versions in the Midrash: "Abraham then took a hatchet in his hand, and broke all his father's gods, and when he had done breaking them he placed the hatchet in the hand of the biggest god among them all, and he went out. Terah (Abraham's father), having heard the crash of the hatchet on the stone, ran to the room of the idols, and he reached it at the moment when Abraham was leaving it, and when he saw what had happened, he hastened after Abraham, and he said to him, 'What is this mischief thou hast done to my gods?' Abraham answered: 'I set savory meat before them, and when I came nigh upon them, that they might eat, they all stretched out their hands to take of the meat, before the big one had put forth his hand to eat. This one, enraged against them on account of their behavior, took the hatchet and broke them all, and, behold, the hatchet is yet in his hands, as thou mayest see.'

"Then Terah turned in wrath upon Abraham, and he said: "Thou speakest lies unto me! Is there spirit, soul, or power in these gods to do all thou hast told me? Are they not wood and stone? And have I not made them? It is thou that didst place the hatchet in the hand of the big god, and thou sayest he smote them all.' Abraham answered his father, and said: "How, then, canst thou serve these idols in whom there is no power to do anything? Can these idols in which thou trustiest deliver thee? Can they hear thy prayers when thou callest upon them?' After having spoken these and similar words, admonishing his father to mend his ways and refrain from worshipping idols, he leapt up before Terah, took the hatchet from the big idol, broke it therewith, and ran away.

"Terah hastened to Nimrod, bowed down before him, and besought him to hear his story, about his son who had been born to him fifty years back, and how he had done to his gods, and how he had spoken. 'Now therefore, my lord and king,' he said, 'send for him that he may come before thee, and do thou judge him according to the law, that we may be delivered from his evil.' When Abraham was brought before the king, he told him the same story as he had told Terah, about the big god who broke the smaller ones, but the king replied, 'Idols neither speak, nor eat, nor move.' Then Abraham reproached him for worshipping gods that can do nothing, and admonished him to serve the God of the universe."1 The King then replied: "Do you not know that I am the Lord of the Universe, the creation, the sun and the moon?" God then endowed Abraham with wisdom and he spoke up: "Naturally the sun always rises in the East and sets in the West. If you are the creator of the universe,

commend the sun tomorrow to rise in the west and to set in the east, only then will I testify to your lordship..."²

The Koranic words also recall the biblical sentence: "Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it" (Ezek. 36:36).³

Notes:

1 Luis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Vol. 1, pp. 214-15

2

3 Cf. Horovitz, *Kor. Unt...* p. 40; "Die erste-eingeführt mit *alam tara ila* – und dritte spielen in der Zeit des Ibraham, während die zweite weder Namen noch Ort nennt. A. Muller, *ZDMG* XLII, 90 hat sie aus der im athiopischen Baruchbuch 5, 6 ff., erzählten Episode herleiten wollen, M. Schreiner *ib.* 436 aus der Geschichte des Honi ha-me'aggel; (*Ta'anit* 23a)." See also notes to 2:261, 262.

SURA II – VERSE 261

Or like him who passed by a village,¹ when it was desolate and turned over on its roofs, and said, 'How will God revive this after its death?' And God made him die for a hundred years, then He raised him, and said. How long hast thou tarried?' Said he, 'I have tarried a day, or some part of a day.' He said, 'Nay, thou hast tarried a hundred years; look at thy food and drink, they are not spoiled, and look at thine ass; for we will make thee a sign to men. And look at the bones how we scatter them and clothe them with flesh.' And when it was made manifest to him, he said, 'I know that God is mighty over all.'

According to Geiger,² this Koranic story refers to Nehemiah 2:13: "And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the dragon's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire."

There is, however, a closer resemblance between the Koranic story and the legend in the Talmud about Honi, the Circle-drawer: "R. Johanan said: This righteous man (Honi) was throughout the whole of his life troubled about the meaning of the verse, A Song of Ascents, When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream (Ps. 126:1). Is it possible for a man to dream continuously for seventy years? One day he was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree; he asked him, How long does it take (for this tree) to bear fruit? The man replied: Seventy years. He then further asked him: Are you certain that you will live another seventy years? The man replied: I found (ready grown) carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children. Honi sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept a rocky formation enclosed upon him which hid him from sight and he continued to sleep for seventy years. When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and he asked him, Are you the man who planted the tree? The man replied I am his grandson. Thereupon he exclaimed: It is clear that I slept for seventy years..."³

The phrase, "And look at the bones how we scatter them and then clothe them with flesh," recalls the words in Ezekiel, Chapter 37, relating to the vision of Ezekiel concerning the dry bones in the valley.⁴

Notes:

1 Ali, op. cit., p. 122, renders "a town."

2 Geiger, op cit., p. 192: "Noch eine andere Erzählung beziehen die arabischen Ausleger, nach Maracci's (Prod. IV, 85) Versicherung, auf Esra... wo von Einem erzählt wird, er sei vor einer zerstörten Stadt vorübergehungen, an ihre Belebung zweifelnd; Gott aber liess ihn sterben, dann nach 100 Jahren wieder aufleben und ertheilte ihm, der seinen Tag auch aufgehalten zu haben glaubte, die

Versicherung, dass schon 100 Jahre verflossen seien, wovon der Beweis sei, dass seine Speise und sein Trank zu Grunde gegangen, sein Esel zerfallen sei. Siehe da sammelte Gott die Gebeine des Esels, bekleidete sie mit Fleisch, so dass der Mann bekannte: Gott ist über Alles mächtig! Die Fabel ruhrt, wie Mar, richtig bemerkt, her von dem Ritte, den Nehemias nach dem zerstörten Jerusalem machte (Neh. 2:12 ff.), der ja so oft mit Esra verwechselt wird.”

3 B. Ta'an. 23a

4 Cf. 2:244, 260, 262

SURA II – VERSE 262

And when Abraham said, 'Lord show me how thou wilt revive the dead,' He said, 'What dost thou not yet believe?' Said he, 'Yea, but that my heart may be quieted.' He said, 'Them take four birds, and take them close to thyself; then put a part of them on every mountain; then call them, and they will come to thee in haste; and know that God is mighty, wise.'

This story, hinging upon the narrative in Genesis 15:11-18, probably springs from a Jewish legend which runs as follows: "But though he believed the promise given him with full and abiding faith, Abraham desired to know by what merit of theirs his descendants would maintain themselves. Therefore, God bade him bring a sacrifice of a heifer of three years old, a she-goat of three years old, a ram of three years old, a turtle dove and a young pigeon, thus indicating to Abraham the various sacrifices that should be brought in the Temple to atone for the sins of Israel. 'But what will become of my descendants after the Temple is destroyed?' asked Abraham. God replied and said: 'If they read the order of sacrifices, as they will be stated in the Scriptures, I will account it to them as if they had offered the sacrifices and I will forgive their sins.' God then revealed to Abraham the course of Israel's history in connection with the other nations on earth.

"Abraham took these animals, omitting the birds, and divided them. The birds he did not divide in order to show that Israel will remain whole. When the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abraham drove them away. Dividing the birds symbolized the advent of the Messiah, who will cut the heathen into pieces. And as the Messianic time was made known unto Abraham, so also was the time of the resurrection of the dead made known to him. When Abraham laid the halves of the pieces over against each other, the animals became alive again, as the birds flew over them."¹ The idea that God brought the birds back to life is also found in Sa'adia Gaon's Commentary.²

Geiger believes that this verse shows that Muhammad, in identifying himself with Abraham,³ presents the latter not only as one who preached against idolatry, but also as the expounder of the doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead. Not certain about this doctrine,⁴ Abraham, according to Muhammad, prayed to God for tangible proof and became convinced when he saw that the divided birds⁵ came together and were revived.⁶

Notes:

1 Midrash Hagadol 16, 17: quoted in T.S., Vol. III, pp. 650 f.; cf. P.R.E., pp.198-99 and 148,

2 Gen. 15:11; cf. Geiger, in , Vol. V, p. 180, who calls attention to this Koranic sentence, See also T.S., *ibid.*, note 124.

3 Cf. notes to 2:91, 244, 260-61

4 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 65: Cf. Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 125, English edition, p. 100: "it is said that, after Nimrod had said: 'I make alive and I kill' (II.260), Abraham answered: 'Quickening is brought about by the return of the spirit to the body'. Nimrod replied: 'Hast thou then seen that?' Abraham could not answer in the affirmative and passed over to another argument. On this he prayed to the Lord for some revelation in order that his mind might be easy about an answer to this question, if it were put to him again."

5 Cf. Gen. 15:8 f.

6 A view which, according to Geiger, is foreign to Judaism, "die freilich dem Judenthume fremd ist," *ibid.* See however, P.R.E., pp. 198 f., and T.S., Vol. III, p. 667, note 197 . Cf. 2:262.

SURA II – VERSE 271

The devil promises¹ you poverty and bids you sin, but God promises you pardon from Him and grace, for God both embraces and knows.

Zamakhshari interprets "the devil promises you" to mean that the devil tells you that being charitable will lead to poverty, but God promises grace.² This interpretation seems to be in harmony with the preceding and succeeding Koranic verses which actually deal with charity.³ Jewish tradition, as shown elsewhere, abounds in statements relating to the importance of charity.⁴ The rabbis stress that good deeds not only do not make one poorer⁵ but, on the contrary, they bring a person prosperity⁶ and protect him from adversity:⁷ "He who gives a small coin to a poor man obtains six blessings, and he who addresses to him words of comfort obtains eleven blessings."⁸

Notes:

1

2 Zamakshari, Vol. I, p. 177: Cf. Baidawi, ad loc.

3 Cf. 2:265: "Kind speech and pardon are better than almsgiving followed by annoyance, and God is rich and clement"; and compare: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith" (Prov. 15:17); "Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, Than a house full of feasting with strife" (Prov. 17:1); "Better is a handful of quietness, Than both the hands full of labor and striving after wind" (Ecc. 4:6). See also 2:269, 272.

4 Cf. notes to 2:1, 211, 246, 272-73

5 Maimonides, 10, 2:

6

7 B. Ta'an. 9a:

8 B.B.B. 9b

SURA II – VERSE 272

Whatever expense ye expend, or vow ye vow, God knows it; but the unjust have no helpers. If ye display your almsgiving, then well is it; but if ye hide it and bring it to the poor, then is it better for you, and will expiate for you your evil deed; for God of what ye do is well aware.

A similar idea is also found in the Talmud which states that he who gives charity in secret is greater than Moses, “for of Moses it is written, For I was afraid because of the anger and the wrath (Deut. 9:19), and of one who gives charity (secretly) it is written, A gift in secret subdues anger (Prov. 12:14).¹

Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah,² constructed out of the numerous Talmudic precepts “an ethical ladder of eight successive rungs (of charity), The first and highest level was helping the poor man to sustain himself.”³

The Koranic assurance that giving charity in secret “will expiate for you your evil deeds,”⁴ recalls the Talmudic statement that charity will deliver the donor “from an unnatural death” and “from the punishment of Gehinnom.”⁵

Notes:

1 B.B.B. 9b: . Cf. B. Hag. 5a: , and 2:1-2, 211, 246, 271.

2

3 A.A. Neuman, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 170

4

5 B.B.B. 10a:

SURA II – VERSE 273

Thou (Muhammad) art not bound to guide them; but God guides whom He will; and whatever good ye expend it is for yourselves, and do not expend save craving for God's face.

The last phrase here recalls the Psalmist's prayer: "As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness;¹ I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness."² The Midrash comments that this teaches that even transgressors who have no other merits but that of giving charity.³ are privileged to face the Shekinah (the Spirit of the Omnipresent as manifested on earth).⁴

Notes:

1

2 Ps. 17:15

3 Cf. notes on 2:1-2, 172, 211, 246, 271, 272, 280; 3:128

4

SURA II – VERSES 276-77

Those who devour usury shall not rise again, save as he riseth whom Satan hath paralysed with a touch; and that is because they say 'selling is only like usury,' but God has made selling lawful and usury unlawful; and he to whom the admonition from his Lord has come, if he desists, what has gone before is his: his matter is in God's hand. But whosoever returns (to usury) these are the fellows of the Fire, and they shall dwell therein for aye. God shall blot out usury, but shall make almsgiving profitable, for God loves not any sinful misbeliever.

Similarly to the biblical¹ statement, the Koran also states, "And what ye put out to usury that it may increase with the wealth of men, it shall not increase with God..." (31:39).²

According to Islam, usury is prohibited in the case of a Moslem dealing with a fellow-believer, but not when dealing with a non-Moslem. Also, the term usury applies not only to money transactions but to any barter or business transaction where profit results.³

The same idea is expressed in the Bible: "Thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother; interest of money, interest of victuals, interest of any thing that is lent upon interest. Unto a foreigner thou mayest lend upon interest; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou puttest thy hand unto, in the land whither thou goest in to possess it" (Deut. 23:20-21).⁴

The rabbis in discussing the prohibition of usury state: "He who lends money on usury denies God... he makes the Torah a laughing stock and Moses a fool."⁵ "Usury is like the sting of a serpent."⁶ "A man should rather sell his daughter than borrow on usury."⁷

Notes:

1 Exod. 22:24: "If thou lend money to any of My people, even to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest."

2 Cf. 3:125; cf. Torrey, op. cit., p. 148

3 The Arabic word for usury is *riba* (an excess) corresponding to the Hebrew

4 Cf. Ezek. 22:12; Ps. 15:5; Prov. 28:8

5

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7

SURA II – VERSE 280

And if it be one in difficulties, then wait for easy circumstances; but that ye remit it as alms¹ is better for you if ye did but know.

Moses, in caring for the underprivileged, prescribes: “If thou lend money to any of My people, even to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest” (Ex. 22:24). “...thou shalt not go into his (debtor’s) house to fetch his pledge... And if he be a poor man, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge; thou shalt surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goes down” (Deut. 24:10-13)

According to Rashi, assisting the poor is obligatory² and a poor man should get preference in assistance over one who is better off.³ Not should the poor man be treated in a slighting manner.⁴ Rather should the creditor put himself in the position of the needy.⁵ When the debt falls due, the creditor must not insist on the pledge and should evince special consideration and kindness.⁶ The rabbis insisted that if a creditor sees the debtor approaching, he should cross to the other side of the street in order not to cause him embarrassment.⁷

Notes:

1 Cf. 2:12, 211, 246, 272, 273; 3:128

2 Rashi on Exod. 22:24:

3 Ibid.:

4 Ibid.:

5 Ibid.:

6 Ibid., verse 25:

7

SURA II – VERSE 282

O ye who believe! If ye engage to one another in a debt for a stated time, then write it down, and let a scribe write it down between you faithfully; nor let a scribe refuse to write as God taught him, but let him write, and let him who owes dictate; but let him fear God his Lord, and not diminish therefrom aught; but if he who owes be a fool, or weak, or cannot dictate himself, then let his agent dictate faithfully, and let them call two witnesses out from amongst their men.

The Koranic requirement of two witnesses recalls the biblical injunction that “at the mouth of two witnesses, shall a matter be established” (Deut. 19:15).¹ The trustworthiness of the witnesses, who are present at the act, must be unimpeachable and they shall be in full agreement with each other as to their testimony.

According to Moslem commentators,² the Koranic expression “from amongst their men,”³ refers to the faithful and excludes disbelievers and slaves.⁴ This is in agreement with the Maimonides’ view about testimony of witnesses.⁵

Notes:

1 Deut. 19:15: ; cf. B. Sanh. 9b and Ibn Ezra on Deut. 17:6 and Deut. 19:15

2 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 182: “Non-Jews and slaves are not qualified as witnesses.”

3

4 Tabari, Vol. III, p. 75:

5 Maimonides, ; cf. B. Sanh. 9b: "... he is a wicked man (and therefore disqualified from acting as witness)..." See also Exod. 23:1

SURA II – VERSE 286

God will not require of the soul save its capacity. It shall have what it has earned, and it shall owe what has been earned from it. Lord, catch us not up, if we forget or make a mistake; Lord, load us not with a burden, as Thou hast loaded those who were before us. Lord, make us not to carry what we have not strength for, but forgive us, and pardon us, and have mercy on us. Thou art our Sovereign, then help us against the people who do not believe!

The Koranic idea that God does not “require of the soul save its capacity” is also found in the Talmud, where the rabbis urge not to impose “a restriction upon the community unless the majority of the community will be able to stand it.”¹ Similarly the Midrash states that the punishment to be meted out by God to the wicked will be commensurate with their actions.² As for “it shall have what it has earned...,” the Psalmist, too, states: “Behold, he travaileth with iniquity; Yea, he conceiveth mischief, and bringeth forth falsehoods. He hath digged a pit, and hollowed it, And is fallen into the ditch which he made” (Ps. 7:15-16).

The second part of this Koranic verse recalls the Psalmist who, in a similar vein exclaims: “Who can discern errors? Clear Thou me from hidden faults.”³ If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O. Lord, who could stand?”⁴

1 B.B.K. 79b

2

3 Ps. 19:13; cf.,

4 Ps. 130:3; cf. Sabbath Prayer Book.

SURA III – VERSE 2

He has sent down to thee the Book¹ in truth, confirming what was before it and has revealed the law, and the gospel before for the guidance of men, and has revealed the Discrimination.

The terms nazzala (sent down) and anzala (revealed)² as used here recall the biblical expressions, “and the Lord came down” (Exod. 19:20)³ and “Go down (Moses)” (Exod. 19:21).⁴ Since “go down” is connected with the giving of the Torah, it is possible that Muhammad adopted a similar usage for his revelation.

The term Taurat⁵ for “the law” as used here, according to Geiger, refers to the Jewish revelation only, meaning the Pentateuch.⁶ Later on Moslem commentators expanded the term to include also the Psalms, the prophecy of Isaiah and other prophecies, but not the Gospel.⁷

Since Mohammad considered Moses as the lawgiver and listed the Psalms and other biblical prophets separately, it is natural that he should refer here to the Torah as the Pentateuch. To the Jews, too, the Torah, which in Hebrew means guidance, learning or teaching, originally referred only to the Pentateuch. As time went on the term Torah embraced not only the Pentateuch and the whole Bible⁸ but the entire gamut of Jewish religious literature. The Moslem commentators, who went beyond the Pentateuch in defining Torah, followed the accepted view of the Jews in Arabia and referred to the Torah as the whole Hebrew Bible.

Regarding Injil,⁹ Ali claims that the term “does not signify, as supposed by Muir and others, the New Testament.”¹⁰ He goes on to say that “the Qur-an nowhere suggests that the original Injil, the revelation of Jesus Christ, existed at the time of the Holy Prophet.”¹¹ The term, Ali claim, “stands for the Evangel or the Gospel, and signifies literally good tidings.”¹² However, most scholars agree that the word refers to the revelation of God to Jesus which later on encompassed the whole New Testament.¹³

Notes:

1 Cf. 2:1-2.

2 Cf. , 2:3 and elsewhere

3

4

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6 Geiger, op. cit., p. 44: “... er hierunter bloss den Pentateuch verstanden haben will indem er (Muhammad) unter den judischen Propheten nach den Patriarchen bloss den Moses als Gesetzgeber gelten last.”

7 Geiger, ibid., p. 45n. (quoting Ahmed ben Abd Elhelim, from Maracc. Prodromi, I, p. 5): Cf. Horovitz, HUCA., p. 194.

8

9

10 Ali, op. cit., p. 140 n.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 For a detailed discussion of this term see Th. P. Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, London, 1885, s.v. Injil, p. 211; and Jeffery, The Qu'ran as Scripture, pp. 66-67.

SURA III – VERSE 4

Verily, God, there is nothing hidden from Him in the earth, nor in the heaven; He it is who fashions you in the womb as He pleases. There is no God but He, the mighty, the wise.

Baidawi, commenting on the word “hidden”, writes: “Nothing which comes to pass in the world, be it universal or particular, faith or unbelief.”¹ The idea that nothing is hidden from God is stressed frequently in rabbinic literature. The Midrash states that the wicked think that God does not see when they sin because He is separated from them by seven heavens... but God... sees everybody and everything.²

As to the phrase, “who fashions you in the womb as He pleases,” compare: “Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb” (Is. 44:2). “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee” (Jer. 1:5). “For Thou hast made my reins; Thou hast knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Ps. 139:13). “Did not he that made me in the womb make him?” (Job 31:15)

Similarly, the Talmud states: “... Come and observe how the capacity of human beings falls short of the capacity of the Holy One, blessed be He, It is in the capacity of a human being to draw a figure on a wall, but he cannot invest it with breath and spirit, bowels and intestines. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so; He shapes one form in the midst of another, and invests it with breath and spirit, bowels and intestines. And that is what Hannah said: There is none holier as the Lord, for there is none beside Thee, neither is there any zur (rock) like our God” (1 Sam. 2:2).³

It is interesting that the Koran uses the term 4 for “fashion” or “shape”, instead of khalafa.⁵ The former is identical with the biblical yazar,⁶ which is used in connection with the creation of man.⁷

Notes:

1 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 70: Cf. M.C.B. p. 3.

2

3 B. Ber. 10a. Cf. Ps. 22:11.

4

5

6

7 Gen. 2:7-8; Ps. 33:15; Jer. 1:5: ; B. Ber. 60b: ; B.Yoma 85a .

SURA III – VERSE 5

He it is who has revealed to thee the Book, of which there are some verses that are decisive, they are the mother¹ of the Book...

The Koranic expression, “some verses are decisive,”² is comparable to the Hebrew ‘Otiyot Mahkimot.³ Similarly the expression, “they are the mother of the Book,”⁴ recalls the Talmudic ‘Em Lamikra’.⁵ As for the word “decisive,” compare the Talmud:⁶ “Mikra is determinant”⁷.

Notes:

1 Palmer, *ad loc.*, i.e., “the fundamental part of it.”

2

3 Cf. Hirschberg, *op. cit.*, p. 215; I Wolfensohn, *Ka’b al-Ahbar und seine Stellung in Hadit und in der islamischen Legendenliterature*, Berlin, 1933, p. 45; Horovitz, *HUCA*, pp. 188f.

4

5 B. Sanh. 41:

6 “‘Mikra has a mother,’ or these in preference to Mikra... i.e. the reading of the sacred text according to the Kere , the established vocalization has an authentic origin, hence well-founded, as distinct from the Masorah (), the Kethib the traditional text of consonants without vowels.” *Ibid.*, p. 10, n.

4.

7 *Ibid.*: Cf. B. Suk. 6b:

SURA III – VERSE 7

‘O Lord! Pervert not our hearts again when Thou hast guided them, and grant us mercy from Thee, for Thou art He who grants. O Lord! Thou shalt gather together man unto the day wherein is no doubt. Verily, God will not depart from His promise.’

The first half of this Koranic verse recalls the Jewish daily prayer: “O our Father, merciful Father, ever compassionate, have mercy upon us; O put it into our hearts to understand and to discern, to mark, learn and teach, to heed, to do and to fulfill in love all the words of instruction in thy Torah.”¹

The idea in the second part of this Koranic verse that God will “gather together men unto the day” is also expressed in the Talmud: “In times to come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will take a scroll of the Law in His embrace and proclaim: ‘Let him who has occupied himself herewith, come and take his rewards.’ Thereupon all the nations will crowd together in confusion, as it is said: All the nations are gathered together, etc. (Is. 43:9). The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say to them: ‘Come not before Me in confusion, but let each nation come in with its scribes.’”²

Notes:

1 D.P.B., p. 115.

2 B. 'A.Z. 2a-2b.

SURA III – VERSE 8

Verily, those who misbelieve, their wealth shall not help them, nor their children, against God at all; and they it is who are the fuel of the fire.

The Psalmist exclaims: "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, ... Of them that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches? No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him... And must be let alone for ever... For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; His wealth shall not descend after him" (Ps. 49P 6-18)¹.

The Koranic idea that "their wealth shall not help them, nor their children against God at all," is also found in the Sifre.² Similarly, we find in the Talmud: "A son confers privileges on his father, but a father confers no privilege on a son... Abraham cannot deliver Ishmael, (and) Isaac cannot deliver Esau."³

Notes:

1 Cf. 2:5, 156-57; 3:172.

2 Sifre to Deut. 32:39:

3 B. Sanh. 104a.

SURA III – VERSE 9

As was the wont of Pharaoh's people, and those before them, they said our signs were lies, and God caught them up in their sins, for God is severe to punish.

In similar vein the Midrash relates: "When Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, they said to him: 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go' (Exod. 5:1), that they may serve Me. He said: I know not the Lord. 'Who is the Lord, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, and moreover I will not let Israel go' (Exod. 2:2). Aaron cast down his rod and it became a fiery serpent. The magicians also cast down their rods, and they became fiery serpents. The rod of Aaron ran and swallowed them up with their rods... (Moses) put his hand into his bosom, and brought it forth leprous like snow, and the magicians also put their hands in their bosoms, and brought them forth leprous like snow. But they were not healed till the day of their death. Every plague which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon them, they also produced, until He brought upon them the boils, and they were not able to stand and do likewise..."¹

Notes:

1 P.R.E., pp. 380-81; Exod. 7:9-17; cf. 2:46-47.

SURA III – VERSE 11

‘Ye have had a sign in the two parties who met; one party fighting in the way of God, the other misbelieving; these saw twice the same number as themselves to the eyesight, for God aids with His help those whom He pleases’.

Moslem exegetes consider this verse to have been composed following the battle of Badr,¹ the first major victory won by Muhammad against the Meccans. Three miracles happened on that occasion: a) Muhammad, at the instruction of the angel Gabriel, took a handful of gravel and threw it toward the enemy; the Meccans immediately turned their backs and fled. b) “The unbelievers thought the believers to be twice the number of the unbelievers, though the number of the latter was 1000, or twice the number of the Muslims, who numbered somewhat over 310.”² c) God sent down three thousand angels, led by Gabriel, who routed the enemy, killing seventy of the Quraish tribe and taking many prisoners; themselves losing fourteen men in that battle.³

A story involving miracles similar to the above first two miracles is related in the Talmud: “Once the Jews desired to send to the Emperor a gift and after discussing who should go they decided that Nahum of Gamzu should go because he had experienced many miracles. They sent him with a bag full of precious stones and pearls. He went and spent the night in a certain inn and during the night the people in the inn arose and emptied the bag and filled it up with earth. When he discovered this the next morning he exclaimed, This also is for the best. When he arrived at his destination and they undid his bag they found that it was full of earth. The king thereupon desired to put them all to death saying, The Jews are mocking me. Nahum then exclaimed, This is also for the best. Whereupon Elijah appeared in the guise of one of them (Romans) and remarked, Perhaps this is some of the earth of their father Abraham, for when he threw earth (against the enemy) it turned into swords and when (he threw) stubble it changed into arrows, for it is written, His sword maketh them as dust, his bow as the driven stubble (Is. 41:2). Now there was one province which (the emperor had hitherto) not been able to conquer but when they tried some of this earth (against it) they were able to conquer it. Then they took him (Nahum) to the royal treasury and filled his bag with precious stones and pearls and sent him back with great honour. When on his return journey he again spent the night in the same inn he was asked, What did you take (to the king) that they showed you such great honour? He replied, I brought thither what I had taken from here. (The innkeepers) thereupon razed the inn to the ground and took of the earth to the king and they said to him, The earth that was brought to you belonged to us. They tested it and it was not found to be (effective) and the innkeepers were thereupon put to death.”⁴

Concerning the third miracle, we find in the Midrash⁵ that large armies of angels came sweepingly before Esau while he, with four hundred strong, went to meet Jacob for a reckoning. This comment is built upon the verse ‘and Jacob sent messengers’ (Gen. 32:4), who according to the Midrash were real angels.⁶

In the battle against Sisera, Deborah sang: “They fought from heaven, The stars in their courses fought against Sisera” (Judg. 5:20). This poetic conception of the heavenly help extended to Deborah against an enemy who possessed nine hundred iron chariots, has been taken literally by some commentators.⁷

Similarly we find in 2 Kinds 19:35: “And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.”⁸

Notes:

1 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 71, ; cf. 3:160
vol.II, p.7 n.

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 71:

3 Wherry, op. cit.,

4 B. Ta’an. 21a 5
Is. 37:36

6 (Ibid.) ; cf. Rashi on Gen. 32:4, 7

8 Cf.

SURA III – VERSE 12

Seemly unto men is a life of lusts, of women, and children, and hoarded talents of gold and silver, and of horses well-bred, and cattle, and tilth; - that is the provision for the life of this world; but God, with Him is the best resort.

Muhammad here stresses the inferiority of worldly possessions in relation to religious attainments. According to Baidawi, Muhammad condemns those who seek these possessions but fail to attain the bliss which is with God. 1 This view is in harmony with the view expressed in the Talmud by Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai who, upon seeing people engaged in worldly affairs said: “All what they made they made for themselves; they build market-places, to set harlots in them; baths, to rejuvenate themselves; bridges, to levy tolls for them.”²

Another Talmudic source gives a similar idea: “The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say to them: ‘Wherewith have you occupied yourselves?’ They will reply: ‘O Lord of the Universe, we have established many market-places, we have erected many baths, we have accumulated much gold and silver, and all this we did only for the sake of Israel, that they might (have leisure) for occupying themselves with the study of the Torah.’ The Holy One, blessed be He, will say in reply: ‘You foolish ones among peoples, all that which you have done, you have only done to satisfy your own desires. You have established market-places to place courtesans therein; baths to revel in them’... And ‘this’ is nought else than the Torah: And this is the Law which Moses set before the children of Israel (Deut. 4:44). They will then depart crushed in spirit.”³

Notes:

1 Baidawi, Vol. I. p. 71:

2 B. Shab. 33b

3 B. 'A. Z. 2b

SURA III – VERSE 13

Say, 'But shall we tell you of a better thing than this?' For those who fear are gardens with their Lord, beneath which rivers flow; they shall dwell therein for aye, and pure wives and grace from God.

This Koranic idea may be compared with the statement in the Ethics of the Fathers: "... and better is one hour of blessing, in the world to come than the whole life of this world."¹

Notes:

1 Mishnah Ab. 4:17 (D), . Cf. 2:23, 3:12, 80, 127.

SURA III – VERSES 25 – 26

Say, 'O God, Lord of the kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest,... Thou honourest whom Thou pleasest; in Thy hand is good. Verily, Thou art mighty over all. Thou dost turn night to day, and dost turn day to night, and dost bring forth the living from the dead, and dost provide for whom Thou pleases without taking count.' Those who believe shall not take misbelievers for their patrons, rather than believers, and he who does this has no part with God at all. Unless, indeed, ye fear some danger from them. But God bids you beware of Himself, for unto Him your journey is.

Similarly to the Koranic idea, the Bible states: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both Thy hand is power and might; and in Thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (1 Chron. 29:11-12).

Hannah in her famous prayer to God utters the following words: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, He lifteth up the needy from the dung-hill. To make them sit with princes, And inherit the throne of glory; For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, And He hath set the world upon them" (1 Sam.2:8)¹

According to the Talmud: "Even a waterman² is appointed from heaven."³

Zamakhshari comments that some books render the Koranic expression "Lord of the kingdom" as "God is the king of kings" meaning the hearts of the kings are in his hands.⁴ This view corresponds to Prov. 21:1: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord..."

Notes:

1 Cf. Daily Prayer Book,

2 “Quite a menial office”

3 B. Ber. 58a:

4 Zamakhshari, Vol. I, p. 194:

SURA III – VERSE 28

The day that every soul shall find what it has done of good present before it; and what it has done of evil, it would fain that there were between itself and that a wide interval. ‘God bids you beware of Himself, but God is gentle with His servants.’

A similar idea is expressed in the Mishnah: “He that performs one precept gets for himself one advocate; but he that commits one transgression gets for himself one accuser. Repentance and good works are as a shield against retribution.”¹

Likewise, the Talmud states: “Perhaps thou wilt say: Who testifies against me? The stones of a man’s home and the beams of his house testify against him, for it is said: For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of timber shall answer it.” (Hab. 2:11)²

Notes:

1 Mishnah Ab. 4:11 (D)

2 B. Hag. 16a

SURA III – VERSE 35

He said, 'My Lord, how can there be to me a boy when old age has reached me, and my wife is barren?' Said he, 'Thus God does what He pleaseth.'

Baidawi, commenting on the phrase "when old age has reached me," states that old age had overtaken him¹ and left its mark on him. He was ninety-nine years old, and his wife ninety-eight.² The Koranic sentence resembles the biblical story about Sarah who was at first barren: "And Sarah laughed within herself, saying: 'After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?'" (Gen. 18:12) The biblical story stresses the fact that Sarah wondered how she could give birth at a time when she and Abraham had "waxed old." The Koran, however, relates this story to Abraham, and as such it may have its antecedent in the Talmud.

Referring to the biblical story, the Talmud relates: "On the day that Abraham weaned his son Isaac, he made a great banquet, and all the peoples of the world derided him... He went and invited all the great men of the age, and our mother Sarah invited their wives. Each one brought her child with her, but not the wet nurse, and a miracle happened unto our mother Sarah, her breasts opened like two fountains and she suckled them all. Yet they still scoffed, saying, 'Granted that Sarah could give birth at the age of ninety, could Abraham beget (child) at the age of hundred?' Immediately the lineaments of Isaac's visage changed and became like Abraham's, whereupon they all cried out, Abraham begat Isaac@ (Gen 25:19)!³

Notes:

1 I.e. Zacharias. Cf. Tafsir-i-Raufi quoted in Wherry, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 16n.

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 75:

3 B.B.M. 87a

SURA III – VERSE 47

But they (the Jews) were crafty, and God was crafty, for God is the best of crafty ones!

According to the Bible: “Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought; Speak the word, and it shall not stand; For God is with us” (Is. 8:10). “There are many devices in a man’s heart; But the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand” (Prov. 21:30).

Baidawi explains this sentence as follows: “God is the most powerful of them in plotting, and the best able to produce the mischief whence it is not expected.”¹

A parallel thought is expressed in the Midrash. Joseph’s brothers said: Let’s go and kill him, and the Holy Spirit² said: We shall see whose word will stand, Mine of yours.³ God knows a man’s thoughts and metes out punishment accordingly.⁴

Notes:

1 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 76:

2

3 (B) Cf. Rashi in Gen. 37:20:

4

SURA III – VERSE 61

Verily, the people most worthy of Abraham are those who follow him and his prophets, and those who believe; - God is the patron of the believers.

The idea of “the people most worth of Abraham,”¹ in a spiritual sense is mainly Christian. However, the concept is also found in Jewish tradition. Thus, the proselyte, when he brought his first-fruits² to Jerusalem, was entitled, like any other, to say: “...which the Lord swore unto our fathers to give us,”³ since he, too, was considered spiritually a descendent of Abraham.⁴ Similarly, the Mishnah states that “Whosoever possesses these three things, he is of the disciples of Abraham, our father; ... a good eye,⁵ an humble spirit and a lowly soul.”⁶

Notes:

1

2 ; cf. Exod. 23:19

3 Deut. 26:3,

4 Cf. Talmud Yerushalmi Bik. 1, 3; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Bik. 4, 3.

5 I.e. “an eye that looks upon people with benevolence and kind feelings, free from envy and ill-will.”

6 Mishnah Ab. 5:19:

SURA III – VERSE 71

Those who sell God’s covenant and their oaths for a little price, these have no portion in the future life. God will not speak to them, and will not look upon them on the resurrection day, and will not purify them but for them is a grievous woe.

The main Koranic idea here, as well as the expression “these have no portion¹ in the future life,” parallels the Talmudic statement: “And these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says that there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law, and (he that says) the Law is not from Heaven, and an Epicurean.”²

Notes:

1 ; cf. Hebrew

2 Mishnah Sanh. 10:1 (D):

SURA III – VERSE 75

And when God took the compact¹ from the prophets ‘(this is) surely what we have given to you of the Book and wisdom. Then shall come to you the Apostle confirming what is with you. Ye must believe in him and help him.’ He said moreover, ‘Are ye resolved and have ye taken my compact on that (condition)?’ They say, ‘We are resolved.’ He said, ‘Then bear witness, for I am witness with you; but he who turns back after that, these are sinners.’

Baidawi comments that “God took the covenant from the Prophets and their peoples and then made the mention of the Prophets serve for the mention of the peoples as well.” Other commentators, however, state that “the meaning is ‘the children of the prophets,’ with omission of the word ‘children’, the ‘children of the prophets’ being the children of Israel.”² Baidawi adds that the Jews

claimed that they had a better right to be prophets than Muhammad, since they were the true people of the Book, and prophets came from them only.³

The Talmud states that on Mount Sinai God revealed himself not only to the unborn prophets but to the coming generations... as well.⁴ Similarly, the Midrash says: “The voice of the first (commandment) went forth and the heavens and earth quaked thereat, and the waters and rivers fled (dried up), and the mountains and hills were moved, and all the trees fell prostrate, and the dead who were in Sheol revived and stood on their feet till the end of all the generations... and those (also) in the future who will be created, until the end of all the generations, there they stood with them on Mount Sinai.”⁵

Notes:

1 Ali translates “made a covenant.” Op cit., o. 167

2 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 79: Cf. M.C.B., p. 56

3 Ibid:

4 B. Sanh. 59a. Cf. B. Hor. 8b.

5 P.R.E., pp. 324-5; cf. :[Z]

SURA III – VERSE 84

Verily, those who misbelieve after believing, and then increase in misbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted; these are those who err.

This Koranic idea recalls the statement in the Mishnah: “If a man said, ‘I will sin and repent, and sin again and repent,’ he will be given no chance to repent.”¹

Notes:

1 Mishnah Yom. 8:9 (D); cf. 2:5, 156-57; 3:8, 85, 172

SURA III – VERSE 85

Verily, those who misbelieve and die in misbelief, there shall not be accepted from any one of them the earth-full of gold, though he should give it as a ransom. For them is a grievous woe, and helpers have they none.

That the condemned cannot redeem themselves from God's wrath through ransom is found in the Bible and in rabbinic sources: "They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their good shall be as an unclean thing; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels; because it hath been the stumbling block of their iniquity" (Ezek. 7:19). "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; But the whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy; For He will make an end, yea, a terrible end, Of all them that dwell in the earth" (Zeph. 1:18).

The same ideas is also found in the Midrash¹ and in the Talmud in connection with the advice given by Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai to his disciples who came to see him when he was on his death-bed. They said to him: "Lamp of Israel, pillar of the right hand,² mighty hammer! Wherefore weepest thou? He replied: If I were being taken today before a human king who is here today and tomorrow in the grave, whose anger if he is angry with me does not last for ever, who if he imprisons me does not imprison me for ever and who if he puts me to death does not put me to everlasting death, and whom I can persuade with words and bribe with money, even so I would weep. Now that I am being taken before the supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who lives and endures for ever and ever, whose anger if He is angry with me is an everlasting anger, who if He imprisons me imprisons me for ever, and whom I cannot persuade with words or bribe with money – nay more, when there are two ways before me, one leading to Paradise and the other to Gehinnom, and I do not know by which I shall be taken, shall I not weep?"³

Notes:

1 Sifre on Deut. 32:39..... . Cf. Num. 22:18

2 Cf. 1 Kings 7:21

3 B. Ber. 28b; cf. 3:8, 84, 172.

SURA III – VERSE 106

Ye were the best of nations¹ brought forth unto man. Ye bid what is reasonable², and forbid what is wrong, believing in God. Had the people of the Book believed, it would have been better for them. There are believers among them, though most of them are sinners.

Here Muhammad shows why his people³ have become the best of the nations: i.e., enjoined the just, forbade the evil, and believed in God. A similar idea is expressed in the Bible and in the Midrash: “It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: Only to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8); R. Eliezer said: “To do justly refers to the execution of justice; to love kindness refers to acts of benignity and to walk humbly refers to the acts of buying the dead and dowering of brides.”⁴

Notes:

1 Cf. notes to 2:137 and Ali’s translation, op. cit., p. 174

2 Ali, ibid., renders it “what is right.”

3 According to the Koran, the Moslems have replaced the children of Israel, who originally were preferred by God (45:15)

4

SURA III – VERSE 114

O ye who believe! Take not to intimacy with others than yourselves; they will not fail to spoil you; they would fain ye come to trouble, - hatred is shown by their mouths; but what their breasts conceal is greater still. We have made manifest to you our signs, did ye but understand.

This parallels the several Mosaic warnings against intimate relations with the idolaters of Canaan. The natives of the land of Canaan performed many abominable deeds, - such as sacrificing their own children and indulging excessively in sensual pleasures with near of kin. Israel was not to learn such abominations or else they would, like those natives, be expelled from the Promised Land.¹

The biblical admonition is: “They shall not dwell in thy land – lest they make thee sin against Me, for thou wilt serve their gods – for they will be a snare unto thee” (Exod. 23:33). A similar warning in the book of Deuteronomy attempts to show the lowness of the civilization of the idolaters who offer even their sons and their daughters as sacrifices to their gods (Deut. 12:30-31).² The reason for not housing the idolaters is given in Deut. 20:18, “that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods, and so ye sin against the Lord your God.”³

Notes:

1 Cf. 16:77

2 Cf. B. Sanh. 63a

3 B. Sot. 35b:

SURA III – VERSE 127

And vie with one another for pardon from your Lord, and for Paradise, the breadth of which is as the heaven and the earth, prepared for those who fear.

This Koranic idea is also expressed in the Talmud: “The Holy One, blessed be He, is to present to each righteous man an inheritance of three hundred ten worlds.”¹ What the size of each world or its contents would be is nowhere stated. Since God has been identified with the constant creation of worlds, there is an infinity of worlds available.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi is reported to have had the Paradise inspected. He discovered there were seven houses and each was one hundred and twenty thousand miles long, one hundred thousand miles wide and one million miles in height.²

The size of the Garden of Eden is also mentioned in many rabbinic sources: “There are two gates in Paradise, made of precious stones, which are supervised by six hundred thousand angels.”³ In Midrash Talpiyot two Gardens of Eden are mentioned: Upper and Lower. The Lower Eden was created 1808 years before Creation, and is sixty times as large as the earth.⁴ The Talmud also states that “the world is one sixtieth of the Garden (of Eden) and Garden is one sixtieth of Eden.”⁵

Notes:

1 B. Sanh. 100a

2 M. Hiffer, Halakoth we-'Aggadoth, New York, 1933, chap. Gan Eden, p. 146

3

4 Cf. notes to 2:23; see also 3:130, 175

5 B. Ta'an. 10a; cf.

SURA III – VERSE 128

For those who expend in alms, in prosperity and adversity, for those who repress their rage, and those who pardon me; God loves the kind.

There are in Hebrew literature numerous notations, tales and ethical precepts concerning charity.¹ the practice of which is considered greater than the performance of sacrifices.² According to the rabbis, the act of charity balances all the other commandments combined.³

Baidawi, commenting on this verse, writes that alms should be given in times of comfort or distress or under all circumstances, since man finds himself always in a state of joy or distress. The thought is that seldom do men expend what they can, whether much or little. As for the expression, "for those who repress their rage," Baidawi interprets that they restrain themselves from getting angry although they have the urge to do so. He quotes a saying of Muhammad: "If any man repress his wrath when able to give it vent, God will fill his heart with comfort and faith."⁴

The virtue of mastering one's anger is paramount in Jewish lore. Besides the warnings in the books of the Bible against anger, there are drastic pronouncements against it in the Talmud: "Who is he that is mighty? He who subdues his (evil) inclination as it is said: He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruth his spirit than he that taketh a city."⁵ Ny "Three things may a person's character be determined... and by his anger."⁶ "Fall not into a passion and thou wilt not sin."⁷ "He who rends his garments in his anger, he who breaks his vessels in his anger, and he who scatters his money in his anger, regard him as an idolater, because such are the wiles of the Tempter."⁸

As for the Koranic expression, "and those who pardon men," the Talmud too, states that the rabbis taught: "Those who are insulted but do not insult, hear themselves reviled without answering, act through love and rejoice in suffering, of them the Writ saith, But they who love Him are as the sun when he goeth forth in his might (Judges 5:31)."⁹ The Talmud further emphasizes that he who forgoes retaliation, all his transgressions will be pardoned.¹⁰

Notes:

1 For a detailed explanation regarding charity in Judaism see notes to 2:1-2, 172, 211, 246, 271, 273, 280.

2 B. Suk. 49b.

3 B.B.B. 9a.Cf.:

4 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 85: Cf. M.C.B., p. 92

5 Mishnah Ab. 4:1.

6 B. 'Erub. 65b

7 B. Ber. 29a; cf. B. Pes. 66b:

8 B. Shab.105b

9 Ibid., 88b

10 B. Rosh H. 17a

SURA III – VERSE 138

Mohammed is but an apostle; apostles have passed away before this time; what if he die or is killed, will ye retreat upon your heels? He who retreats upon his heels does no harm to God at all; but God will recompense the thankful.

This idea is also found in the Targum which states that idolaters hurt themselves rather than God.¹

Notes:

1 Targum Onkelos, Deut. 32:5:

SURA III – VERSE 139

It is not for any soul to die, save by God's permission written down for an appointed time; but he who wishes for the reward of this world we will give him of it, and he who wishes for the reward of the future we will give him of it, and we will recompense the grateful.

According to Baidawi, the phrase, "appointed time," means "fixed for a time," or "death shall not come before or after the fixed time."¹ Basing their reasoning on Ps. 36:23² and Prov. 20:24,³ the rabbis, too, maintained: "No man bruises his finger here on earth unless it was decreed against him in heaven."⁴ In Ps. 39:5 David exclaims: "Lord make me to know mine end, And the measure of my days, what it is; 'Let me know how frail I am.'" To this the rabbis comment that when David learned that he would die on the Sabbath, he requested God to let him die on the first of the week or on the eve of the Sabbath. Said God: "'For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand' (Ps. 84:11): better is to Me the one day that thou sittest and engages in learning than the thousand burnt-offerings which thy son Solomon is destined to sacrifice before Me on the altar."⁵

The Talmud discussed three books that "are opened (in heaven) on New Year), one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed in the book of death; the doom of the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement; if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of death."⁶

Relying upon this Talmudic declaration, R. Ammon of Mayence, famous author of the hymn *unetaneh tokef* which is recited on the High Holy Days, writes: "As the shepherd mustereth his flock, and passeth them under his crook, so dost Thou cause to pass, number, appoint, and visit every living soul, fixing the limitations on all creatures, and prescribing their destiny. On the First Day of the year it is inscribed, and on the Fast Day of Atonement it is sealed and determined how many people shall live and die... who is to perish by water, who by fire."⁷

Notes:

1 Baidawi, Vol. I, p. 87:

2 "It is of the Lord that a man's goings are established"

3 "A man's goings are of the Lord; How then can man look to his way?"

4 B. Shab. 30b.

5 Cf.: "Now, every Sabbath day he (David) would sit and study all day. On the day that his soul was to be at rest (i.e. depart from this world), the Angel of death stood before him but could not prevail

against him, because learning did not cease from his mouth... Now, there was a garden before his house; so the Angel of death went, ascended and soughed in the trees. He (David) went out to see: as he was ascending the ladder, it broke under him. Thereupon he became silent (from his studies) and his soul had repose," *ibid*.

6 B. Rosh. H. 16b. There is a parallel between the human records up in heaven mentioned in the Talmud and the Moslem book of records. Cf. 3:148: "Say, 'If ye were in your houses, surely those against whom slaughter was written down, would have gone forth to fight even to when they are lying now; that God may try what is in your breasts and assay what is in your hearts, for God doth know the nature of men's breasts,'"

7 Cf. Aggadath Bereshith, pp. 9 ff.; 'Or Zarua', Hilkot R. Hash. 276

SURA III – VERSE 154

If God help you, there is none can overcome you; but if He leave you in the lurch, who is there can help you after Him? Upon God then let believers rely.

Similar expressions are found in the Psalms and in Jeremiah: "The Lord is for me; I will not fear; What can man do unto me" (Ps. 118:6)? "Many are the sorrows of the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy compasseth him about." (*ibid*. 32:10). "Thus saith the Lord: Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, And maketh flesh his arm. And whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5). This idea is also found in the Talmud where praise is showered on the one who puts all his faith in God.¹

Notes:

1 B. Men. 29a

SURA III – VERSE 159

Or when an accident befalls you, and ye have fallen on twice as much, ye say, 'How is this?' Say, 'It is from yourselves. Verily, God is mighty over all.'

A counterpart is found in the Talmud: "If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct."¹

Notes:

1 B. Ber. 5a

SURA III – VERSE 172-73

Let not those who misbelieve reckon that our letting them range is good for themselves. We only let them have their range that they may increase in sin. And for them is shameful woe. God would not leave the believers in the state which ye are in, until He discerns the vile from the good.¹

Similarly to the Koranic idea the Talmud, too, states: “And to what are the wicked compared in this world? To a tree standing wholly in a place of uncleanness, but a branch thereof overhangs a place of cleanness: when the bough is lopped off, its stands entirely in a place of uncleanness. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, makes them prosper² in this world,³ in order to destroy and consign them to the nethermost rung, for it is said, There is a way which seemeth right unto man, But at the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12).”⁴ In another place the Talmud states that of those “who walked in perversity, it is written, but the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them (ibid. 11:3).”⁵

Notes:

1 Cf. 2:149, 156-67, 160; 3:127, 163, 183.

2 Lit., “furnishes them with goodness.”

3 “Thus rewarding them for the little good they perform – lopping off the branch inclining to the place, that it may disregard in the next world.”

4 B. Kid. 40b. “An attempt to answer the eternal question, why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.”

5 B. Shab. 88b.

SURA III – VERSE 179

‘Verily, God has covenanted with us that we should not believe in an apostle until he gives us a sacrifice which fire devours.’

Tabari,¹ Zamakhshari and Baidawi² rightly explain this to mean that the Israelites considered it a sign of the prophet’s truth when a fire came down from heaven and consumed his offering. Such instances occur in the Bible and especially in postbiblical literature.

Chapter 18 in First Kings relates the story about Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The former’s sacrifice was consumed by a heavenly fire whereas that of the latter was not. The consuming of an offering by a heavenly fire as proof of divine acceptance is discussed in detail in rabbinic lore.³

According to Christian and Moslem traditions, which undoubtedly have their roots in early Jewish traditions⁴, Abel’s offering was consumed by a fire from heaven.⁵

Notes:

1 Tabari, Vol. IV, p. 123:

2 Baidawi, Vol. IV, p. 92:

3 Sifra on Leviticus p. 45b (W): Cf. B. Shab. 87b; Seder 'Olam Rabbah, ch. 7. Sifre Zutta (ed. Horvitz, p. 286) enumerated twelve times when a fire came down from heaven: six time as a good omen and six times as a bad omen:

4 Rashi pm Gen. 4:4: "Fire descended from heaven and consumed it," Cf. Ibn, Ezra, ad loc.

5 Cf. V. Aptowitzer, Kain und Abel in der Aggada der Apokryphen, der Hellenistischen, Christlichen und Mohammedanischen Literatur, Leipzig, 1922, pp. 39, 144-46

SURA III – VERSE 191

Lord! Forgive us our sins and cover our offenses, and let us die with the righteous.¹

A similar utterance is found in the Talmud: "Now , that wicked man (Balaam) too gave a sign for himself [that he would not enter the future world but saying, Let me die the death of the righteous (Num. 23:10) – meaning, If I die the death of the righteous (i.e. a natural death)], my last end will be like his (i.e. 'I will enter the world to come'); but if not (i.e., If I die a violent death), then behold I go unto my people (ibid. 24:14) (i.e. into the Gehenna)."²

In 6:95 Muhammad states: "Verily, God it is who cleaves out the grain and the datestones; He brings forth the living from the dead, and it is He who brings the dead from the living. There is God! How then can ye be beguiled?" Geiger quotes a saying attributed to Muhammad that the dead man shall be raised in the garments in which he was buried.³ This idea is also expressed in the Talmud: "Queen Cleopatra⁴ asked R. Meir, 'I know that the dead will revive...⁵ But when they arise, shall they arise nude or in their garments?' – He replied. 'Thou mayest deduce by an a fortiori argument (the answer) from a wheat grain. If a grain of wheat, which is buried naked, sprouteth forth in many robes, how much more so the righteous, who are buried in their raiment!'"⁶

Notes:

1 Cf. 2:149.

2 B. Sanh. 105a.

3 Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 78:

4 Not of 'Anthony and Cleopatra' fame. Cf. W. Bucher, *Die Agada der Tannaiten*, Strassburg, 1890, II, p. 68.

5 Cf. Ps. 72:16: "And they (the righteous) shall (in the distant future) blossom forth out of the city (Jerusalem) like the grass of the earth."

6 B. Sanh. 90b