

Fallen Angels and the Afterlives of Enochic Traditions in Early Islam

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How does the study of early Islam relate to research on the so-called “pseudepigrapha” associated with the antediluvian scribe Enoch? When I began writing my dissertation on early Enochic traditions about the fallen angels—nearly fifteen years ago—such a question might have struck me as odd.¹ At the time, the import of such a topic seemed to lie in recovering the value of noncanonical texts like the *Book of the Watchers* (1 Enoch 1-36) for elucidating Second Temple Judaism and its intertwined Jewish and Christian afterlives.² In working to invert the arrow of analysis of early Enochic literature away from source-criticism and toward reception-history, my interventions were thus aimed at interlocutors interested in the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation of Genesis, in the hopes of illumining the interpenetration of debates about primeval history, parabiblical literature, and the problem of evil among Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity.

It only took a moment, however, for this initial orientation to change. Or more specifically, a single short email message: “Hello; my name is Patricia Crone, and I am a scholar of Islam. May I invite you to lunch to talk about fallen angels?” That message led to a lunch, during which she quizzed me about details about the various versions and trajectories of Jewish and Christian traditions about antediluvian angelic descent, the sins and punishments of the fallen angels, and their names, in relation to a paper that she was writing on “The *Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān”—which she would go on to present at a 2005 workshop in Jerusalem in memory of Shlomo Pines, but which did not appear in published form until 2013.³ Although space did not permit the expansion of my 2002 dissertation to include the Islamic materials that we discussed, I integrated some references into the revised 2005 book version and began to compile relevant materials,⁴ drawing both on her suggestions and on the parallel efforts of John C. Reeves.⁵ More recently, I have returned to these materials for a volume in collaboration with Reeves on *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, collecting and analyzing Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and Arabic references to Enoch, Enochic books, and Enochic traditions.⁶

¹ A.Y. Reed, “What the Fallen Angels Taught,” Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2002.

² I.e., as a “test-case” in rereading the relationships of Judaism and Christianity as “Ways that Never Parted,” consistent with the collaborative project on the same theme that I had been in the midst of organizing in 2001 and 2002; cf. A.H. Becker & A.Y. Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen, 2003).

³ P. Crone, “The *Book of the Watchers* in the Quran,” in *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism, and Science in the Mediterranean World*, ed. H. Ben-Shammai, S. Shaked, & S. Stroumsa (Jerusalem, 2013) 16-51.

⁴ A.Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge, 2005), esp. 255, 277.

⁵ See esp. J.C. Reeves, ed., *Tracing the Threads* (Atlanta, 1994); idem, “Exploring the Afterlife of Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Medieval Near Eastern Religious Traditions: Some Initial Soundings,” *JSJ* 30 (1999) 148-77; Reeves, “Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qurān,” in *Bible and Qurān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. Reeves (Leiden, 2003) 43-60.

⁶ J.C. Reeves & A.Y. Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Sources from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, forthcoming with Oxford University Press. Sources there “include the Dead Sea Scrolls, so-called ‘Apocrypha’ and ‘Pseudepigrapha,’ other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, and a range of Jewish and Christian interpretative literature (e.g., midrash, biblical commentaries). The New Testament, Christian apocrypha, Nag Hammadi literature, and the writings of church fathers from both western and eastern churches...”

I begin by recounting my own experience so as to start on a note of caution and context: I come to this seminar as a specialist in Second Temple Judaism and late antique Judaism and Christianity who is curious and excited to learn from the papers and discussions—but hardly qualified to speak to the topic of “Early Islam: The Sectarian Milieu of Late Antiquity?” Although an outsider to the study of Islam, however, I suspect that my experience may not be wholly unique among scholars of Biblical Studies and Late Antiquity. The past fifteen years have seen some dazzlingly efforts to situate Arabia, Iran, and early Islam in late antique contexts,⁷ and these same years have been marked also by a remarkable growth of conversation across Biblical Studies and Qur’ānic Studies,⁸ as facilitated by new interdisciplinary fora and institutional partnerships such as the “Qur’ān and Bible” units at SBL and ISBL annual meetings, IQSA’s affiliated meetings with SBL, and now the founding of EISS in association with the Enoch Seminar.⁹ In short: such trends are now becoming prominent enough to resound even among those of us who do not work in Arabic, the Qur’ān, or early Islam—and likely even more so in the years to come.

By means of helping to initiate a conversation about “Early Islam and Enochic Traditions” for this Enoch Seminar Nangeroni Meeting, then, I would like to engage Crone’s above-noted article on “The *Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān” with an eye backwards and outwards, asking what can be gained for scholarship on Enochic texts and traditions, the historiography of Late Antiquity, and the discipline of Religious Studies. Accordingly, I shall draw upon my in-progress project with Reeves, as well as building upon his recent studies of Hārūt and Mārūt,¹⁰ while also taking this opportunity to explore some ideas about channels of transmission and settings of interchange that I have not been able to address in detail in my

together with Qur’ān and tafsīr... “tales of the prophets” (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*) anthologies, Muslim esoteric texts (e.g., *Umm al-Kitāb*), and Christian and Muslim chronographies (e.g., Syncellus, Ṭabarī, Michael Syrus)... various magical manuals and mystical treatises (e.g., Hekhalot literature, Zohar),” with the aim of offering “a more representative perspective on the rich afterlives of Enochic texts and traditions within and between religions in the late antique and medieval Near East.”

⁷ Surveys and assessments include R. Hoyland, “Early Islam as a Late Antique Religion,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S.F. Johnson (Oxford, 2012); M.E. Pregill, “Rethinking Late Antiquity: A Review of Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad: The First Millennium Refocused*,” IQSA website, 17 March 2014. On Arabia see now G.W. Bowersock, *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam* (Oxford, 2013), and on Iran, P. Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Islam* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁸ For some different approaches see, e.g., M.E. Pregill, “The Hebrew Bible and the Qur’ān: The Problem of the Jewish ‘Influence’ on Islam,” *Religion Compass* 1.6 (2007) 643–59; G.S. Reynolds, *The Qur’ān and Its Biblical Subtext* (London, 2010); C. Bakhos, “Genesis, the Qur’an and Islamic Interpretation,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. C.A. Evans, J.N. Lohr, & D.L. Peterson (Leiden, 2012) 607–32.

⁹ Michael Pregill (personal communication) notes that “Quran and Bible” was started as a joint AAR-SBL initiative around 2004, later migrating to SBL, and the topic garnered its own unit in the SBL International Meeting approximately five years later; IQSA began meeting as an SBL affiliate in 2013, which is also the same year that EISS was founded.

¹⁰ Esp. Reeves, “Some Explorations”; idem, “Resurgent Myth: On the Vitality of the Watchers Traditions in the Near East in Late Antiquity,” in *The Fallen Angels Traditions: Second Temple Developments and Reception History*, ed. A.K. Harkins, K. Coblenz Bautch, & J.C. Endres (Washington, D.C., 2014) 94–115; idem, “Some Parascryptural Dimensions of the Muslim *Tale of Hārūt wa-Mārūt*,” forthcoming in *JAOS*.

past publications on fallen angels, the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, and the late antique transmissions and transformations of Second Temple Jewish texts and traditions.¹¹

In the process, I would like to reflect upon the ramifications for Religious Studies of even exploring questions and connections of this sort. At least since Abraham Geiger and the forging of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in 19th-century Germany, similarities between Jewish and Islamic sources have been a nexus for charged contestation over “origins” and, hence, also for the reification and essentialized retrojection of religious difference in claims and counter-claims about purity, priority, “influence,” and “borrowing.”¹² Just as attention to the afterlives of Enochic traditions about angelic descent has helped to highlight the complex and continuing interpenetration of Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity, so it may also provide an apt crucible for experimenting with new approaches to Judaism and Islam. Even as the old fixation on “origins” has been widely critiqued across the discipline of Religious Studies,¹³ many common scholarly reading practices therein remain predicated on the assumption that clusters of related materials are best explained through arrows or hierarchies of derivation. The dominant approaches to explaining commonalities between texts from different traditions, for instance, still privilege the discovery of direct literary dependence, the construction of unilinear chains of exegetical development, and the rhetoric of interreligious “influence” and “borrowing.”¹⁴ But what is effaced or ignored in the quest (whether tacit or explicit) for the “origins” of ideas, motifs, and “religions”?¹⁵ What might we learn by approaching some “parallels” as attesting constellations of cultural activity surrounding the preservation of received materials through textual and other technologies of memory? In some cases and places, might it be more apt to imagine an interconnected multiplicity of creative efforts to preserve and revivify the past? And what might we discover about the microdynamics of

¹¹ See above as well as A.Y. Reed, “From Asael and Šemiḥazah to Uzzah, Azzah, and Azazel: 3 Enoch 5 (§§7–8) and the Jewish Reception-History of 1 Enoch,” *JSQ* 8.2 (2001) 105–36; eadem, “The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr,” *J ECS* 12.2 (2004) 141–71; eadem, “Reading Augustine and/as Midrash,” in *Midrash and Context*, ed. L. Teugels and R. Ulmer (Piscataway, N.J., 2007) 75–131; eadem, “Beyond Revealed Wisdom and Apocalyptic Epistemology: Early Christian Transformations of Enochic Traditions about Knowledge,” in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality*, ed. C.A. Evans & H.D. Zacharias (London, 2009) 138–64; eadem, “Enoch in Armenian Apocrypha,” in *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. K. Bardakjian & S. La Porta (Leiden, 2014) 149–87; eadem, “Gendering Heavenly Secrets? Women, Angels, and the Problem of Misogyny and Magic,” in *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in Antiquity*, ed. K. Stratton (Oxford, 2014) 108–51.

¹² A. Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (Leipzig, 1902 [1833]), and see further Pregill, “The Hebrew Bible and the Qur’ān”; idem, “Isra’iliyyat, Myth, and Pseudepigraphy,” *JSAI* 34 (2008), esp. 215–22.

¹³ I thus refrain from delving into the debates about “Islamic origins” that have shaped much of the discussion of “the sectarian milieu” since J. Wansborough’s 1978 work of that title; for reassessments and reflections see further *M TSR* 9.1 (1997) 1–90.

¹⁴ For genealogy and critique of this preoccupation with “origins” in the study of “religion(s)” see T. Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origin of Religion* (Chicago, 1993).

¹⁵ Here and below, I put “religion” in “scare quotes” to signal that the category as it has been construed within modern Western scholarship is largely modeled on Protestant and other European ideals and, thus, may not fit so well with the premodern Muslim and Jewish sources surveyed below, where notions of ritual and doctrinal difference were often categorized or theorized in different ways. For some examples pertaining to the Near East in Late Antiquity see, e.g., A.H. Becker, “Martyrdom, Religious Difference, and ‘Fear’ as a Category of Piety in the Sasanian Empire,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2.2 (2009) 300–36; A.Y. Reed, “Parting Ways over Blood and Water? Beyond ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’ in the Roman Near East,” in *La croisée des chemins revisitée*, ed. S.C. Mimouni & B. Pouderon (Paris, 2012) 227–59.

cultural continuity and change by looking to the reworking of received materials also for clues as to specific settings, mechanisms, and channels of their transmission, textualization, and transformation?

In her above-noted 2013 article, Crone shows how attention to traditions about fallen angels can challenge us to relate early Islamic materials to late antique parallels or precursors in a manner that departs *both* [1] from the old “origin-tracing” whereby “Western scholars to envisage Muhammad as picking up bits and pieces of religious lore from his Jewish, Christian, and diverse other neighbors without much understanding of what they meant,” *and* [2] from the isolationism that can be fostered by a “sense that Islam arose in a world apart.”¹⁶ “The tribal societies evoked in pre-Islamic poetry,” Crone notes, “are so utterly different from the Near East described in Greek, Syriac, Aramaic, Coptic, or Iranian works that one automatically classifies ideas which can be shown to have originated in the non-Arabian Near East as ‘foreign elements,’ or in other words, as features appearing out of their normal context, so that they have to be explained by mechanisms such as traders accidentally picking up this or that on their journeys.”¹⁷ Attention to fallen angels, however, reveals a different picture, more akin to bricolage than “borrowing”:

What we see in the Qur’ānic treatment of the fallen angels... is not the impression of a passerby who had picked up some ancient story without much sense of what it meant. What we see is the story in the context to which it had come to belong by late antique times, complete with the magical practices it was held to explain and the angry sense of being outflanked by disreputable people that the situation induced in the observer. Wherever or whenever the encounter(s) took place, the observer is *engaging* with the tradition as it looked in his time, not simply plundering it, let alone getting anything wrong. Islam here grows by imperceptible steps... out of the environment that came before it, creating a new one as it does so. It would be enormously illuminating if we could see the entire Qur’ān in this way.¹⁸

In what follows, I shall consider Crone’s arguments in light of the broader set of early Islamic materials about fallen angels that Reeves and I have collected and analyzed, and I shall explore their significance also from the other side. Might it be “enormously illuminating” also to see early Enochic texts and tradition, *not just* as a vital part of Second Temple Judaism, or as an element in the Jewish background of early Christianity, or as a subterranean current infusing later Jewish mysticism, *but also* as a vibrant component of early Islam? What might we learn, in the process, about Late Antiquity and the Near East?

Much has been written on Idrīs in relation to Enoch, including as a “test-case” for what P. S. Alexander terms “Transformations of Jewish Traditions in Early Islam”¹⁹ and as a component in what Kevin van Bladel reconstructs as interweaving of diverse late antique elements into the “Arabic Hermes.”²⁰ Following Crone, I would here like to look to the fallen angels as another “test-case” in both senses. Like Alexander, however, I do so not as a historian of Islam seeking precursors or contexts but rather as a scholar of ancient and late antique Judaism who finds such connections critical for understanding the significance of those Second

¹⁶ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 50-51.

¹⁷ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 51.

¹⁸ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 51.

¹⁹ P.S. Alexander, “Transformations of Jewish Traditions in Early Islam: The case of Enoch/Idris,” in *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions in Memory of Norman Calder*, ed. G.R. Hawting, J.A. Mojaddedi, & A. Samely (Oxford, 2001) 11-29.

²⁰ Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford, 2009).

Temple texts now commonly marginalized as “non-canonical,” “inter-testamental,” or “pseudepigraphical.” We may learn some things when we juxtapose Bible and Qur’ān, but we can learn others when we look beyond canonical corpora to the broader “parascriptural” array of oral and written reflection on those primeval periods privileged at the overlaps of Jewish and Muslim memory-making. Reeves has made a case for understanding such overlaps as resonant with longstanding Near Eastern mythic patterns that remained generative for the *longue durée*.²¹ What I would like to investigate, in addition, is whether attention to the specific selections and expressions of such patterns might also reveal something about the interlocking knowledge-practices, technologies of memory, and channels of transmission that facilitated the preservation and circulation of older stories, names, and ideas about angels and the antediluvian age among Muslims, Jews, and others.

1. Fallen Angels from the Qur’ān to the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt”

At least since the 1920s, synthetic treatments of “fallen angels” have included Islamic traditions about Hārūt and Mārūt.²² This pair of angels is mentioned only once in the Qur’ān:

And they follow what the satans recited over Solomon's kingdom. Solomon did not disbelieve, but the satans disbelieved, teaching the people sorcery and that which was sent down upon Babylon's two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt; they did not teach any man without saying, “We are but a temptation; do not disbelieve!” From them they learned how they might divide a man and his wife,²³ yet they did not hurt any man thereby, save by the leave of God, and they learned what hurt them, and did not profit them, knowing well that whoso buys it shall have no share in the World to Come; evil then was that for which they sold themselves, if they had but known. (Q 2:102)²⁴

Completely absent here, however, are precisely those features privileged in the only related “biblical” source. In Genesis, passing mention is made of “sons of God” who saw the beauty of “daughters of men” and chose wives from them in the days before the Flood (6:2), resulting in hybrid sons and the spread of Giants and/or Nephilim (6:4), as well as contributing to the deterioration whereby “all the thoughts of humankind were evil all the time” (6:5) such that God regretted creating them and brought the Flood (6:6-7). In Q 2:102, by contrast, no mention is made of sexual transgression or hybrid progeny. Hārūt and Mārūt are explicitly called angels,²⁵ and they are linked to teachings of magic. No reference is made of any transgression or rebellion on their part. The satans who teach sorcery in the time of Solomon are said to

²¹ Reeves, ed., *Bible and Qur’ān*; idem, “Some Parascriptural Dimensions.”

²² E.g., L. Jung, “Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature: A Study in Comparative Folk-Lore,” *JQR* 16.3 (1926) 287-336, esp. 295-310, as later extended in B.J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (Philadelphia, 1952) 113–16. Many of the connections there compiled were noticed already in earlier work, e.g., Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 104-7; B. Heller, “La chute des anges Schemchazai, Ouazza et Azaël,” *RÉJ* 49 (1910) 202-12, esp. 206-10. For a sense of these traditions in the context of Muslim reflection on angels see now S.R. Burge, *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s al-Haba’ik fi akhbar al-mala’ik* (London, 2012).

²³ Crone posits a connection to the “hate-charms” taught by Watchers in the *Book of the Watchers* (1 Enoch 9:7); “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 27-28.

²⁴ Here and below reproducing Arberry’s rendering with minor revisions for readability.

²⁵ Contrast, e.g., the case of Iblīs, whose angelic status is debated, and whose transgressions are sometimes connected to his status as *jinn* (Q 18:15); see further W.S. Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011) 120-33.

disbelieve,²⁶ and the content of their teachings are traced to Hārūt and Mārūt. It is stressed, however, that these two angels were “sent down” by God and that they warn their students “do not disbelieve!”

Q 2:102 only makes sense as a tradition about “fallen angels,” in fact, when we look to traditions of illicit angelic instruction first attested in the Enochic *Book of the Watchers*, written in Aramaic around the third century BCE.²⁷ There, Watchers like ‘Asael and Shemiḥazah are not just accused of sexual pollution with human women and siring monstrously hybrid sons; they are also credited with corrupting teachings of root-cutting, sorcery, metal-working, cosmetics, weapons-making, and various sorts of astral divination.²⁸ The comparison, however, also highlights some interesting points of divergence. The *Book of the Watchers* recounts in detail how 200 angelic Watchers decided to descend from heaven to earth, abandoning their heavenly posts. Illicit angelic instruction is thus presented as one in a series of angelic transgressions, contributing to the deterioration of earthly conditions and spread of human sin that necessitated the Flood. In Q 2:102, by contrast, two angels are “sent down,” and the focus falls on emphasizing human responsibility: transmudane teachers may be credited with teaching magical knowledge, but Hārūt and Mārūt only do so for the sake of testing of humankind through temptation (*fitna*), and consequently, they contribute instead to the cause of human obedience to the divine.

In this sense, the pattern in Q 2:102 falls closer to the account of angelic descent in *Jubilees*, composed in Hebrew in the second century BCE. There, angels are said to have been sent down to earth by God during the lifetime of Jared “to teach humankind do what is just and upright on the earth” (*Jub* 4:15)—only to be corrupted later by long-term exposure to earthly life and its temptations (4:22; 5:1-18). Whereas the *Book of the Watchers* accuses ‘Asael, Shemiḥazah, and other Watchers of teaching root-cutting, sorcery, metalworking, cosmetics, weapons-making, astral divination (*1 En* 7:1; 8:1-3), and “all the deeds of godlessness, wrongdoing, and sin” (13:1), moreover, *Jubilees* associates them only with divination (*Jub* 8:2-4).²⁹

Most scholars of Second Temple Judaism have read the differences between these two early accounts of antediluvian angelic descent as reflecting a deliberate departure of *Jubilees*

²⁶ As Crone notes, there is no connection—whether of parentage or otherwise—here made between the satans and these angels, and this is another point of contrast with the *Book of the Watchers*, which places the origins of demons as the disembodiment of the spirits of the Watchers’ Giant sons after their bodies were destroyed by the Flood; “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 27.

²⁷ See further Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 24-49; eadem, “Heavenly Ascent, Angelic Descent, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 1 Enoch 6–16,” in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, ed. R.S. Boustán & A.Y. Reed (Cambridge, 2004) 47–66.

²⁸ See *1 Enoch* 7:1; 8:1-3; 9:7; 13:1-2; 16:2-3. Part of the key chapter for the trope of illicit angelic instruction, *1 Enoch* 8:3, is attested in Aramaic fragments from Qumran and can be reconstructed from the evidence of 4QEn^a (1 iv 1–5) and 4QEn^b (1 iii 1–5) as follows: “Shemihazah taught the casting of spells [and the cutting of roots; Hermoni taught the loosing of spells,] magic, sorcery, and skill; [Baraq’el taught the signs of the lightning flashes; Kokab’el taught] the signs of the stars; Zeq’el [taught the signs of the shooting stars; Ar’taqoph taught the signs of the earth;] Shamshi’el taught the signs of the sun; [Sahriel taught the signs of] the moon. [And they all began to reveal] secrets to their wives”; see further M.A. Knibb, “The Book of Enoch or Books of Enoch? The Textual Evidence for 1 Enoch,” in *The Early Enoch Literature*, ed. G. Boccaccini & J.J. Collins (Leiden, 2007) 21–40 at 23. On the differences in the Greek, see also Reed, “Gendering Heavenly Secrets.”

²⁹ Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 87-89.

from the *Book of the Watchers*. Reeves, however, questions the dominant scholarly practice of stringing together known accounts of antediluvian angelic descent into a chronological line of written sources chained from “origin” to “interpretation” (e.g., Genesis → *Book of the Watchers* → *Jubilees*), and he looks to the different dynamics revealed by expanding our purview also to include consideration of Qur’ānic and other Islamic accounts.³⁰ This move forms part of Reeves’ broader argument that the multiplicity in both Second Temple and late antique periods—and the connections between them—may reveal the multiplicity of an enduring mythic complex in the Near East that cannot be reduced merely to a matter of biblical exegesis. It is certainly possible to compile some selective examples of Jewish and Christian accounts of antediluvian angelic descent and summarize them in isolation, as if evidence only for the history of the interpretation of Genesis.³¹ Especially when we expand our purview to include the Qur’ān, however, the limitations of this approach are starkly exposed—not least for its anachronistic retrojection of distinctively modern (and largely Protestant and European) assumptions about the transmission of religious traditions as a textualized domain defined by private acts of reading a fixed *qua* print text of Scripture. In the decades since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars have become increasingly aware that the premodern Jewish and Christian encounter with the biblical past involved far more than only the text of what comes down to us as the Tanakh, encompassing a fluidly dynamic yet surprisingly stable complex of motifs and traditions, circulating in oral and written forms—what James Kugel has called “The Bible As It Was.”³² If the *Book of the Watchers* and *Jubilees* can help us to recover something of this complex, perhaps so too for the Qur’ān...?

Questions of this sort are certainly raised, at the very least, by our evidence for the immense spread and the interconnected complexity of Enochic traditions in Late Antiquity. As Reeves and I note in our introduction to *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*:

Texts in a broad array of languages—including Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Arabic—integrate motifs or mythemes from known Enochic books. In addition, direct references to words, “prophesies,” or “books” of Enoch can be found across a broad continuum of writings created by Jews, Christians, Muslims, Manichaeans, and “gnostics”.... For many centuries, both old and new Enochic writings appear to have circulated in various forms among Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others—together with other oral and written expressions of distinctively Enochic traditions about Enoch, the fallen angels, and the Giants. Even after the exclusion of “books of Enoch” from the Jewish Tanakh and most Christian Old Testaments—and even despite efforts to marginalize materials associated with Enoch by some rabbis and church fathers—materials related to Enoch remained remarkably widespread, traveling across creedal and community boundaries in the Near East and beyond, throughout the first millennium of the Common Era.

It is critical to acknowledge the potentially ancient character of the constituent parts of much the complex—and certainly much more than survives *in writing* in early and known forms.

³⁰ Reeves, “Some Parascriptural Dimensions”; idem, “Resurgent Myth.” Reeves there critiques common arguments for a direct interpretative relationship between the *Book of the Watchers* and *Jubilees*; in my view, however, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

³¹ E.g. L.R. Wickham, “The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men: Genesis VI 2 in Early Christian Exegesis,” in *Language and Meaning*, ed. J. Barr, et al. (Leiden, 1974), 135–47; F. Dexinger, “Judisch-christliche Nachgeschichte von Genesis 6,1–4,” in *Zur Aktualität des Alten Testaments*, ed. S. Kreuzer & K. Lüthi (Frankfurt am Main, 1992) 155–75; W.H. Wagner, “Interpretations of Genesis 6.1–4 in Second-Century Christianity,” *JRH* 20 (1996) 137–56.

³² J. Kugel, *The Bible as it Was* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

Whatever might be said of more ancient traditions, however, it is also clear that the *Book of the Watchers* and other early Enochic writings had a rich reception-history of their own, even apart from the exegesis and expansion of Genesis. This reception-history, in turn, seems to have proved generative for some of the distinctive streams of tradition that shaped the memory of the primeval past in Late Antiquity—perhaps particularly in the Near East. The challenge, then, is how *both* to acknowledge older and enduring shared patterns not attested in surviving literature *and also* to attend to the specific choices of selections and articulations in the forms that we do know from specific texts, times, and places.

Crone experiments with such a doubled approach to fallen angels in the Qur’ān. Rather than treating Q 2:102 as *sui generis* and/or treating its silences as “gaps” that are “filled” by later exegetes “borrowing” Jewish ideas, for instance, she builds a case for understanding this terse passage against the background of the richly developed traditions about fallen angels that echo, interpret, rework, and/or extend the *Book of the Watchers* across the Near East. The names Hārūt and Mārūt have no precedent in Jewish or Christian sources,³³ and even in the Qur’ān, these angels are not described as “fallen” *per se*—whether in the sense of having departed improperly from their posts in heaven or in the sense of having polluted themselves through lust or sex with human women. Nevertheless, as Crone notes: “It is a striking fact that although the Qur’ān gives the angels Iranian names and says very little about them, the exegetes effortlessly recognized them as the fallen angels from the Watchers story.”³⁴

This recognition, in her view, is not merely a matter of later reinterpretation; rather, “echoes of the *Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān”—Crone argues—already serve “to relate the Qur’ān to a well-documented context on the fringes of the Arab world in late antiquity.”³⁵ To make this point, Crone adduces other Medinese suras that seem similarly to reflect familiarity with the late antique complex of traditions extending Enochic and related ideas about fallen angels.³⁶ These include a possible allusion to angelic descent in Q 2:30,³⁷ but especially the otherwise mysterious statement attributed to Jews in Q 9:30:

The Jews say: “Uzayr is the son of God,” while the Christians say: “Christ is the son of God....” (Q 9:30)

She reads the enigmatic reference to ‘Uzayr as possibly related to the late antique multiplication of variations on ‘Asael (אסע/לשאע; Gr. Αζαηλ)—the name of the fallen Watcher

³³ The names of Hārūt and Mārūt are typically traced to the Iranian Haurvatāt and Ameretāt; for the proposal of Manichaen mediation see P.J. de Ménasce, “Une légende indo-iranienne dans l’angéologie judéo-musulmane,” *Etudes Asiatiques* 1 (1947) 10-11. Note also the later appearance of these names in Hebrew, as attested in T.-S. K 1.1 (12th c.), for which see P. Schäfer & S. Shaked, eds., *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* (Tübingen, 1994) 1.79-82, with a parallel in MS Vatican 245 fol. 111b, as discussed in G. Scholem, “Some Sources of Jewish-Arabic Demonology,” *JJS* 16 (1965) 9; Reeves, “Some Parascriptural Dimensions.”

³⁴ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 29.

³⁵ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 50.

³⁶ See my *Fallen Angels* and references there, as well as Harkins, et al., eds., *Fallen Angels Tradition*; C. Auffarth & L.T. Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Fall of the Angels* (Leiden, 2004).

³⁷ Cf. J.C. Reeves, “Toward a Rapprochement of Bible and Quran,” *SBL Forum* 2004. See below on this passage in relation to traditions about the fall of Satan and the fall of Iblīs—a complex that, I would suggest, remains distinctive from (even if intersecting at times with) Jewish and Islamic traditions about antediluvian angelic descent aligned with Enochic texts and traditions, even if largely conflated in their Christian counterparts, especially in the Latin West. (So too, e.g., Bodman, *Poetics of Iblīs*, 70-83, although there neglecting to integrate more recent insights into the continued tenacity of Enochic traditions long after Second Temple times.)

most often associated with sins of teaching in the *Book of the Watchers*.³⁸ In addition, she interprets the assertions that angels do not descend apart from divine permission in the Meccan suras Q 19:64 and 97:4 as a “further thought about angelic descent.” “The overall impression conveyed by these references,” she thus proposes, “is that the Watcher story formed part of the general background against which the Qur’ān was revealed.”³⁹ Among the results is an emphasis on continuity rather than rupture between Qur’ān and *tafsīr* as well.

Much of Crone’s article is oriented toward supporting her tentative solution to the longstanding puzzle of the identity of ‘Uzayr (Q 9:30). Whether or not one accepts this particular hypothesis, however, she stresses that the “interest of all four or five examples lies in the light that they throw on the religious milieu in which the Qur’ān arose.”⁴⁰ This impression is further confirmed and extended by Reeves in his recent synthetic analysis of the complex of Islamic interpretative and narrative traditions that came to be consolidated under the medieval rubric of the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt” (*qiṣṣat Hārūt wa-Mārūt*).⁴¹ Focusing upon the *tafsīr* to Q 2:102 by Tabarī (d. 923 CE) and to “tales of the prophets” (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*) and other anthologies by Maqdisī, Tha‘labī, Kisā’ī, and Qazwīnī, Reeves draws out a common narrative structure that intersects at several points with earlier Enochic and related traditions, pointing to multiple strands of older elements therein preserved. The fullest versions, for instance, feature “[1] a prolegomenon in heaven, [2] resulting in an angelic mission to earth, [3] the corruption of these emissary angels, and [4] their consequent punishment by God.”⁴² Some make explicit the setting of the antediluvian age and/or reference a human intercessor in a manner directly paralleling the role of Enoch in the *Book of the Watchers*.

The most stable and dominant components of the medieval complex, however, are unparalleled in either biblical or Second Temple traditions. Reeves notes, for instance, how “angelic amazement at human wickedness is the flashpoint which sets all the extant versions of the ‘Tale’ into narrative motion.”⁴³ Significantly, for our purposes, it is here that we find the most compelling commonalities with the distinctive forms of the angelic descent myth within late antique and medieval Jewish literature, which tend to integrate elements of the Rabbinic trope of angelic rivalry with humankind.⁴⁴ To be sure, this trope is also attested in Syriac Christian literature in relation to narratives about the creation of Adam and fall of Satan at the beginning of time, in a manner aligned with the Qur’ānic treatment of Iblīs (e.g., Q 2:30; 7:12).⁴⁵ The “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt,” however, resonates most sharply with the parallel but

³⁸ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 48-50, picking up an idea positing by P. Casanova, “Iḍrīs et ‘Ouzair,” *Journal Asiatique* 205 (1924) 356-60. On the issues surrounding the traditional linkage with Ezra see also V. Comerro, “Esdras est-il le fils de Dieu?” *Arabica* 62 (2005) 165-81.

³⁹ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 17.

⁴⁰ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 17.

⁴¹ Most extensively now in Reeves, “Some Parascriptural Dimensions.”

⁴² Reeves, “Some Parascriptural Dimensions”—there quoting an account associated with Mujāhid in the *Tafsīr* of Tabarī as an example, but also including discussion of many different versions as well as a detailed chart of the overlaps and differences across ten of them.

⁴³ Reeves, “Some Parascriptural Dimensions.”

⁴⁴ P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvormstellung* (Berlin, 1975).

⁴⁵ Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 72-83; G.A. Anderson, “The Exaltation of Adam and the Fall of Satan,” in *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays*, ed. G.A. Anderson, M.E. Stone, & J. Tromp (Leiden, 2000); T.

distinctive deployment of this trope in late antique and medieval Jewish literature in relation to Enoch/Metatron, the Generation of Enosh, and/or Generation of the Flood—a development largely unparalleled in Christian sources.⁴⁶ This emphasis marks a contrast to the angelic descent myth as known from the *Book of the Watchers* and most of its Christian tradents. “As the [Muslim] exegetes tell the story,” as Crone notes, “it is not about angelic revolt or the origin of sin. Rather it is about how tough it is to be a human being.”⁴⁷

Although the corruption of the angels in the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt” almost always involves some attempted or actual sexual transgression, moreover, it is typically along lines unprecedented in Genesis, the *Book of the Watchers*, or *Jubilees*—that is: with reference to a single very beautiful (often Persian) woman who becomes a celestial being (usually Venus). Whether Hārūt and Mārūt are depicted as descending for positive aims such as judging and/or for the sake of testing the self-claimed superiority of angels to humankind, the “Tale” thus introduces a sense of their fall into fleshly lust—an element that is strikingly absent from Q 2:102. Not only does the timing resonate with *Jubilees*’ narrative of angelic descent, but it also finds poignant counterparts in the cluster of medieval midrashic traditions that A. Jellinek called the “Midrash of Šemḥazai and Azael” (e.g., *Yalqut Shimoni* [Venice 1566] ff. 11v-12v; i §44).⁴⁸ There, the two main Watchers of the *Book of the Watchers*, Šemḥazai and ‘Asael in Aramaic, reappear as Šemḥazai and ‘Azael in Hebrew, alongside many tropes and traditions known from the *Book of Giants* as well as *Jubilees* and the *Book of the Watchers*. Yet this medieval “Midrash” also includes the oldest extensive Jewish versions of the tale of

Wanta, “Satan Whispered: Considering Qur’ānic Accounts of Satan’s Fall in Light of Syriac Christian Tradition,” forthcoming.

⁴⁶ The one notable exception to this pattern is Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 8.9-14, which also tells the tale of angelic descent as a story about angelic rivalry leading to angelic descent, followed by their corruption while on earth and their teachings of magic as well as other technical and divinatory skills. Just as in the preface to *Aggadat Bereshit*, for instance, the angels here let themselves down without God’s consent but also to prove humankind wrong—only to find themselves corrupted by flesh. Inasmuch as Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* contains “Jewish-Christian” features, took form in fourth-century Syria, and includes distinctive prophetological ideas with notable parallels in Islamic literature, it may be an important witness to the reception of *Jubilees* and cultivation of a distinctive complex of antediluvian angelic descent in the late antique Near East; see further A. Y. Reed, “Retelling Biblical Retellings: Epiphanius, the Pseudo-Clementines, and the Reception-History of *Jubilees*,” forthcoming.

⁴⁷ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 30. Interestingly, this same point is sometimes made quite explicitly in midrashim; the widespread diffusion of the trope is clear, e.g., in its inversion in *Pesikta Rabbati* 34.2, where humans complain to God about the angels, citing Azza and Azael in much the same way that the accusing angels cite the Generation of Enosh and the Generation of the Flood: “Master of the Universe, you gave us a heart of stone, and it led us astray; if Azza and Azael, whose bodies were fire, sinned when they came down to earth, would not we of flesh and blood sin all the more?”

⁴⁸ This title was given by A. Jellinek to a short midrash about the fallen angels found in Simeon ha-Darshan’s midrashic anthology *Yalqut Shimoni* (13th century; Frankfurt?); *Yalqut*’s source here is commonly identified as *Midrash Abkir*, a non-extant midrashic collection that may date from the early 11th century (e.g., Heller, “La chute des anges,” 205). Versions also occur in R. Moshe ha-Darshan’s *Bereshit Rabbati* (11th century; Narbonne) and the copy of the anthological chronicle of Yerahmeel ben Solomon (ca. 1150; Southern Italy?) preserved in Eleazar ben Asher Ha-Levi’s collection *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* (ca. 1325). Due to its affinities with the Qumran and Manichean versions of the *Book of the Giants*, as well as its utility as an aid for reconstructing these fragmentary works, scholars have typically focused on the most expansive form of this midrash, as found in Jellinek’s excerpt from *Yalqut* in *BHM* 4:127-28 and in Gaster’s translation of the *Chronicle of Yerahmeel* (25). It should be noted, however, this form is constructed from smaller units which also circulated separately in less narrativized forms, both before and after, and which are marked as distinct traditions even in *Bereshit Rabbati*.

angel(s) attempting to seduce a woman who becomes a star—and, hence, the closest Jewish counterparts to those elements of the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt” without attested Second Temple antecedents.⁴⁹

Inasmuch as the materials attesting the “Midrash of Šemḥazai and Azael” date from the eleventh century and following, Reeves concludes that “the Muslim Hārūt and Mārūt complex both chronologically and literarily precedes the articulated version of the Jewish ‘Midrash.’”⁵⁰ What their overlaps reveal, however, is much more than a single moment of “borrowing” or a single direction of “influence.” The medieval Jewish materials may have been shaped by their Muslim counterparts, but—as Reeves stresses—both also integrate what we know to be far older traditions, some first known in Second Temple Jewish forms, others first glimpsed in “gnostic” and Christian sources. Their “parallels,” thus, speak to Jewish–Muslim interactions in the Middle Ages, but they simultaneously help to highlight the longstanding local traditions in the Near East that made both sets of traditions poignant and possible, perhaps laying the groundwork for a cross-fertilization which was always already much more than mere “borrowing.”

2. Magic, Stars, and Angel–Human Hybrids: Hārūt and Mārūt in the Works of Jāḥiẓ

With Crone’s contextual suggestions and Reeves’ corrective insights in mind, then, I would like to return to the question of fallen angels in relation to “Early Islam and Enochic Traditions.” Even if we imagine an older and larger complex of traditions of which only a few written examples come down to us, what might we learn from attention to the choices of selection, textualization, and framing in those forms that we do have? How should we contextualize and interpret their distinctive foci and dominant concerns? Is it possible to glimpse any clues to specific channels of transmission or predominant settings of preservation and cultivation?

To explore these questions, it may be useful to look more closely at some of the relevant sources from the period *between* the Qur’ānic materials on which Crone focuses *and* the literary consolidation of the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt” as analyzed by Reeves. Especially intriguing, in my view, are the multiple references to Hārūt and Mārūt in the writings of Jāḥiẓ (AH 160-255/781-869 CE), a Muslim author of East African heritage who was active in Mesopotamia (i.e., specifically Basra, in what is now southern Iraq).⁵¹ Jāḥiẓ mentions Hārūt and Mārūt in multiple scattered contexts, each of which—I shall suggest—may be revealing, not just for what is *stated* but also for what is *assumed*.

Whereas Q 2:102 makes no reference to angelic sin, for instance, one of Jāḥiẓ’s passing references to the pair is the following question in *Kitāb al-tarbī‘ wa’l-tadwīr*:

“And which one was the more wicked: Hārūt or Mārūt?” (§77)⁵²

⁴⁹ For a passing reference, albeit difficult to date, see however Midrash Tanḥuma (ed. Buber), Hosaphah to Ḥuqqat §1. For precedents and parallels see discussion below.

⁵⁰ Reeves, “Some Parascriptural Dimensions”; see also Heller, “La chute des anges,” 210.

⁵¹ See further C. Pellat, *The Life and Works of Jahiz* (Berkeley, 1969) 3-27. From the perspective of the reception-history of Enochic literature, of course, his East African heritage proves especially intriguing in light of the preservation of the Geez compendium *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* as scriptural among Ethiopian Christians.

⁵² Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tarbī‘ wa’l-tadwīr* §77; trans. J.C. Reeves.

The assumption here is precisely what is unstated and even countered in the Qur'ān—that is: the characterization of these two angels as “fallen” in some fashion. Jāḥiẓ does not describe why or how they are wicked. It is already assumed (or so it seems) to be known without need for explanation.

Also telling is another brief reference to the two later in the same work:

God has mentioned magicians in the Qur'ān. He told about Hārūt and Mārūt, and He spoke about “the enchantresses who blow on knots” (Q 113:4). (§182)⁵³

In the case, Jāḥiẓ adduces Hārūt and Mārūt, not as exemplary of fallen angels, but rather exemplary of magicians. Consequently, this tradition draws our attention back to Q 2:102 and its most striking point of differences from the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt”: the former is not framed as a story about fallen angels, but rather as a teaching concerning the temptations of magic.⁵⁴ It is this Qur'ānic emphasis, in turn, which is presumed as central here by Jāḥiẓ.

At first sight, this emphasis on their magic may appear to mark a departure from the Second Temple traditions about the fallen angels integrated into the later “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt.” Even this, however, has a notable Enochic lineage. Elsewhere, I have surveyed the *Nachleben* of the trope of illicit angelic instruction from the *Book of the Watchers*, mapping the range of ways in which it was redeployed by Jews and Christians in reflections upon ambivalent types of knowledge—that which is powerfully efficacious yet potentially corrupting. Already in the Greek translation of the *Book of the Watchers* (ca. first century BCE/CE?), the magical connotations of the fallen angels’ teachings become enhanced.⁵⁵ At least since the second century CE, the connection is further explored by early Christians writing in Greek and Latin; Justin Martyr (second century CE) contends that fallen angels enslaved humankind “with magical writings” as well as idolatrous sacrifices (2 *Apol.* 5.4), and variations upon this association become common among Christian authors from the second to fourth centuries CE—most often in the context of arguments about the genealogy of idolatry, “heresy,” and religious error.⁵⁶ The trope of the fallen angels’ teaching becomes widespread enough among early Christians, however, that it is also used in other ways, including to condemn women who beautify themselves with cosmetics,⁵⁷ but also to make more positive claims. Evidence for the latter clusters especially in late antique Egypt. Clement of Alexandria (third century CE), for instance, appeals to fallen angels to claim a powerfully ambivalent lineage for “pagan” philosophy, while Zosimus of Panopolis (fourth century CE) uses them for the aetiology of alchemy.⁵⁸ In both cases, the arguments are framed as interventions into broader debates about the history of knowledge—as also echoed, in the case of alchemy, in technical Hermetica of presumably “pagan” Greco-Egyptian provenance.⁵⁹

Within the classical Rabbinic literature, we find no counterparts to this appeal to the teachings of the fallen angels as a locus for epistemological reflection—most likely because

⁵³ Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tarbī‘ wa’l-tadwīr* §182, ed. C. Pellat (Damascus, 1955) 94; trans. J.C. Reeves.

⁵⁴ “The angels,” as Crone also stresses, “are not guilty of any sexual sins; they merely teach people magic”; *Book of the Watchers* in the Qur'ān,” 27

⁵⁵ See further Reed, “Gendering Heavenly Secrets.”

⁵⁶ E.g., Clement, *Ecl.* 53.4; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.15.6; *Epid.* 18; Tertullian, *Idol.* 9.1; *Apol.* 35.12; Lactantius, *Inst.* 2.16; Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 161-77.

⁵⁷ E.g., Tertullian, *Cult.fem.* 1.2; Cyprian, *Hab.Virg.* 14.

⁵⁸ E.g., Clement, *Strom.* 5.1.10.2; Zosimus *apud* Sync. 14.6-14.

⁵⁹ Reed, “Beyond Revealed Wisdom”; eadem, “Gendering Heavenly Secrets,” 125-29; see further below.

of the apparent rejection both of Enochic books and of the angelic interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 beginning around the second century CE.⁶⁰ When Jewish interest in Enoch later reemerges, however, so too with Jewish interest in illicit angelic instruction, beginning in the Hekhalot literature in Hebrew: *Sefer Hekhalot/3 Enoch*, the earliest source to attest the Jewish association of Enoch with Metatron, tells the tale of Enoch's transformation as a tale of angelic rivalry sparked by the complaints of a group of two or three ministering angels called 'Uzza, 'Azza, and/or 'Azael (Schäfer, ed., *Synopse* §6 = *3 Enoch* 4), and it also includes a narrative about these angels on earth teaching sorcery for the adjuration of heavenly bodies for idolatrous worship in the Generation of Enosh (Schäfer, ed., *Synopse* §§7-8 = *3 Enoch* 5).⁶¹ The latter offers an interesting intertext for Q 2:103 and this passage from Jāhiz inasmuch as it is a rare examples of the treatment of antediluvian descent without any reference to sexual transgression, one focusing solely on the problem of angelic instruction of humankind in magical arts.⁶² The probable Babylonian provenance of these and other early materials within *Sefer Hekhalot/3 Enoch* makes the consonance of concerns all the more intriguing.⁶³

It is as a group of angels with the names known from the manuscript tradition for *Sefer Hekhalot/3 Enoch* (עזאל, עזא, עזא, and variants) that a concern for fallen angels reemerges in Jewish literature—often with a fluidity between angelic descent and angelic rivalry as well as a surprising ease for flipping of their status from fallen angels to ministering angels and back again. Some precedent can be found already in Second Temple times; in the Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance, we find some variants on the *Book of the Watchers*' Asael (e.g., עזאל, עזאל) and his partial assimilation to the mysterious Azazel (עזאל) of Leviticus 16 (e.g., 4QAgasCreat A frag. 1 7-10; 4QEnGiants 7 i 6; cf. *b.Yoma* 67b). More proximate and significant for understanding the late antique Babylonian context of the cultivation and spread of the traditions that we see in *Sefer Hekhalot/3 Enoch*, however, are the echoes in Aramaic incantation bowls from late antique Mesopotamia, wherein names of this sort are multiplied much along the same lines attested across the Hekhalot manuscripts.⁶⁴

In a broader sense this pattern forms part of the multiplication of *-el* angel/demon/archon names attested in magical materials known from the PGM, Palestinian amulets, and Cairo Genizah, which all include some names similar to Asael/Azael.⁶⁵ In the Aramaic incantation bowls, however, this particular set of names occurs more frequently and often in settings with intriguing connections to the depiction of these figures in *Sefer Hekhalot/3 Enoch*. One bowl, for instance, lists them alongside Metatron in the course of a petition for the nullification of

⁶⁰ Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 122-59.

⁶¹ Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 174-84.

⁶² In later Jewish mystical literature, the trope of fallen angels as teachers of “magical arts” or “sorcery” becomes common; e.g., *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* §25; *Zohar* (ed. Vilna) 1.58a; 1.126a; 3.207b-208. Notable is the emphasis on their continued role in such teaching in *Zohar* 1.58a, not just as the culture-heroes who introduced such knowledge to humankind: “up to this day they remain here and teach magical arts to human beings.” The trope also appears in some medieval midrashim (e.g., *Aggadat Bereshit ad Gen 6:4*) but is less widespread. Even sources that include reference to the teachings of Azael, et al., sometimes draw instead on other elements such as Azael's association with “all kinds of dyes and women's ornaments by which they entice them to sin” in *Bereshit Rabbati*; Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 258-68.

⁶³ Reed, “From Asael and Šemiḥazah”; eadem, *Fallen Angels*, 256-58

⁶⁴ For details see Reed, “From Asael,” 121-22 with chart in n. 64.

⁶⁵ E.g., PGM IV 2142; XXXVI 174; XLV 7; Gaster, “Logos Ebraikos,” 109-17; Schäfer & Shaked, *Magische Texte*, T.-S. AS 142.39 1a line 25. See H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch* (Cambridge, 1928) 12, for a list of literary sources in which Azael (or variations thereof) denotes a heavenly angel.

sorceries from a range of different nations, as practiced “in the seventy languages, either by women or men” (lines 8-9):

All of them (i.e., the sorceries) are brought to an end and annulled by the command of the jealous and avenging God, the One who sent Azza and Azael [עזאזל ויעזאל] and Metatron, the great prince of his Throne. They will come and guard the dwelling and the threshold of Parrukukdad son of Zebinta and Qamoi daughter of Zaraq. (Gordon *D Archiv Orientalni* VI in Isbell, *Corpus*, 112-13, lines 10-12)

Here, Azza and Azael are invoked to protect Parrukukdad and Qamoi from sorcery—presumably as non-fallen angels, even as the reference to “sending” allows for the possibility that they have already descended to earth. In any case, it is striking that these figures are here associated with Metatron and adjured in a spell dedicated to countering the very sorcery with which they are elsewhere associated. Two bowls from Nippur with duplicated materials attest an association with Hermes as well:

In the name of Gabriel and Michiel and Raphiel, and in the name of Asael Asiel [עסאל עסיאל] the angel and Ermes the gr[eat lord...]. (16007 Montgomery 7, line 8).

In the name of Gabriel and Michael and in the name of Raphael and Asiel [עסיאל], and in Hermes the great lord, in the name of YHW in YHW. (16081 [Myrman], line 8)⁶⁶

In other bowls, figures with such names are called upon as ministering angels:

In the name of Michael, Raphael, Azael [עזאל], Azriel, Ariel... the holy angels who stand in front of the throne of the great God. (Naveh & Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, A 7a:2-5)

On your right are very many, on your left is Uziel [עזיאל], in front of you is Susiel, behind you is Repose. Above these is God’s Shekinah. (Naveh & Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, A 1:1-3)⁶⁷

At least in late antique Mesopotamia, the association of fallen angels with magic, then, was not merely a matter of theorizing antediluvian angelic sin or mapping the origins of different types of knowledge: it is reflected also in the realm of ritual practices and material objects for the protection of individuals from supernatural harm.

Significantly, for our purposes, the evidence for Jewish magic thus helps to highlight one plausible setting in which some Enochic traditions about the Watchers could have been transmitted, developed, and cultivated even apart from the interpretation of Genesis—and with an enduring emphasis on magic rather than angelic descent or sexual transgression.⁶⁸ The earliest Enochic material, after all, is consistently in Aramaic and already exemplary of a scribal tradition of “Aramaic cultural mediation” that ensured the movement of astronomical

⁶⁶ Here, the name Asiel emerges as a variation on Asael, concurrent with the assimilation of the names of other angels to the “-iel” ending (i.e., Michael → Michiel; Raphael → Raphiel). On Hermes, Metatron, and Enoch, see J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia, 1913) 122-24.

⁶⁷ J. Naveh & S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1985). See also Moussaieff Collection Bowl 6 lines 7-8 as discussed in S. Shaked, “Peace be Upon You,” *JSQ* 2 (1995) 211-16. Cf. Naveh & Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, A 1:1, A 7:3; Naveh & Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1993) A 19:23.

⁶⁸ This is consistent with a broader pattern noted by Michael Swartz, in his survey of affinities between Qumranic precedents for later Jewish mystical, magical, and divinatory sources, whereby there is much more continuity both in form and content with regard to magic and divination than with regard to those themes deemed “mystical or visionary”; the former are more “stable and enduring” and seem to play a consistent role in the life of a community; “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Later Jewish Magic and Mysticism,” *DSD* 8 (2001) 193.

knowledge from cuneiform culture to Jewish and other settings, as Jonathan Ben-Dov has shown, and the incantation bowls may be best understood as a later extension of much the same phenomenon, as Siam Bhayro has recently suggested.⁶⁹ Especially in light of the broader affinities between the bowls and the Hekhalot literature, moreover, it makes sense that these Enochic traditions also reemerge in *Sefer Hekhalot/3 Enoch*—seemingly initially in Mesopotamia as well.⁷⁰

The evidence of the Aramaic incantation bowls also point to a specific late antique setting in which traditions about angels flowed back and forth between Jews and non-Jews.⁷¹ Indeed, it is often said that magic was as an interreligious or transreligious phenomenon, and this seems especially true for these bowls from late antique Mesopotamia, as shown by the remarkable parallels between the presumably Jewish bowls in Babylonian Aramaic and those in Mandaic and Syriac.⁷² Accordingly, it is perhaps not surprising to hear of the Muslim exegete al-Kalbī from Iraq (d. 763 CE) discussing the angels ‘Azā, ‘Azāyā, and ‘Azazīl, and equating two of them directly with Hārūt and Mārūt.⁷³ Nor is surprising that Jāhiz, also writing in Iraq, might refer to the import of Hārūt and Mārūt with primary reference to their association with magic.

It is against this specific background that Crone argues, as noted above, for understanding ‘Uzayr as a variant (whether aural or scribal) of the same complex of names.⁷⁴ By her reading, fallen angels are here used to critique Jewish claims to commerce with angels but also to evoke the dangers posed also to Muslims of the temptations of magic. Even without the addition of Q 9:30 to the complex, in fact, such dynamics can be inferred from Q 2:103, particularly when considered in context:

The problem that preoccupies the Quran in the passage on Hārūt and Mārūt is that some People of the Book (i.e., Jews or Christians) prefer magic to the truth. In the preceding verse it complains that a party of the People of the Book react to the fact that a messenger has come to them from God by throwing the book behind their backs (2:101); they prefer to follow that which the demons related to Solomon, i.e., magic... We find ourselves right in the middle of Jewish magic, a well-attested phenomenon and one in which speculation about Solomon is well known to have played a role... In Mesopotamia and Iran, the great majority of incantation bowls

⁶⁹ J. Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years* (Leiden, 2008); S. Bhayro, “The Reception of Mesopotamian and Early Jewish Traditions in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 11.2 (2013) 187–96.

⁷⁰ The exact nature of this relationship remains a matter of some debate; see further Shaked, “Peace be Upon You”; R.S. Boustán, “The Emergence of Pseudonymous Attribution in Heikhalot Literature: Empirical Evidence from the Jewish ‘Magical’ Corpora,” *JSQ* 14 (2007) 18–38. In the case of *Sefer Hekhalot/3 Enoch*, 11th/12th c. Genizah fragments (T.-S. K 21.95.L) attest the circulation of a version with more magical and astrological concerns prior to the Rabbinized versions that come down to us from the Haside Ashkenaz.

⁷¹ Steve Wasserstrom suggests the same channel for the transmission of traditions about Metatron in *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton, 1995) 194–205.

⁷² See e.g., Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, 95–101, 115–16; S. Shaked, “Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia,” *JSAI* 21 (1997) 103–17. Even though Odeberg’s list of parallels between 3 Enoch and Mandaean literature (3 Enoch, 64–79) is plagued by the parallelomania of his age, it is perhaps worth revisiting, particularly in light of the interest in Metatron in the Mandaic magical bowls. Wasserstrom, e.g., notes the similar duplication of Azazel in Mandaean tradition, for instance, where Azazel and Azazel are two of the four angels of the West; see “Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Muslim literature: A bibliographical and methodological sketch,” in *Tracing the Threads*, 101–2, and references there.

⁷³ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 30.

⁷⁴ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur’ān,” 36–48. On this reading, she suggests, “the charge against the Jews would not reflect ignorance or misunderstanding of Jewish belief, but rather the anger and the polemical exaggerations that this tends to induce” (p. 43).

were made by Jews, often for clients bearing Iranian names, suggesting that magic was regarded as something of a Jewish specialty there, and it must have been from a region within the Iranian sphere of influence that the story passed to the Qur'ān, for Hārūt and Mārūt are Haurvatāt and Ameretāt, two of the Zoroastrian divine beings known as *amesha spentas*, and it is in Babīl that the Qur'ān places them.⁷⁵

However we choose to reconstruct the connection of angels and magic variously attested by the Qur'ān, Kalbī, and Jāhīz, this evidence is important—in my view—for exposing the limitations of focusing our consideration of connections between Jewish and Muslim ideas about angels only on literary or “religious” sources. Traditions about transmudane powers were often cultivated and disseminated for more individualized purposes in other forms and settings, including exorcistic and protective prayers and objects, healing rites, aggressive magic, and apotropaic and other amulets.

A similar caution arises when we look to a third reference to these figures in Jāhīz's *Kitāb al-tarbī' wa'l-tadwīr* (§41), which is framed in yet another context:

What is the tale of al-Zuhara (i.e., Venus)? And what happened to Suhayl (i.e., Canopus)? And what is said about Hārūt and Mārūt?⁷⁶

In this case, the two angels appear in a list in which the first two bear quite obvious connections to astronomy. The connection of these four figures is explicated in Jāhīz's *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, as we shall see below. For now, it suffices to note the significance of this terse iteration for reminding us about the circulation of traditions about fallen and other angels also in technical and other discourses about planets and stars: just as we may miss something when we refract premodern traditions about angels through a modern bifurcation of “religion” from “magic,” so too from “science.”

Jāhīz's *Kitāb al-tarbī' wa'l-tadwīr* also includes a question about Hermes and Idrīs, directly prior to the above questions (§40). More determinative for his treatment of fallen angels, however, is another question in the same work, which might seem at first sight to be wholly unrelated: “Just who was the father of Jurhum?” (§182). The two references to Hārūt and Mārūt in his *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* are both framed as answers to this very question:

They claim that Jurhum was the offspring of what transpired between the angels and moral women. (The angel responsible) was an angel who disobeyed his Lord in heaven, (and) He sent him down to earth with the form and constitution of a human being. (This is) analogous to what occurred at the time of the affair of Hārūt and Mārūt and the affair of al-Zuhara (Venus), who was Ānāhīd. Whenever an angel would disobey God Most Exalted, He would send down to earth in the form of a human being. This one married the mother of Jurhum, and she bore him Jurhum... Stemming from this type of procreation and this type of composition and attribution were Bilqīs, the queen of Saba' (Sheba), and Dhū'l-Qarnayn (Alexander the Great?).⁷⁷

They claim that Abu Jurhum is a descendant of those angels who came down to earth at the time when they were disobedient in heaven, similar to what is said about Hārūt and Mārūt. They brought about (the existence of) Suhayl (Canopus), who was a tithe-collector (now) transformed into a star, and they brought about the (the existence of) Al-Zuhara (i.e., Venus), a woman

⁷⁵ Crone, “*Book of the Watchers* in the Qur'ān,” 28.

⁷⁶ Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-tarbī' wa'l-tadwīr* §41; trans. J.C. Reeves.

⁷⁷ Jahiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. F. Atawi (Damascus, 1968), 1.113.20-25; trans. J.C. Reeves.

whom they desired, whose name was Ānāhīd, (now) transformed into a star. Something similar to this is said in India about the star named ‘Uṭārid (Mercury).⁷⁸

In both passages, Jāḥiẓ adduces Hārūt and Mārūt as exemplary of the very phenomenon of fallen angels, in the sense of angels who disobeyed in heaven, came down to earth, and desired human women. Angelic descent is thus explicit. That it is mentioned in the course of speculating about historical figures associated with legends of mixed human-angelic parentage—and specifically Jurhum, an ancestor of an ancient Arabian tribe in Mecca—draws our attention to local ancestral lore as another possible element informing the early Islamic interest in fallen angels. It is in this context, in any case, that sexual transgression is here added to the profile of Hārūt and Mārūt, and they are thus adduced as examples of what is assumed to be a broader and more common phenomenon of angelic descent, as occasioned by angelic disobedience and divine punishment.

Although these two passages from *Kitāb al-tarbī‘ wa’l-tadwīr* begin along similar lines, however, each focuses on a different type of result—one earthly, the other celestial. The first tradition quoted above draws attention to the products of a presumably physically consummated angelic–human union, thereby leading to further speculation about other possible hybrids in human history: “stemming from this type of procreation and this type of composition and attribution were Bilqīs, the queen of Saba’ (Sheba), and Dhū’l-Qarnayn (Alexander the Great?).” Even if the latter is uncertain, one might readily imagine some connection to any variety of tales about figures of mixed parentage across the Near East, as disseminated in settings ranging from local folklore to imperial propaganda. We may be tempted to connect them with the Giants of early Enochic tradition in particular, but Jāḥiẓ’s framing here reminds us that the interest in hybrid products of angelic–human union was hardly limited to learned speculation about the antediluvian age; indeed, if anything, we here see how fallen angels can be used to integrate and structure diverse received materials.

The second passage from *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* quoted above makes a different point, which is resonant with another branch of the reception-history of Enochic texts and traditions—that is, the cluster of late antique Egyptian reflection on illicit angelic instruction noted above. The above-noted appeal by Zosimus to use fallen angels to explain the origins of alchemy, for instance, finds a “pagan” counterpart in a story put in the voice of Isis herself in the Hermetic *Letter of Isis to Horus*:

...it came to pass that a certain one of the angels who dwell in the first firmament, having seen me (i.e., Isis) from above, was filled with the desire to unite with me in intercourse. He was quickly on the verge of attaining his end, but I did not yield, wishing to inquire of him as to the preparation of gold and silver. When I asked this of him, he said that he was not permitted to disclose it, on account of the exalted character of the mysteries, but that on the following day a superior angel, Amnael, would come... The next day, when the sun reached the middle of its course, the superior angel, Amnael, appeared and descended. Taken with the same passion for me he did not delay, but hastened to where I was. But I was no less anxious to inquire after these matters. When he delayed incessantly, I did not give myself over to him, but mastered his passion until he showed the sign on his head, and revealed the mysteries I sought, truthfully and without reservation.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. F. Atawi (Damascus, 1968), 6.456.3-6; trans. J.C. Reeves.

⁷⁹ *Letter of Isis the Priestess to Horus* in M. Berthelot and C. É. Ruelle, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1888) 2.28–33 at 29. Translation follows K.A. Fraser, “Zosimus of Panopolis and the Book of Enoch: Alchemy as Forbidden Knowledge,” *Aries* 4.2 (2004) 125–47 at 132–33.

This Hermetic text echoes early Enochic traditions about illicit angelic instruction but is also an early attestation of the narrative tradition concerning a woman whom angels or archons try to seduce but who escapes, whether through divine intervention or her own trickery, to become a star, constellation, or planet in the sky. Also in late antique Egypt, multiple variations of this narrative are integrated into “gnostic” accounts of primeval history, as attested in Coptic in the Nag Hammadi codices.⁸⁰ As noted above, it does not become integrated into known Jewish literature until the Middle Ages, when it emerges alongside Enochic traditions in the so-called “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael”; there, Šemḥazai encounters one of the “daughters of men” (often given the name Asterah), tries to seduce her, and gives in her demands that he first teaches her “the Name by which you are able to ascend to the Raqia,” whereupon she ascends and escapes him and becomes among the stars in the Pleiades.⁸¹ Even as this tradition recalls assertions from the *Book of the Watchers* about the Watchers’ revelation of secrets to their wives, it also resonates with Rabbinic speculations about the Pleiades and the astronomical causes for the Flood, as preserved in the Babylonian Talmud (e.g., *b. RH* 11b–12a).

The patterns in the surviving attestations, thus, permit only speculation about possible Second Temple or older Jewish precedents.⁸² What is important, for our present purposes, is the circulation of similar narratives across the divides of “Christian,” “gnostic,” and “pagan” literatures in Late Antiquity—but also across different knowledge-enterprises traditionally studied in isolation from one another by virtue of modern distinctions between “science,” “religion,” and “magic.” Here too, the framing of these materials by Jāḥiẓ offers a useful corrective. Not only does Jāḥiẓ situate this particular tradition about fallen angels as primarily a matter of discussion about stars, but he points to parallels in India without any evident sense of a need to specify a difference of “religious” context: “something similar to this is said in India about the star named ‘Uṭārid (i.e., Mercury).”⁸³

⁸⁰ See, e.g., *Hypostasis of the Archons* 92:18-93:1 and parallels as discussed in G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (Leiden, 1984) 53–61.

⁸¹ In the variation of this aggadah is found in *Seder Hadar Zeqenim* and framed with reference to Gen 6:2 and Gen 28:12 (see BHM 5:156), the woman becomes the constellation Virgo.

⁸² See now Reeves, “Parascriptural Dimensions” and further references there.

⁸³ The intensity of Muslim curiosity about Indian astrology and astronomy is noted by al-Biruni—who complains, in fact, that “our fellow-believers... relate all sorts of things as beings of Indian origin, of which we have found not a single trace with the Hindus themselves” (*Alberuni’s India*, trans. E.C. Sachau, 211), before going to recount South Asian astrological and astronomical knowledge in great detail. In this case, the Indian tradition in question is not entirely clear. When Georges Dumézil sought Sanskrit counterparts to Hārūt and Mārūt in the hopes of reconstructing a common mythic substratum of twin tales, he looked to the Aśvins, citing their lust for the woman Sukanyā in the *Mahābhārata* (3.123); e.g., “Les Fleurs Haurot-Maurot et les Anges Haurvatat Ameretat,” *REA* 6 (1926) 43-69. This passage has been widely cited as if a clear “parallel” (e.g., de Menasce, “Une légende indo-irénienne,” 10), but it remains that Mbh 3.123 and its variants exhibit very few commonalities of either detail or structure to the narratives surveyed above; notably lacking, for instance, is any element of astral or celestial transformation. That said, there is no dearth of Sanskrit narratives featuring women and others transformed into stars and constellation—indeed, as Stella Kramrisch observes, ancient South Asian traditions often “perpetuate figures not only by throwing them onto the screen of memory but also on the vault of heaven where they shine as stars”; *Presence of Śiva* (Princeton, 1994) 39. For the example of Prajapati chasing his daughter and being chased in turn by Rudra/Śiva across the sky, as correlated to movements of Sirius, Orion, and Aldebaran see pp. 40-50 there.

3. Conclusions

Twenty years ago in *Between Muslim and Jew*, Steve Wasserstrom observed that “the study of religion has barely begun to interrogate the extraordinary phenomenon of Jewish–Muslim symbiosis, much less rethink the paradigm itself.”⁸⁴ A decade later, Gil Anidjar repeated his insight—adding the need for attention to “the distance that is already presupposed, established, and sedimented in words, foremost among the words such as the word ‘between.’”⁸⁵ It may be worth repeating Wasserstrom’s call even today. And, if so, it is perhaps especially with Anidjar’s further caution about what may be effaced when related sets of Jewish and Islamic traditions are confined to the rubric of interaction *between* “religions.”⁸⁶

In the case of the fallen angels, we have seen how some stories, tropes, names, mythemes, and ideas move so fluidly that it may not be meaningful to label them as *only* “Jewish” or “Muslim”—let alone to imagine that arguments over priority of “origins” or directionality of “influence” might exhaust their significance. Some of these overlaps may well speak to an enduringly local Near Eastern heritage that cannot be tied to a single “religion” in exclusion of others.⁸⁷ Even the later iterations, moreover, reflect interconnectivity of a sort not readily reduced to a modern sense of dialogue or exchange *between* “religions”—in part because of the importance of magic and astronomy for shaping the discourse about fallen angels in Late Antiquity. From a modern Western perspective, it might seem self-evident that “angels” are a topic of interest only for “religion.” Our evidence for fallen angels, however, blurs the boundaries of “magic,” “science,” and “religion” alike. Here as elsewhere, modern scholars may wish to ask and answer questions about religious difference or dialogue, but many of the answers in our premodern sources speak instead to other questions—such as about the efficacy of incantations or the aetiology of celestial movements in the night sky. Our sources sometimes appeal, moreover, to an antediluvian age that enables the imagining of a remembered past prior to the very types of differentiation that we as scholars of Religious Studies are trained to study.

I shall leave it to others to determine whether or not early Islamic traditions about the fallen angels are thus representative or unusual as examples of the “Transformations of Jewish Traditions in Early Islam.” It may be worth noting, however, how our findings above relate to the consideration of “Early Islam and Enochic Traditions” by Alexander and others on the basis of other examples of Enochic traditions. Alexander’s survey of materials about Enoch and Idrīs, for example, concludes that “contacts between Muslims and Jews which ensured the transmission of traditions from Judaism to Islam were basically at a scholarly level... across the restricted front of scholarly dialogue... based to some extent on written sources”—or, in other words, not a matter of “storytelling and folklore” but rather “theological and textual hermeneutics.”⁸⁸ What we have seen above, however, is perhaps more akin to what van Bladel maps as the variegated continuum of late antique materials given fresh expression in early Islamic traditions about the pre-Islamic past—in his case, especially Hermetica, and in our case, also including traditions best known from Hekhalot literature, Aramaic incantation

⁸⁴ Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 7.

⁸⁵ Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab* (Stanford UP 2003) 171-72.

⁸⁶ As Anidjar notes of Wasserstrom, most scholarship “does not interrogate the sphere of ‘religion’ within which he locates his subject, nor does he offer reasons for such a confining location”; Anidjar, *The Jew*, 171.

⁸⁷ See also the argument made more broadly in Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, esp. 191-390, there with a focus on pre-Islamic Iran.

⁸⁸ Alexander, “Transformations of Jewish Traditions in Early Islam,” 29—although contrast Reeves, “Some Explorations,” 44-52.

bowls, and transregional Eurasian narratives about women who become celestial bodies. In this sense, our findings fit well with what Wasserstrom has shown for the place of magic also in the transmission of traditions about Metatron into Islamic intellectual culture.⁸⁹

In some ways, what we have seen for fallen angels is also akin to what is suggested by David J. Halpern and Gordon Newby on the basis of an eschatological tradition about the sun and the moon associated with the Yemenite Jewish convert to Islam, Ka‘b al-Aḥbār (d. ca. AH 32/652 CE). Halpern and Newby point to a possible precedent in the association of fallen angels with fallen stars in the *Book of the Watchers* and other early Enochic materials.⁹⁰ This, in turn, inspires them to suggest that “a Judaism more akin to that of the pseudepigraphic Enoch books than to that of the Talmud and Midrash” existed “side by side with rabbinic Judaism... in seventh century Arabia,” and that it was this “related variety of Judaism more inclined to apocalypticism... and not its more familiar rabbinic cousin, that decisively influenced Muhammad’s new religion.”⁹¹ The generative connection of astronomical and apocalyptic traditions fits well with what we have noted above. What we saw from our broader scope of sources, however, is a situation far more complex than can be captured by isolating one “variety of Judaism” to serve as “influence” upon Muhammad. Attention to Islamic “parallels,” in fact, helps to reveal Rabbinic Judaism as more elastic, more dynamically connected to Hekhalot and magical Jewish traditions, and more embricated in an interconnected Near Eastern milieu than has been traditionally assumed.⁹²

Whereas Alexander, Halpern, and Newby focus on illuminating “Islamic origins,” moreover, I would like to suggest that the juxtaposition of Jewish and Islamic materials may be no less important for reorienting our own scholarly purview and perspectives away from fixations on “origins” and the teleological assumptions that often accompany them. It is in this sense that it may be heuristic for scholars of Second Temple Judaism to attend to trajectories that culminate in Islam. After all, even those studies that ostensibly focus on “the text itself” inevitably operate with some tacit but guiding sense of the end of the story for which they illumine some of the beginning. Most often, in the field of Biblical Studies, this assumed end is some contemporary expression of Christianity, Judaism, and/or Western culture. And this, in turn, has led to the naturalization of some questions and categories but also the occlusion and obfuscation of others.

In the case of the *Book of the Watchers*, for instance, scholars typically take for granted that its depictions of the fallen angels must speak primarily to theological debates about the “origins of evil.” Attention to the trajectories of the tradition as transmitted and transformed within Islam, however, helps us to notice how many of the *Book of the Watchers’* Jewish and Christian interpreters and tradents are also more concerned with questions about knowledge, on the one hand, and the comparison of angels and humankind, on the other—and also to notice the prominence of such concerns even already in the *Book of the Watchers*. So too with magic and astronomy: when we situate early Enochic texts and traditions as prolegomenon to the history of Christianity in the West, it may seem obvious to focus foremost on its relationship to Genesis and on its opinions about the “origins of evil.” But when we look back at these traditions from the perspective of those elements that proved most fertile among Muslims,

⁸⁹ Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 194-205

⁹⁰ Specifically: *I Enoch* 18:11-19:2 (*Book of the Watchers*); 86:1-4; 88:1-3 (“Animal Apocalypse”).

⁹¹ D.J. Halpern & G.D. Newby, “Two Castrated Bulls,” *JAOS* 10.2 (1982) 631-38.

⁹² Hence, interestingly, confirming many of the insights and arguments made on other grounds in R.S. Boustan, “Rabbinization and the Making of Early Jewish Mysticism,” *JQR* 101.4 (2011): 482–501.

Jews, “pagans,” and others in the Near East, however, we are reminded of the determinative place of astronomical knowledge in the Aramaic Enoch tradition, already from its very earliest known stages.⁹³ And just as knowledge about stars was already interwoven (and blurred) with knowledge about angels in the Enochic *Astronomical Book*, even prior to the *Book of the Watchers*, so knowledge about fallen angels and demons in the *Book of the Watchers* and *Book of Giants* also dovetails with what we now know from the Dead Sea Scrolls about the place of transmundane powers in the Jewish magic of the time (e.g., exorcistic incantations; apotropaic prayers). Here as elsewhere, part of the power of the recent turn toward reception-history is perhaps to unsettle the notion of any single straight line from the “origin” or “invention” of this or that story or idea in the ancient past to its use or loss in the present—but also to unsettle the assumption of any single present as its self-evident or single culmination.

By means of conclusion, then, I would like to return to the moment with which I began. Recently, I had occasion to recall it when attending a Colloquium in honor of Patricia Crone at the Institute for Advanced Study,⁹⁴ and both the memory and the event impressed me with the power of conversations between scholars of Islam and scholars of Judaism—not just to inform the specialist study of each, but also to shed new perspectives on the period between them, pushing us beyond the conventionalized bounds of the study of Late Antiquity as centered on the Christianization of the Roman Empire and as culminating in medieval Europe and the modern West. There is arguably something quite significant at stake—both historically and historiographically—in conversations of this sort. Whether or not this or that specific “parallel” between Jewish and Muslim sources is found to be plausible or illuminating, much may be gained by expanding the scope of Late Antiquity beyond the Roman Empire, looking to the multivalently magnetic contact-zones of Mesopotamia and their rippling effects upon communities and literatures across an interconnected Near East and beyond.⁹⁵ And, hopefully, in the process, our own perspectives on the past can become further interconnected as well.

⁹³ I make this point in more detail in “Ancient Jewish Sciences and the Historiography of Judaism,” in *Ancient Jewish Sciences and the History of Knowledge in the Second Temple Period*, ed. J. Ben-Dov & S.L. Sanders (New York, 2014) 197–256.

⁹⁴ Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, 25 February 2015.

⁹⁵ On the need for such reorientation see further A. Y. Reed, “Beyond the Land of Nod,” *HR* 49.1 (2009) 48–87; eadem, “Reimagining ‘the East’: Eurasian Trade, Asian Religions, and Christian Identities,” in *History and Material Culture in Asian Religions*, ed. B.J. Fleming & R. Mann (London, 2014) 265–83. In addition, the prospect of a newly expansive eastward horizon onto Late Antiquity is much of what has been inspiring my current work on the Pseudo-Clementines, a late antique Syrian “Jewish-Christian” corpus that speaks *both* to the Near Eastern *Nachleben* of early Enochic texts and traditions *and* to the complex prehistories of some Islamic ideas—the latter of which is an interest also catalyzed by my conversations with Patricia Crone; see further, e.g., Reed, “Retelling Biblical Retellings”; Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 288–95.