

STUDIES IN
LATE ANTIQUITY AND EARLY ISLAM

17

BETWEEN BIBLE
AND QUR'ĀN

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THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AND THE
ISLAMIC SELF-IMAGE

URI RUBIN

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In Memory of My Parents

CONTENTS

Preface	xiii
Introduction	1
The Selected Material	2
The Structure of the Book	4

PART I

The Bible: Virtuous Israelites

1. Arab-Jewish Messianism: Syria	11
The Historical Clash with the Byzantines	12
'Abd al-Malik	19
The Eschatological Clash with the Byzantines	20
The Tribes of Israel and Constantinople	24
The Lost Tribes	26
Constantinople and the Biblical Models	30
The Evidence from Jewish Documents	32
The Secrets of Rabbi Shim'on	32
The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer	33
The Evidence from Christian Sources	34
2. The Israelites and Arabia	36
The Promised Land and Arabia	37
The Prophets and Arabia	38
The Mahdī and Arabia	44
Polemics and Arabia	45
The Lost Tribes and Arabia	46
Evidence from Documents	48
The Constitution of Medina	48
A Christian Document: Sebeos	49

PART II
The Qur'ān: Sinful Israelites

IIA. SUPERIOR ARABS

3. The Affair of the Spies	55
Qur'ānic Israelites	59
Sūrat al-Mā'ida (5):20-26	61
Jerusalem	62
Hijāz	63
Al-Ḥudaybiyya	64
Badr	69
Interlude: the Shī'ī Outlook	76
4. The Gate of <i>Hitta</i>	83
Jerusalem	89
Arabia	91
The Shī'a and <i>Hitta</i>	95
The Shī'ī Compilations	97
5. The Tablets of Moses and Muḥammad's <i>Umma</i>	100
The Transfer of God's Mercy	111

IIB. ARABS AND OTHERS ALIKE

6. Israelite and Islamic Sects: the <i>Firaq</i> Tradition	117
Origins	119
The Historical Part	121
The Khawārij and the <i>Firaq</i> Tradition	125
Abū Umāma and the Beheaded Khawārij	125
al-Sawād al-A'zam	127
<i>Jamā'a-Tā'a</i>	128
Jews and Christians (71-72)	130
"Judeo-Muslims" and "Christo-Muslims"	131
The Khārijī Archetype	133
Anti-Heretical Versions	136
Anti-Shī'ī Versions	138
Isolated Versions	138
Sectarian Versions	141
Anti-Sectarian Reaction	143

Inverted Versions	144
7. Israelite Forms of Schism: the Khawārij and the Qur'ān ..	147
The Khawārij and Sūrat Āl 'Imrān (3):7	147
Khārijī Scripturalism	150
Khawārij and <i>Sunna</i>	152
Khawārij and <i>Ta'wīl</i>	154
<i>Ra'y</i> and <i>Qiyās</i>	157
Khawārij, Israelites and the <i>Firaq</i> Tradition	159
Other Qur'ānic Verses in Abū Umāma's Statement	160
Anti-Heretical Qur'ān Exegesis	161
The Sin of the Calf: Sūrat al-A'rāf (7):152	162
Sūrat al-Ṣaff (61):5	162
Sūrat al-Kahf (18):103–106	162
Scholars on Heretics and Israelites	164
The Qur'ānic Text and Islamic Schism	165
8. The Ways of Sin: the <i>Sunna</i> Statement	168
The Chair of 'Alī	169
The Worship of the Calf	170
Similes of Symmetry	173
The Iraqi Versions	174
Sins Against the Qur'ān	176
Qadarīs	177
Imitated Movements	180
Imitation + Symmetry	181
Qur'ānic Sins	182
Actualisation: Jews and Christians	183
Persia and Byzantium	185
The <i>Sunna</i> Statement and the Shī'a	186
9. Warning from the Past: the <i>Halaka</i> Statement	190
Civil Wars	191
Disputes over the Qur'ān	193
Readings	193
Qadarism	195
"Beating" Parts of Scripture	197
<i>Ra'y</i> and <i>Qiyās</i>	198
Exaggerated Inquiries	199
<i>Ghuluww</i>	201

Storytelling and Monasticism	202
Apocrypha	202
Writing Down of the <i>Ḥadīth</i>	204
Moral and Social Disintegration	206
Luxury	207
The <i>Halaka</i> Statement in Qur'ān Exegesis	208
1. Sūrat al-Rūm (30):32	209
2. Sūrat Āl 'Imrān (3):105	209
3. Sūrat Āl 'Imrān (3):7	209
4. Sūrat al-Mu'minūn (23):53	210
5. Sūrat al-Nisā' (4):140	210
6. Sūrat al-Shūrā (42):13	211
7. Sūrat al-An'ām (6):153	211
10. Qur'ānic Metamorphosis: the Apes and the Pigs	213
The Qur'ānic Setting	213
Contemporary Jews as Apes and Pigs	215
Eschatological <i>Maskh</i>	215
The Triple Calamity	217
Apes and Pigs and Eschatological <i>Maskh</i>	220
Heretics	220
Başra	222
Umayyads–Yemenis–Shī'īs	223
Apes and Pigs and <i>Sunna</i> Statements	225
Allowing <i>Munkar</i>	226
Slave-Girls, Wine, etc.	228
Confirming Versions	231
Summary and Conclusions	233
The Children of Israel	233
The Arabs	234
Bible and Qur'ān	236
The Bible	236
The Qur'ān	237
Epilogue: the Chronology of the Islamic Self-Image	237
Excursus A: the Mice and the Lizards	241
The Biblical and Qur'ānic Sets of Terms	242
The Mouse	242
The Lizard	243

The Abū Naḍra←Abū Sa'īd Tradition	244
Other Baṣran Versions	245
Kūfan Versions	245
Hijāzī Versions	247
Summary	248
Israelites and Lizards	248
Excursus B: the Twelve Princes	251
Bible: the Ishmaelite Link	251
The Princes of Moses	255
The Revised Apocalypse of the Princes of Ishmael	256
The Ka'b-Yashū' Discourse	257
The 'Abbāsids Included	259
The Apocalypse of Nāthā	259
Companion Versions	262
Hudhayfa	262
Ibn 'Abbās	263
'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ	263
'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr: Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy	267
'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar	269
Prophetic Versions	269
30 Years + Twelve	276
The Shī'a	278
The Princes of Moses	279
Quraysh	280
Bibliography	281
General Index	297
Index of Qur'ānic References	313
Index of Biblical References	317

PREFACE

Preliminary versions of some chapters of this book were presented at various conferences. Chapter 1, at the conference on “Jews and Muslims: a Revised Evaluation”, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, March 1996; Chapter 3, at “Languages and Cultures of the Middle East”, TCMO, University of Nijmegen, October, 1997; Chapter 4, at the “Seventh Colloquium: From Jāhiliyya to Islam”, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, July–August, 1996.

A previous version of Chapter 10 was published as “Apes, Pigs, and the Islamic Identity”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 17 (1997), 89–105, and an earlier version of Excursus B was published as “Apocalypse and Authority in Islamic Tradition: the Emergence of the Twelve Leaders”, *Al-Qanṭara* 18 (1997), 11–42.

I am grateful to Roza I.M. El-Eini for editing the English style, and to Lawrence I. Conrad for his editorial suggestions and numerous useful notes and comments. My thanks are also due to Ed Breisacher, Manager Director of the Darwin Press, for his careful reading of the text and for spotting further errors and typos. Last but not least, to my wife Raya who read the final proofs, and was able to catch several other slips of mine.

The translation of Qur^ānic verses throughout the book is my own, drawing heavily on Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford, 1964).

INTRODUCTION

The title “Between Bible and Qurʾān” could be taken to mean that this book deals with the “influence” of the Bible on the Qurʾān. Here, however, the title indicates that the book will examine the literary role played by the Bible in Islamic sources, and will concentrate on the tension between Biblical and Qurʾānic models as revealed in Islamic texts describing contacts between the Muslims and the people of the Bible, that is, the Jews in particular but Christians, too. This book will thus examine certain crucial aspects of the Islamic attitude towards the Other.

A study assessing the relative impact of the Bible and the Qurʾān on Islamic texts has not previously been undertaken. Most of the studies which deal with the relationship between the Bible and the Qurʾān have been carried out from an external viewpoint, being aimed at exploring the ways in which the Qurʾān and other early Islamic texts were “influenced” by Jewish, Christian, and other types of “monotheistic” literature. There is an enormous number of such studies which have appeared since the nineteenth century, and there is no point in listing them here.

Unlike these studies, the present book remains within the internal sphere of the Islamic sources and examines the relationship between the Biblical and Qurʾānic elements present in them. This is done with a view to revealing aspects of the evolution of the Islamic self-image, i.e. the manner in which the Muslims defined their own position *vis-à-vis* their monotheistic predecessors in world history. This aim is based on the assumption that the way in which Islamic texts employed Biblical and Qurʾānic models may reflect the Islamic perception of the role in history of the Jews and the Christians, as compared with that of the Muslims.

The evidence of some Jewish and Christian documents will also be examined in order to illustrate the extent to which the Islamic historical perception left its mark on the writings of contemporary Jewish and Christian authors. The present book will thus also reveal elements in the general Jewish–Christian–Islamic discourse.

The Selected Material

The Islamic texts selected for examination establish a direct and explicit link between Muslims and others in the context of world history. The others are often called the “Children of Israel” (*banū Isrāʿīl*), but they also appear under further designations. Sometimes, they are called “Jews” (*Yahūd*) and “Christians” (*Naṣārā*), and at other times they are also referred to as “those who were before you” (*alladhīna min qablikum*). The designation “Children of Israel” usually stands for the Biblical peoples of Moses and Jesus, but may also stand for the Jewish contemporaries of the Muslims; “Jews” and “Christians” are generally the contemporaries of the Muslims, but may also stand for the past generations of Moses and Jesus. “Those who were before you” may represent the Children of Israel, or the Jews and the Christians, as well as any other community mentioned as playing a role in world history. They may include the generations of pre-Israelite prophets, such as Noah. Apart from these basically ethnic designations, the sources use less frequently the religious designation “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitāb*), that is, the non-Muslim communities possessing a holy scripture. These are again the Jews and the Christians, but the Magians (*Majūs*) also belong in this category. This set of designations indicates that the differences between Jews and Christians are insignificant, as both are treated as belonging to the same monotheistic group that preceded the Muslims in world history.¹

The present study will concentrate on texts referring to these groups of non-Muslims, and mainly on those in which a historiographical link is made between them and the Muslims. This is the best way to elucidate the Islamic historical perception and the Islamic self-image that is implied by this perception.

The study focuses on one type of text, the traditions, which in Arabic are called *ḥadīth*. The term stands mainly for reports transmitted from one generation to another. Many of them are attributed to the Prophet, but reports transmitted on the authority of other figures are also available, and they too will be taken into account. This material will be studied from the literary point of view, which means that no attempt will be

¹ Cf. Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, 1984), 58–62.

made at reconstructing the history of the events described in the traditions. This is also the approach on which my study of the life of Muḥammad was based.² The question of the authenticity of the traditions, that is, whether they were really transmitted by the authorities listed in the *isnāds* (chains of transmitters), will not detain us either because our concern here is the message of the traditions, whoever the “authentic” original authority may be. The evidence of the *isnāds* will only help us determine the general provenance of the traditions, i.e. the geographic region in which they originated and were first circulated.

The *ḥadīth* is an autonomous literary corpus that has its own textual dynamics, and therefore deserves an independent investigation, separate from the study of other types of Islamic sources—such as dogmatic, theological and polemical writings—in which the impact of the Bible and the Qurʾān may also be present. The advantage of the *ḥadīth* over these types of texts is that it contains early layers which may reflect the very first stages of the evolution of the Islamic historical perception.

Hadīth material is available in numerous compilations: legal, exegetical, historiographical, etc. Some of the material is regarded as “sound” (*ṣaḥīḥ*), but our study will not be confined to what orthodox Muslims consider “sound”, and will take account of all the layers of the available material, which is the only way to gain an insight into the evolution of ideas and into the tension between conflicting approaches. Shiʿī compilations will also be consulted, and will be shown to reveal the special role played by the Children of Israel in Shiʿī dogma.

A pioneering survey of Biblical elements (= *Isrāʾīliyyāt*) in *ḥadīth* has already been done by M.J. Kister, who also examined the reaction of Muslim religious leaders to the Jewish impact on the Muslim believers.³ More recent studies by scholars interested in Jewish and Christian–Islamic literary contacts have remained focused on other types of Islamic writings, such as anti-Jewish polemics,⁴ as well as on the evi-

² Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: the Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton, 1995).

³ M.J. Kister, “*Haddīthū ‘an banī isrā’īla wa-lā ḥaraja*”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 215–39 (repr. in *idem*, *Studies in Jāhiliyya and Early Islam*, [London, 1980], XIV).

⁴ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*

dence of the Qurʾān itself and its exegesis (*tafsīr*).⁵ The absence of *ḥadīth* is especially conspicuous in one book which was designed to investigate the evolution of the Islamic self-image in the context of Jewish–Islamic conceptual contacts, namely, John Wansbrough’s *The Sectarian Milieu*.⁶ An occasional allusion to *ḥadīth* is only made in the second chapter of this book, which looks into the role of the *sunna* as an origin of authority.

A noteworthy exception is Suliman Bashear’s posthumously published *Arabs and Others*, in which a considerable amount of *ḥadīth* material, including Qurʾān exegesis, is studied “with an attempt to examine the Arabs’ consciousness of themselves and of others....”⁷ However, this work is not intended to concentrate on world history in particular, and no special attention therefore is paid to Jews or to the Bible. This of course does not in the least diminish the importance of this welcome contribution to the study of early Islam.

A literary study of the Islamic historical perception as a key to the formation of the Islamic self-image is therefore well in order, and its results may be helpful for a reevaluation of the Islamic attitude towards Jews and Christians.

The Structure of the Book

This book uses as a starting point the Arab conquest of Syria, which took place at the first stage of the Arab anti-Byzantine campaign, and marked the beginning of meaningful relations between the well-established Jewish–Christian cultural system and the young Arabian–Islamic one. The Islamic texts indicate that the young Islamic culture acted as young cultures normally do when exposed to direct contact with well-established cultures. At first, Islamic historiography tended to be dependent on the well-established Jewish–Christian literary models of sacred history, and at this primary stage, Islamic tradition appropriated from the Jew-

(Princeton, 1992); Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden, 1996).

⁵ Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians* (Cambridge, 1991).

⁶ John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978).

⁷ Suliman Bashear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997), 5.

ish-Christian literature Biblical items and messianic concepts which it adapted to Islamic apologetic needs, and thus provided the Arab invasion its legitimisation. More specifically, Muslim historiography anchored the Arab conquest of Syria in Biblical prophecies, thus turning this conquest into a renewed version of an Israelite exodus, i.e. a messianic re-conquest of the Promised Land. The Israelites themselves (or rather, their descendants) were depicted as virtuous believers sharing with the Arabs the same messianic goal, thus constituting with them a chosen community based on a universal monotheism.

This stage is discussed in Chapter 1, which analyses traditions in which prophecies gleaned mainly from Isaiah and Ezekiel have been adapted to the Arab conquest of Syria and to the Arab anti-Byzantine campaign at large, thus providing them with divine legitimisation. The adaptation is done by Ka'ab al-Aḥbār, a Jewish convert to Islam. This chapter also considers traditions using the Jewish messianic theme of the Lost Tribes of Israel, which appear in these traditions as virtuous warriors assisting the Muslims in the eschatological battle for Constantinople, and turn the expected fall of the city into the focus of Arab-Jewish messianic dreams. Finally, the chapter examines some Jewish and Christian texts which are also focused on the eschatological battle for Constantinople.

Chapter 2 deals with traditions in which the scope of Jewish-Arab messianism is expanded from Syria to Arabia, and is projected back into the life of Muḥammad. These traditions try to turn the Ḥijāz into a destination for Israelite pilgrimage which they establish as a model for Muḥammad's own campaigns in the Ḥijāz. Such traditions mark the growth of Arab consciousness within the evolving Islamic self-image, and represent efforts to secure the status of the Ḥijāzī holy places after it had been overshadowed by that of Syria, the original Promised Land. Most significant here are the traditions attributing to the Lost Tribes of Israel a Ḥijāzī orientation. The tribes not only go on pilgrimage to Mecca but also meet with the Prophet in person and recognise the truth of his message. This chapter also touches upon a Christian document (Sebeos) that preserves major elements of Jewish-Arab messianism.

The two subsequent chapters deal with traditions that remain within the Ḥijāzī sphere of the life of Muḥammad. They retain the relationship

between the Islamic conquests and the Israelite exodus, but demonstrate the ongoing transition from a universal to a particularistic perception of the faith. They reflect an ever-growing Islamic ability to disengage and develop independently, which was made possible because the Arabs enjoyed political as well as military and social superiority over the Jews and the Christians. In these traditions, the image of the Children of Israel has changed considerably. They are described as sinners and as inferior to the faithful Arabs. Their sinful image is derived exclusively from the Qur^ʿān, which replaces the Bible as the central source of religious knowledge. In this new setting the Children of Israel fail to accomplish the sacred goals of their exodus, and Muḥammad's Arab believers fulfil the mission instead of them, thus replacing the Israelites as God's new chosen people. The role of two Qur^ʿānic passages, adduced in Muḥammad's biography to demonstrate the sins of the Israelites and the superiority of the Arabs over them, is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Further global aspects of the notion of Arab superiority over Jews, and mainly the exclusion of the Israelites from the scope of God's chosen community, are examined in Chapter 5. These aspects revolve around the Qur^ʿānic scene of Moses and the smashed tablets.

The subsequent chapters (6–10) continue with the theme of the sinful Israelites, but here the relationship between the latter and the Muslims is dramatically different. Instead of contrasting sinful Israelites and chosen Muslims, these traditions place Muslims and non-Muslims within the same sphere of sin and punishment. These traditions are focused on conditions of inner division and schism which seem to have generated a desperate conviction that the divided Islamic community was no better than the other communities, and that it was destined to suffer the same fate of sin and punishment that had befallen the Israelites.

These traditions too draw heavily on the Qur^ʿān, but now the models of Israelite sin and punishment are used to expose and denounce the conflicts among Muslims as resembling conflicts among Israelites. The traditions attack various sections of Islamic society, mainly Khawārij, Qadaris and Shi^ʿis; these are all accused of introducing Israelite forms of schism into Islamic society. The Qur^ʿān itself quite often features as the core of the Islamic dissension, and the various heretics are accused of turning the scripture into a source of inner division, thus imitating the

Jews and the Christians, who were divided over their own scriptures. Hence a parallelism emerges between the Bible and the Qurʾān as origins of division, so that instead of providing the Muslims with a firm basis of a distinctive identity, the Qurʾān has turned out to be the cause of their assimilation with the other communities. The traditions exposing this parallelism set out to prevent the assimilation by urging the Muslims to avoid schism revolving around the Qurʾān and adhere instead to the Prophet's *sunna*. These traditions thus provide a specific background for the much-debated emergence of the particular value of Muḥammad's *sunna*.

A survey of these traditions reveals major aspects of the Islamic controversies that revolve around the Qurʾān, along with the Israelite stigma that was attached to them. In Chapters 6 and 7, the tension between the Qurʾān and the *sunna* is discussed in connection with Khārijī dissent, to which an Israelite stigma is attached by means of the *firaq* tradition, which equates the Israelite schism with the Islamic one. Allusion is made here to the parallel tension among Jews between written and oral Torah, which seems to be the origin of the Israelite stigma of the Khawārij. In Chapter 8, reference is made to the Shīʿi and the Qadarī dissension, to which an Israelite stigma is attached by means of the *sunna* statement, which equates the evil ways of the Israelites with those of the Muslims. In Chapter 9, reference is again made to the Qadarīs as well as to others who spread dissension among Muslims; this discord stemmed from controversies over the reading and interpretation of the Qurʾān, as well as from relying on apocryphal scriptures. The Israelite stigma is now attached to them by means of the *halaka* statement, which equates the worldly punishment of the Israelites with that of the Muslims. Chapter 10 deals with traditions applying to the above sinners among the Muslims the Qurʾānic Israelite fate of punitive metamorphosis into apes and pigs. Thus, Muslims guilty of Israelite sins are also liable to Israelite punishment.

In the different chapters, special attention is given to the Children of Israel as seen by the Shīʿis. The relevant traditions show that, while the Sunnis attached an Israelite stigma to Shīʿis and other unorthodox trends, the Shīʿis, for their part, attached the same stigma to the Sunnis, while seeing themselves as preserving among the Muslims the honourable heritage of the Israelite prophets.

The Summary draws together the various findings of the book, sorting them out according to the major themes of the discussion, namely, the Children of Israel, the Arab believers, the Bible and the Qurʾān.

The Summary closes with an epilogue that touches upon the problem of the chronology of the evolving Islamic self-image as implied throughout the chapters, and provides the external considerations which have determined the structure of this book.

Excursus A examines the survival of the Jewish myth of the Lost Tribes in dietary law pertaining to the meat of mice and lizards. Excursus B examines an additional example of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār's role as the provider of Biblical links designed to anchor the history of the Islamic *umma* in Biblical prophecies. A prophecy from Genesis about Ishmael's twelve princes is applied to Muslim leaders, and the various stages of its Islamic transformation are studied here. Both chapters supply additional examples of the tension between the Bible and the Qurʾān.

PART I

THE BIBLE: VIRTUOUS ISRAELITES

CHAPTER 1

ARAB-JEWISH MESSIANISM: SYRIA

The study of the Islamic self-image, as reflected in the Islamic historical perception, should begin with the literary analysis of traditions describing the Arab conquests (*futūh*),¹ because military campaigns were the means by which Islam first manifested itself in world history.² Among the traditions describing the Arab conquests, there are some which deal with the Children of Israel and establish a direct link between the role in history played by them and by the Arab believers. These traditions are therefore most revealing as far as the Islamic self-image is concerned.

The traditions about the Children of Israel which pertain to the Arab conquests fall into two subgroups. One subgroup describes the conquests in Arabia during Muḥammad's time, and the other subgroup deals with the military clash with the Byzantines outside of Arabia which took place in the time of later caliphs. The chronological order of the events described in these traditions ought to have led us to begin with the traditions about Muḥammad, but I have decided to follow another chronology, that of historical perception, or, of self-image. This chronology entails that the traditions about the clash with the Byzantines be discus-

¹ Considerable work has already been done on the literary development of the *futūh* traditions. See especially Albrecht Noth and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Early Islamic Historical Tradition: a Source-Critical Study*, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton, 1994). See also Lawrence I. Conrad, "The Conquest of Arwād: a Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East", in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), 317-401.

² For warfare as a major factor in the rise of Islam, see especially Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987), 243-46.

sed first, for the following reason: all the available texts are the product of historiographers who flourished in the Umayyad period at the earliest, which means that their work must have been done under the influence of what they already knew about the Islamic achievements up to their own time. It follows that the texts we read today, in which a meaningful perception of world history is discerned, were created by people well aware of the sweeping Islamic conquests outside of Arabia.

Hence what they tell us about Muḥammad in the context of world history must have been formed under the impact of later events, because as long as the religion known as “Islam” was confined to Arabia, the “Muslims”, that is, the faithful Arabs, were not yet part of world history, and so could hardly have formed a meaningful historical perception at that level. Even if in Muḥammad’s days the Muslims already aspired to changing the history of the world, they had not yet done it. World history was only changed in the period of the *futūḥ* outside Arabia, while in Muḥammad’s days, the changes affected by warfare remained within the Arabian sphere of the Ḥijāzī tribes. Old empires were still intact.

It follows that when looking for the first stages of the evolution of the Islamic perception on world history, traditions about Arabia should not be studied first. Rather, one should begin with the events that had the first impact on the historiographical perception of the historiographers, that is, the *futūḥ* outside Arabia. The conquest of the Holy Land left not only the first, but also the greatest impact on the evolving Islamic historical perception.

The Historical Clash with the Byzantines

The narrative of the Arab anti-Byzantine campaign has two conceptual stages, historical and eschatological. The historical stage pertains to al-Shām, that is, Syria and Palestine. These were the regions which the Arab believers actually conquered from the Byzantines.³ The eschatological stage applies to the rest of the Byzantine regions and mainly to Constantinople, which the Muslims failed to conquer until 1453, but never

³ For the history of the Arab conquest of Syria and Palestine see e.g. Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), 91–155; Moshe Gil, *History of Palestine*, 634–1099, trans. Ethel Broido (Cambridge, 1992).

stopped dreaming of capturing, in the process turning the dream into the focus of their messianic hopes.

The historical as well as the eschatological levels of the anti-Byzantine campaign reveal the dependence of Islamic historiography on Jewish models, and this development is reflected in traditions pertaining to the Children of Israel. Beginning with the historical phase, the relevant traditions describe the Jews as welcoming the Arab invasion of Palestine with messianic euphoria, and as seeing in it a renewed exodus and return to the Promised Land. This implies appropriation of Jewish messianic ideas and their incorporation into the Islamic story of the conquest where they have become the major retrospective justification of the Arab invasion.

In the Bible, the idea of the Exodus covers the entire sequence of events from Abraham, to whom God promises in posterity to give the land of Canaan, through Moses, elected by God to liberate Israel from slavery in Egypt, till the conquest of the Promised Land by Joshua the son of Nun. The Exodus marks the election of the Children of Israel as God's chosen people, and it also serves as a messianic model for the future deliverance of Israel from exile.⁴

The Islamic traditions which have applied the idea of the Exodus to the Arab invasion of al-Shām revolve around the personage of Ka^cb al-Aḥbār (d. AH 32), a well-known Jew who came to Syria from Yemen and lived in Ḥimṣ. He is said to have been the protégé of Mu^cāwiya, the first Umayyad caliph of Syria. There are various versions about the date and circumstances of his conversion to Islam,⁵ and according to the traditions discussed below, he embraced Islam in Palestine during the days of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the caliph in whose time the Arabs conquered Jerusalem from the Byzantines. A tradition recorded in Ibn A^ctham's *Futūḥ*⁶ describes a meeting between Ka^cb and ʿUmar which takes place

⁴ Exodus 3:6–17; Deuteronomy 4:34, 7:6–8; Isaiah 11:15–16, 51:9–11, 63:11–14; Jeremiah 11:4; Micah 7:15, etc.

⁵ Israel Wolfensohn (Ben Zeev), *Ka^cb al-Aḥbār und seine Stellung im Ḥadīṭ und in der islamischen Legendenliteratur* (Frankfurt, 1933), 16–20. See also Moshe Perlmann, "A Legendary Story of Ka^cb al-Aḥbār's Conversion to Islam", *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume* (New York, 1953), 85–99; Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, 96–97.

⁶ On Ibn A^ctham see Conrad, "Arwād", 349 n. 90.

in Jerusalem shortly after the Arabs have taken control of it.⁷ It revolves around the axis of the mutual recitation of scriptures. ʿUmar quotes to Kaʿb a Qurʾānic verse, and Kaʿb quotes to ʿUmar a Biblical text.

The Qurʾānic verse which Kaʿb hears is Sūrat al-Nisāʾ (4):47. In it, the People of the Book are requested to believe in the revealed book of God (= the Qurʾān) because it confirms (*muṣaddiq*) their own scriptures. This is followed by a threat of dreadful punishment.⁸ On hearing this divine demand, Kaʿb embraces Islam and immediately quotes to ʿUmar a passage from the Torah, and thus a structure of mutual attestation is created: while the Qurʾānic passage is adduced to show that Islam corresponds to the Biblical annunciation, the Torah is adduced to illustrate and confirm that annunciation. The passage which Kaʿb quotes from the Torah foretells the Arab conquest of the Holy Land by ʿUmar, and describes his followers. The passage reads thus:

This land, in which the Children of Israel once dwelt, will be opened up (i.e. conquered) by God at the hand of a man of the righteous, compassionate to the believers and fierce to the unbelievers. He says in private what he says in public, and his word and deed are equal. The nearest to him and the farthest from him have equal rights with him. His followers are people believing in one god, devout (*ruhbān*) at night and heroes at daylight, merciful, helpful and devoted one to another. They cleanse their private parts with water and wear loincloths. Their scriptures (*anājiluhum*) are in their breasts (*fī sudūrihim*), and their alms (*ṣadaqātuhum*) are in their bellies (*fī buṭūnihim*). Their tongues are wet with the praise of God's greatness, holiness and glory, and they praise God in all circumstances, and on the plains and on the mountains. They are the first community that will enter Paradise.⁹

On hearing the words of the Torah, ʿUmar prostrates himself and says: "Oh people of Islam, rejoice, because God has kept His promise to you,

⁷ On the traditions describing ʿUmar's visit to Palestine see Heribert Busse, "ʿUmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), 73–119; *idem*, "ʿUmar's Image as the Conqueror of Jerusalem", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986), 149–68; Gil, *History of Palestine*, nos. 81–82.

⁸ *Yā ayyuhā lladhīna ütū l-kitāba, āminū bi-mā nazzalnā muṣaddiqan li-mā maʿakum min qabli an naṭmisa wujūhan fa-naruddahā ʿalā adbārihā...*

⁹ Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, I, 228.

and has given you victory over your enemy and bequeathed the land to you.”

This tradition comprises a mixture of Biblical and Qurʾānic elements. The Qurʾānic impact is detected in the description of the Arab believers as “merciful, helpful and devoted one to another”. This echoes Sūrat al-Faḥ (48):29, in which Muḥammad and his followers are said to have been described in the Torah as “hard against the unbelievers, merciful one to another”. The same applies to ʿUmar, whom Kaʿb’s statement describes as “compassionate to the believers and fierce to the unbelievers”. The phrase “their scriptures are in their breasts” echoes Sūrat al-ʿAnkabūt (29):49, which speaks about “clear signs in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge”. Some interpreted this as referring to the Muslims who know their scripture by heart, in contrast to the others who recite their scriptures while looking at written copies (*naẓaran*).¹⁰ The line “their alms are in their bellies” means that the Muslims take their alms and eat of them. This probably refers to the Qurʾānic ruling that one’s expiation (*kaffāra*) is to feed the poor (e.g. Qurʾān 5:89), which means that their alms and expiatory gifts return to them and remain with them. The statement that “they cleanse their private parts with water” is derived from the elements of what is considered to be the primordial heritage of Abraham. The elements are recorded in traditions forming part of the exegesis of Sūrat al-Baqara (2):124, in which God tests Abraham “with certain words”, and he “fulfils” them. Some traditions say that Abraham’s trial included washing away with water the remains of excrement and urine.¹¹ The same seems also to apply to the words that they “wear loincloths”. Abraham is said to have been instructed not to let his body be indecently exposed while prostrating himself in prayer, and he therefore put on drawers (*sarāwīl*).¹²

However, the Qurʾānic touch detected in Kaʿb al-Aḥbār’s statement is only an over-layer applied to its essence, which draws directly on the Bible. The Biblical origin of Kaʿb’s statement (and perhaps also of

¹⁰ E.g. Huwwārī, III, 308; Māwardī, *Nukat*, IV, 287 (from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī).

¹¹ E.g. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 414–15, the traditions of Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān (Yemeni, d. AH 101) ← Ibn ʿAbbās, and of Qatādā ibn Diʿāma (Baṣran, d. AH 117).

¹² Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 115 (from Wakiʿ).

Qurʾān 48:29)¹³ can be detected with considerable certainty. The origin seems to be found in Isaiah 42:1–13, in which this prophet describes the emergence of the Servant of God. In the first part of this passage, Isaiah says:

1. ...He shall bring forth judgement to the gentiles. 2. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgement unto truth. 4. He shall not fall nor be discouraged till he has set judgement in the earth....

The Arabian link of this passage is provided in the subsequent part, in which Isaiah describes the people of Kedar (= Arabs—U.R.) as those who “give glory unto the Lord and declare His praise in the islands” (vv. 11–12). This is, no doubt, the origin of Kaʿb’s description of the followers of the Arabian leader conquering the land of Israel, about whom he says that “their tongues are wet with the praise of God’s greatness, holiness and glory”.

Kaʿb’s statement to ʿUmar is very similar to that contained in a tradition of the Syrian Shahr ibn Ḥawshab (d. AH 100); it is recorded in al-Azdī’s *Futūḥ al-Shām*,¹⁴ as well as in Ibn Ḥubaysh’s *Ghazawāt*.¹⁵ In yet another tradition of Shahr, Kaʿb discovers the same Biblical description of the Muslims in scrolls bequeathed to him by his father; this time, however, their leader is not ʿUmar but the Prophet himself. The Prophet’s description reveals an even closer affinity with Isaiah. While Isaiah says about the Servant of God (v. 2) that he “shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street”, the Prophet is described in

¹³ It is unclear to me why Patricia Crone says about this version of Kaʿb’s speech that it “has now lost its messianic content and Biblical flavour to become ʿArab *sajʿ*” (Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: the Evolution of the Islamic Polity* [Cambridge, 1980], 208 in n. 60).

¹⁴ Azdī, *Futūḥ*, 262. On this compilation see Lawrence I. Conrad, “Al-Azdī’s History of the Arab Conquests in Bilād al-Shām: Some Historiographical Observations”, in *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām During the Early Islamic Period Up to 40 A.H./640 A.D.*, I (Amman, 1987), 28–62.

¹⁵ Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Ghazawāt*, I, 312. See also ps.-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, I, 153; Ka-lāʿī, *Iktifāʿ*, III, 298.

the scrolls as one who is “not crude nor coarse, and he does not raise his voice in the streets”.¹⁶

Summing up, Ibn A^ctham’s account about the meeting between Ka^cb al-Aḥbār and ʿUmar tells us some important things about the manner in which early Islamic historiographers chose to remember the Arab conquest of Palestine, and especially the attitude of the Jews (as represented by Ka^cb) to this event. First, the Islamic conquest is the outcome of a divine promise recorded in the Torah. Second, the Jews recognise the fact that the Arab conquest has fulfilled that promise. And third, the Jews see in the Arab conquest a second link in a series of holy wars beginning with the initial conquest of Palestine, that of the Biblical Children of Israel; this is why the tradition deems it important to include in the supposed text of the Torah a statement to the effect that the Children of Israel once dwelt in that land. This means that Ka^cb al-Aḥbār, who quotes this text, sees in the Arab invasion a renewed version of the Israelite conquest of Canaan.

This perception of the conquest exhibits the adoption of Biblical–messianic notions which, in their new Islamic environment, were designed to serve apologetic Umayyad needs and mainly to legitimise the Islamic presence in the Holy Land. These notions were built into the story of the conquest of al-Shām, which was thus turned into a messianic act representing a new exodus and marking Jewish deliverance. This apologetic device forms a retrospective delineation of the conquest, and is based on a universal perception of the community; it consists of Arab as well as Jewish believers, to whom God revealed Himself through His prophets, and they all share a messianic vision of the liberation of the Holy Land from the Byzantine grip. The same apologetic perception of the conquest of Palestine is also reflected in the fact that Muslim historiographers found it important to preserve and disseminate reports about assistance extended by local Jews to the Arab troops fighting the Byzan-

¹⁶ Azdi, *Futūḥ*, 260; Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Ghazawāt*, I, 311; ps.-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, I, 153; Kalāʿi, *Iktifāʾ*, III, 297. For more versions of Muḥammad’s description see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 30–31. On the relationship of Ka^cb’s Biblical description of Muḥammad to Isaiah see already Wolfensohn, *Ka^cb al-Aḥbār*, 19.

tines in Palestine,¹⁷ and about the Jewish warm welcome of ʿUmar, whom they reportedly called the “redeemer” (*al-fārūq*).¹⁸

As for Kaʿb, he serves to provide the ideological grounding for the conquest of al-Shām; he readily recites the Biblical description of the Islamic *umma*, which implies that he admits that the Arab invasion represents a sacred scheme predicted in the Bible. In this setting, he retains his Israelite affiliation, but realises that the true message of the Torah obliges him to embrace Islam. This means that Moses’ Torah and Muḥammad’s Qurʾān coexist in his religious disposition, and this is explicitly stated in the following anecdote about him. Kaʿb meets another Jewish rabbi who rebukes him for having abandoned the religion of Moses, and for having followed Muḥammad’s religion instead. Kaʿb replies: “I adhere to the religion of Moses, and [at the same time] I have followed Muḥammad’s religion”.¹⁹

Kaʿb is portrayed here as what one could be tempted to call a “Judeo-Muslim”, that is, an Islamised Jew. This designation (which is obviously inspired by the well-known label “Judeo-Christian”) will be used here not as a name for a real trend among the Jews (although such a trend could have existed), but rather as a signal of the Islamic universal perception of the faith. This perception discerns among the Jews groups of believers and regards them as forming an integral part of the community of the faithful. An explicit statement of this perception is contained in the report mentioned above of Shahr ibn Ḥawshab, which describes how

¹⁷ For which see Wolfensohn, *Kaʿb al-Aḥbār*, 25–26; Gil, *History of Palestine*, nos. 70, 72; Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: the Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton, 1995), 48–54. Cf. Stefan Leder, “The Attitude of the Population, Especially the Jews, towards the Arab-Islamic Conquest of Bilād al-Shām and the Question of their Role Therein”, *Die Welt des Orients* 18 (1987), 64–71. For similar reports on the non-Islamic side, see Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: a Study and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997), 528.

¹⁸ For ʿUmar’s function as a redeemer in Islamic tradition see further Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977), 5; Suliman Bashear, “The Title *Fārūq* and its Association with ʿUmar I”, *Studia Islamica* 72 (1990), 65–70.

¹⁹ Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXI, 184: *anā ʿalā dīn Mūsā wa-tabīʿtu dīn Muḥammad (s)*.

Ka^ʿb discovered the description of the Muslims in his father’s scrolls. The report opens with the declaration that Ka^ʿb belonged to “the believers among the people of the Torah in God’s messenger (= Muḥammad)” (*min mu^ʿminī ahl al-tawrāt bi-rasūl Allāh*). This is followed by the statement that he was one of the scholars among his people (*min ʿulamā^ʿihim*), which implies that his belief in Muḥammad originated in his knowledge of the supposed Biblical annunciation of the Muslims.²⁰

ʿAbd al-Malik

Another instance of Jewish messianism becoming part of Islamic (i.e. Umayyad) apologetic historiography is exposed in further traditions about Ka^ʿb. Here he traces back to Biblical prophecies the most imposing Arabian enterprise in Jerusalem: the construction of the Dome of the Rock by the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik. This was completed *ca.* 72/691–92. Islamic tradition says that Ka^ʿb al-Aḥbār had already discovered in the Bible a prophecy concerning ʿAbd al-Malik’s enterprise. Ka^ʿb is said to have found (*aṣāba*²¹) in the Torah the following statement: “Rejoice (*abshirī*²²), Jerusalem, because I am about to send my servant ʿAbd al-Malik to build and decorate you”.²³ In another version, the Rock is called “the Temple” (*al-haykal*), and the statement continues: “...I shall surely restore to Bayt al-Maqdis its first kingdom, and I shall crown it with gold and silver and gems...and David is the King of the Children of Israel.”²⁴

In basing the construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Bible, Islamic tradition again used Jewish messianic aspirations, which this time are focused on the rebuilding of the ruins of Jerusalem as expressed, for example, in Jeremiah 30:18 and 31:4, 38–40. Explicit hope for the recon-

²⁰ Azdi, *Futūh*, 259. Cf. Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Ghazawāt*, I, 311 (about Ka^ʿb’s father).

²¹ Printed: *aṣāra*.

²² Printed: *aysirū*.

²³ Wāsiṭi, *Fadā’il*, no. 138.

²⁴ Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 50. The text is quoted in Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden, 1999), 162–63 (in a discussion of the historical background to the building of the Dome of the Rock). Cf. Moshe Sharon, “‘The Praises of Jerusalem’ as a Source for the Early History of Islam”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 49 (1992), 59.

struction of the Temple (*hekkhal*) by a specific person is also expressed, for example, in Zechariah 6:12–13, which seems to be echoed in Ka^cb's statement. These Jewish messianic dreams have been employed here to legitimise the erection of an Islamic sanctuary on the site of the Israelite Temple.

The Eschatological Clash with the Byzantines

Jewish messianism has also been employed in traditions pertaining to the eschatological phase of the clash with the Byzantines, namely, the fall of Constantinople, which became a messianic unfulfilled dream.

The traditions about Constantinople were mainly circulated in Ḥimṣ, where messianic expectations flourished in association with holy war on the nearby Byzantine front.²⁵ The Jews shared with the Arab believers the hope that Constantinople would fall, and the actual Umayyad attempts to conquer the city—although abortive—triggered off various Jewish messianic movements.²⁶

Islamic tradition has put the Jewish messianic dreams concerning the fall of Constantinople to good use. This comes out again in a tradition about the meeting between Ka^cb al-Aḥbār and ʿUmar in Jerusalem.²⁷ It was circulated by Rajāʾ ibn Ḥaywa (Syrian, d. AH 112). This time, Ka^cb tells the caliph that God sent to Constantinople a prophet, who stated:²⁸

Oh Constantinople, what have your people done to My House [in Jerusalem]. They destroyed it, and compared you to My Throne, and attributed to Me that which I have not said (*wa-taʿawwalū ʿalayya*). I have decreed that one day I shall make you bare (*jalḥāʾ*); no one will dwell in you, and no one will seek

²⁵ Wilferd Madelung, "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ in the Umayyad Age", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986), 141–85; Josef Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (6 vols., Berlin and New York, 1991–95), I, 65–69.

²⁶ This was already observed by Jacob Mann, whose findings are reported in "Proceedings of the American Oriental Society at the Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1927", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 47 (1927), 364.

²⁷ On this tradition see Busse, "ʿOmar b. al-Ḥattāb in Jerusalem", 92–94.

²⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 611–12 (I, 2409). Quoted in Madelung, "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ," 158–59.

shelter within you. [I shall destroy you] at the hands of the sons of al-Qādhir (= Kedar), Saba³ and Waddān....²⁹

The last part of this statement is also reported by the traditionist Rabi^ca al-Shāmi.³⁰

Biblical origins may be found again in Ka^cb's latter statement. Heribert Busse tried to trace it back to Ezekiel 27,³¹ but the parallelism already begins in Ezekiel 26, which opens a series of lamentations about Tyre (Hebrew: *Ṣōr*). God condemns Tyre for rejoicing at the fall of Jerusalem and for aspiring to benefit from the city's fall and become replenished (v. 2). Later on,³² the prince of Tyre is blamed for arrogantly saying: "I am a god, I sit in a seat of God". As punishment for Tyre's arrogance, God threatens to cause many nations to come up against her and destroy her walls and break down her towers. God will also "scrape her dust from her and make her like a bare rock (נצחיה סלע)".³³ Tyre will be destroyed at the hand of Nebuchadrezzar (i.e. Nebuchadnezzar), who will tread down her streets with the hoofs of his horses.³⁴ God then repeats His promise to make her "like a bare rock".³⁵

Ezekiel's prophecies about Tyre seem to be the origin of Ka^cb's statement about Constantinople. Tyre (Arabic: *Ṣūr*) was originally built on an off-shore island and was conquered by the Muslims alongside other coastal towns in ^cUmar's days.³⁶ Since the Arab conquest, its Biblical predicted fall could be applied to the Islamic anti-Byzantine campaign, and the model of its take-over could easily be expanded to Constantinople, which like Tyre was a fortified port almost entirely surrounded by water.

²⁹ The form Waddān is probably a misrepresentation of the Biblical Dedan, which is the name of Sheba's brother (e.g. Genesis 10:7). Cf. Busse, "'*c*Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem", 92 n. 72.

³⁰ Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, III, 612 (I, 2409).

³¹ Busse, "'*c*Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem", 93.

³² Ezekiel 28:2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 26:3–4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 26:13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26:14.

³⁶ E.g. Ibn A^ctham, *Futūh*, I, 264.

The parallel between Ezekiel's description of the arrogance and fall of Tyre and Ka^cb's statement about the arrogance and fall of Constantinople is indeed striking. The first part of Ka^cb's statement accuses the Byzantines of arrogantly aspiring to establish Constantinople as God's new worldly throne (*ʿarsh*), which means the replacement of Jerusalem by that city.³⁷ This is a clear reflection of Tyre's malicious joy at Jerusalem's misfortune, and of the arrogance of the prince of Tyre who believes he is sitting in a seat of God. The second part of Ka^cb's statement predicts that Constantinople will become *jalhāʿ*, which initially means "bald", and when said about land, means that its herbage has been eaten.³⁸ This has its origin in Ezekiel's recurrent threat against Tyre, that God will "scrape her dust from her" and make her desolate "like a bare rock".

The dependence of Ka^cb's statement on Ezekiel's Tyre is confirmed most explicitly in another version of his statement which, however, is detached from the immediate context of his meeting with ʿUmar. It is contained in a story about a certain Sa^cid ibn Jābir³⁹ who receives a scroll of Ka^cb from a member of the Umayyad family. The story has been recorded by Nu^cʿaym ibn Ḥammād (d. AH 229).⁴⁰ The text of the scroll begins with the statement that Şūr (= Tyre) is the city of the Rūm (= the Byzantines), and that it is called by many names.⁴¹ This means that the Biblical Tyre has been reinterpreted and became a name for Constantinople. The prophecy itself opens with the description of Şūr's arrogance and her aspiring to be God's seat, and with a threat to send against her people who are described as *ʿibādī al-ummiyyīn*: "My servants the *ummiyyūn*". This stands for the Arab believers and is a reflection of the

³⁷ For the Christian context of the transfer of sanctity from Jerusalem to Constantinople see Busse, "ʿOmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem", 93–94; Ofer Livne-Kafri, "Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), 125.

³⁸ Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. "j.l.h."

³⁹ Probably al-Saghāʿidhī. About him see Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), IX, 291. Cf. Madelung, "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ," 160 n. 80.

⁴⁰ Nu^cʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 299. Quoted in Madelung, "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ," 159 (without noting a possible Biblical origin).

⁴¹ *Qul li-Şūr wa-hiya madīnat al-Rūm wa-hiya tusammā bi-asmāʿ kathīra.*

Hebrew *goyim* used for “nations” in Ezekiel 26:3. The threat to make Şūr *jalhā*³ recurs in this version also, which, however, contains additional fragments that seem to have been gleaned from other Biblical passages. For example, the nations attacking Şūr are described in Ka^cb’s statement as lions emerging from the bushes, not being afraid of the voice of the shepherds who try to drive them away. This is derived from Isaiah 31:4, where a lion not afraid of shepherds represents God fighting the enemies of Jerusalem.

There are other similar versions of Ka^cb’s statement, with various additions and variations, one of which is transmitted by the Ḥimṣī Shurayḥ ibn ʿUbayd and the other by Khālīd ibn Ma^cdān.⁴² They both open with the statement that Constantinople rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem, which is obviously a representation of Ezekiel 26:2, and the threat to make Constantinople *jalhā*³ is also mentioned later on, though the name Şūr does not occur there.

On the whole, it is clear from these versions that a wide range of Biblical prophecies about the salvation of Jerusalem and the fall of her enemies could become a model for the literary messianic presentation of the Islamic anti-Byzantine campaign.

As for the version in which the statement of Ka^cb is voiced in front of ʿUmar in Jerusalem, in it the eschatological Islamic take-over of Constantinople has become a Biblical prophecy which a “Judeo-Muslim” recites to the Muslim caliph in the hope that he will fulfil it. Hence the spread of Islam is again perceived not only as part of a predestined divine scheme, but also as fulfilling Jewish messianic aspirations. The “Judeo-Muslim” appears as sharing the same hopes with the Arabs. The apologetic purpose of these texts is again clear enough, namely, to use Jewish messianic hopes for providing the anti-Byzantine campaign with the needed ideological cause.

⁴² Shurayḥ ibn ʿUbayd: Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 284. Quoted in Madelung, “Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ,” 160 n. 80. Khālīd ibn Ma^cdān: Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 342. On this version see Madelung, “Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ,” 159–60 n. 80; Busse, “ʿOmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem”, 92–93.

The Tribes of Israel and Constantinople

Islamic tradition adapted to the eschatological fall of Constantinople specific elements from Jewish messianism, mainly the anticipation of the return of the exiled tribes of Israel to the Promised Land. This is a central item in Jewish messianism; the tribes are expected to return to the Promised Land in a new exodus and restore the kingdom of the House of David. This hope is expressed already by several Biblical prophets⁴³ and forms part of later Jewish eschatology, which contains messianic visions describing the return and the gathering of the exiled tribes.⁴⁴

In the Islamic adaptation of this messianic dream, Constantinople has become the Promised Land to which the exiled tribes are about to return in an exodus at the end of days. The return of the tribes of Israel in an exodus to Constantinople is stated explicitly in a Ḥimṣī tradition recorded by Nu^ʿaym ibn Ḥammād and circulated by Ṣafwān ibn ^ʿAmr (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 100).⁴⁵ The tradition alludes to a Qur^ʿānic verse recorded in Sūrat al-Isrā^ʿ (17):104, which reads:

After him (i.e. Pharaoh) We said unto the Children of Israel: “Dwell in the land, and when the promise of the hereafter comes to pass, We shall send you forth together.”

The tradition about this verse contains a statement made again by Ka^ʿb al-Aḥbār. He says that the verse refers to two tribes (*sibtān*) of the Children of Israel who will take part in the “Great War” (*al-malḥama al-ʿuzmā*) and “assist the Muslims” (*..fa-yansurūna l-Islāma wa-ahlahu*).⁴⁶ The “Great War” is how Islamic eschatological tradition usually refers to the apocalyptic battle with the Byzantines, which is supposed to culminate in the fall of Constantinople. In Ka^ʿb’s statement, the Qur^ʿānic “promise of the hereafter” (*wa^ʿd al-ākhirā*) is perceived in a messianic sense and means the gathering of the tribes of Israel at the end of days.

⁴³ Hosea 1:10–11; Jeremiah 30–31; Ezekiel 37:15–28.

⁴⁴ *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*, II, 452 (s.v. “Aḥarit ha-yamim”), XXVII, 262–63 (s.v. “Aseret ha-shbatim”).

⁴⁵ Quoted already by Madelung, “Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ,” 159.

⁴⁶ Nu^ʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 296. The *isnād*: Ṣafwān ibn ^ʿAmr ← Abū l-Muthannā al-Umlūki (Damḍam. Ḥimṣī) ← Ka^ʿb.

Constantinople has become the place to which they are about to come together, where they will wage war, like the ancient war which they once waged in the land of Canaan. Although the tradition is recorded as exegesis on a Qurʾānic verse, it is unlikely that the Qurʾān itself is actually aware of the Jewish messianic anticipation of the return of the exiled tribes, so that Kaʿb’s statement seems to draw on independent non-Qurʾānic sources, which are based on Biblical or Midrashic notions. Nevertheless, the reading of these ideas into the Qurʾān makes this scripture share with the Bible the role of predicting a divine scheme that fulfils an Islamic version of Jewish messianic hopes.

The Biblical source of the tradition is indicated in the allusion to the number of the tribes coming to Constantinople. They are two only. This seems to echo the Biblical subgroup of two tribes and a half (the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh) who settled east of the Jordan River and were commanded by Joshua the son of Nun to pass before their brethren armed, and help them in their battles against the people of Canaan.⁴⁷ These tribes were included in the tribes of Israel who went in exile; Islamic tradition has re-defined their military duty as *jihād* against Constantinople. Thus, Constantinople has been included in the scope of the Promised Land, in the sense that it has become a destination of the returning Israelite tribes, who are expected to conquer it jointly with the Arab believers. The returning tribes have been portrayed here as “Judeo-Muslims”.

A further apocalypse of Kaʿb describing the eschatological battle for Constantinople speaks about “a group of the People of Moses” (*umma min qawm Mūsā*) that will witness the victory.⁴⁸ This latter designation is derived from another Qurʾānic verse, Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (7):159. This verse speaks about a “group” (*umma*) of righteous people living among the “people of Moses” (*qawm Mūsā*) and will be referred to here as “the Israelite *umma* verse”. It reads:

Among the people of Moses there is a group of people (*umma*) who guide by the truth and by it act with justice.

⁴⁷ Joshua 1:12–14.

⁴⁸ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 281.

This verse postulates that there are two groups among the people of Moses: the sinners and the righteous. Like the above-mentioned verse 17:104, the present verse does not seem to have a messianic connotation either; but exegesis has again extended to the Qurʾān the role of predicting the fulfilment of Jewish messianism. In the exegesis of the latter verse, yet another Ḥimṣī tradition appears identifying the righteous *umma* of the people of Moses as two tribes (*sibṭān*) who will assist the Muslims in the "Great War". The tradition is again of the Ḥimṣī Ṣafwān ibn ʿAmr.⁴⁹ Ṣafwān's tradition has linked the Israelite *umma* verse to the "Judeo-Muslim" tribes whose messianic goal is focused on the conquest of Constantinople.

The Lost Tribes

Further traditions about the tribes of Israel, recorded in the Islamic commentaries on the above Qurʾānic verses, draw on a specific aspect of the Jewish notions concerning the tribes who went into exile. The Babylonian Talmud mentions a river named *Sabaṭyon*, that is, a "Sabbatic River".⁵⁰ In Midrashic sources, it is often called *Sambaṭyon* and is regarded as the river beyond which the exiled tribes settled.⁵¹ It is described as a river of stones that runs all week and rests on Sabbath.⁵² A "Sabbatic River" is already mentioned by Josephus Flavius. It is located in Syria, and is thus called because it remains dry for six days and begins flowing on the seventh. Titus passed by this river with the captive Jews on his way back to Rome from Jerusalem.⁵³

The exiled tribes dwelling beyond the legendary river became the subject of a whole complex of myth. Travellers looked for their traces and claimed to have met them, and legendary reports were circulated about their wonderful life in their hidden and remote dwellings. Many of these stories were circulated on the authority of Eldad ha-Dani, who was

⁴⁹ Ibn Abi Ḥātim, V, 1588 (no. 8373. Printed *sultān* instead of the correct *sibṭān*); Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 136 (from Ibn Abi Ḥātim).

⁵⁰ *Sanhedrin* 65b.

⁵¹ E.g. *Bereshith Rabba* 73:6; *Bamidbar Rabba* 16:25.

⁵² *Bereshith Rabba* 11:5.

⁵³ Josephus Flavius, *Wars of the Jews*, 7:5 (1).

active at the end of the ninth century AD (*ca.* AH 280).⁵⁴ However, it will be shown below that Islam too left its mark on Eldad ha-Dani's reports about the Israelite tribes.

Islamic sources earlier than Eldad are already familiar with the Jewish myth of the Lost Tribes beyond the river, having adapted it to a specific Islamic context. All the relevant traditions appear again in the commentaries on the above Qurʾānic verses. Some of them are recorded in the commentaries on *Sūrat al-Isrāʾ* (17):104, which, as seen above, promises the Israelites that they will be sent forth together “when the promise of the hereafter comes to pass”. The traditions appear in one of the earliest commentaries of the Qurʾān which have come down to us, namely, that of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. AH 150).⁵⁵ Muqātil says that the verse addresses 70,000 of the Children of Israel who dwell beyond a river past China. They have come to China from Bayt al-Maqdis (= Jerusalem) after a journey of a year and a half. In their present location, they are isolated from the rest of the people beyond a river of running sand called *Ardaq* (var. *Ardaq*;⁵⁶ perhaps the correct form is *Azraq*⁵⁷), which “freezes” (*yajmud*) every Sabbath.

Muqātil describes the journey of the tribes to their remote abode with emblems borrowed from the Israelite Exodus from Egypt as described in the Old Testament. He says that the Children of Israel killed the prophets and worshipped idols, and therefore the believers among them prayed to God and asked Him to separate them from their rebellious brethren. Thereupon, God struck a tunnel (*sarab*) under the ground, from Bayt al-Maqdis to China; they went through it, and as they pushed on, the tunnel opened up before them and closed behind them. God made a pillar of fire for them (to show them the way), and sent them manna and quails (to

⁵⁴ About him see David J. Wasserstein, “Eldad ha-Dani and Prester John”, in C.F. Beckingham and B. Hamilton, eds., *Prester John, the Mongols and the Ten Lost Tribes* (Aldershot, 1996), 213–36.

⁵⁵ Muqātil, II, 553–54.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 68.

⁵⁷ A river (*nahar*, i.e. “canal”) named *Zaroq* is mentioned in the Talmud of Jerusalem (*Yebamoth* 8b), where it marks the border of the Babylonian exile (for the purpose of genealogy). However, the correct form is dubious and also appears as *Yazzoq* (*Qid-dushin* 43a).

eat). Thus, the journey of the Lost Tribes to their new abode represents a second exodus.

Later *tafsīr* compilations contain similar traditions, all recorded with reference to Sūrat al-A^ʿrāf (7):159, the Israelite *umma* verse. As seen above, this verse speaks about a “group” (*umma*) of righteous people living among the “people of Moses” (*qawm Mūsā*). Several traditions recorded in the commentaries on this verse identify the righteous *umma* among the people of Moses with the Lost Tribes. Some of the traditions were already noticed long ago by scholars who discovered in them the origin of Eldad ha-Dani’s story about the Lost Tribes, whom he too calls the “people of Moses”.⁵⁸ However, more recent scholars writing about Eldad are no longer aware of the Islamic material.⁵⁹ One is a tradition of ʿĀmir al-Sha^ʿbi (Kūfan, d. AH 103); it states that the righteous *umma* of the people of Moses are “servants” (*ʿibād*) of God who dwell beyond al-Andalus; they do not know that God could ever be disobeyed, and they lead a leisurely life in a country of endless wealth.⁶⁰ In this version, the Lost Tribes dwell in al-Andalus, which marks the western end of the medieval world. In his commentary on the Israelite *umma* verse, al-Ṭabari (d. AH 310) has recorded a tradition on the authority of al-Suddī (Ismāʿil ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Kūfan, d. AH 128), to the effect that the river separating the righteous people of Moses from the rest of the world is one of honey (*shahd*).⁶¹ This is probably a reflection of Exodus 16:31, where it is stated that the manna tasted like wafers made with honey. The description of the river in the later Islamic sources is usually closer to the standard one; it is one of sand,⁶² or one which lies beyond sandy hills.⁶³

⁵⁸ Abraham Epstein, *Eldad ha-Dani: Seine Berichte über die X Stämme und deren Ritus* (Pressburg, 1891 [in Hebrew]), 15–16.

⁵⁹ This seems to be the case with Steven Wasserstrom, for whom the account of Eldad ha-Dani about the people of Moses is entirely Jewish (Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 63, 76).

⁶⁰ Ibn Abi Ḥātim, V, 1588 (no. 8374); Suyūṭi, *Durr*, III, 136 (from Ibn Abi Ḥātim).

⁶¹ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, IX, 60. See also Tha^ʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (Ahmet III, 76/II), fol. 103a–103b; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 256. Cf. Ibn ʿAtīyya, VII, 183. But see Ibn Abi Ḥātim, V, 1588 (no. 8372): *nahr min sahl, yaʿnī min raml yajrī*.

⁶² E.g. Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, VII, 302.

⁶³ *Mā warāʾ raml ʿālij*. Samarqandī, I, 575.

The link established by Islamic exegesis between the Lost Tribes and the Israelite *umma* verse lends them a “Judeo-Muslim” touch. The tribes are identified with the righteous *umma* among the people of Moses, which means that they maintain the true faith as professed by Moses and endorsed by the Qurʾān.

Some of our traditions expect the Lost Tribes to perform a military task when they return, which seems to resume an indirect link to Constantinople. In his commentary on the Israelite *umma* verse, Muqātil says that the virtuous *umma* among the Children of Israel dwells beyond China, and that the sand-river which separates it from the rest of the world is an extension of the River Jordan. When Jesus the son of Mary descends, Joshua the son of Nun will join him.⁶⁴

The role of Joshua here is presumably the same as his Biblical one, that is, to lead the tribes of Israel in battle. In the Old Testament this battle is for the Promised Land, following the Exodus from Egypt. Now it is an eschatological battle which Joshua wages together with Jesus.

The link between Joshua and Jesus (which could be inspired by the affinity of their names) is significant because Jesus too has a military task, which is to defeat the Dajjāl (Antichrist). The clash between Jesus and the Dajjāl is expected to take place in Palestine (not far away from the gate called *Bāb Ludd*, located either in Jerusalem or in Lydda),⁶⁵ although other traditions say that the Muslims themselves will kill the Dajjāl there.⁶⁶ As for the time of the clash, a tradition of the Prophet says that it will take place during the conquest of Constantinople, when the Muslims will start dividing the booty. At that stage, they will hear that the Dajjāl has attacked their families in their absence, and they will return to Syria where Jesus will descend and face the Dajjāl, causing him to disappear like salt in water.⁶⁷

Beyond the specific details of the clash between Jesus and the Dajjāl, the link between Jesus and Joshua, as established in Muqātil’s tradition,

⁶⁴ Muqātil, II, 68.

⁶⁵ E.g. Abū Dāwūd, II, 432 (36:14), etc.

⁶⁶ Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, III, 607–608 (I, 2403). And see Gil, *History of Palestine*, no. 80.

⁶⁷ E.g. Muslim, VIII, 175–76 (52, *Bāb fī faṭḥ Qusṭantīniyya*); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6813.

demonstrates again the process in which the eschatological level of the Islamic anti-Byzantine campaign attained a Jewish messianic attire, with a military task being assigned to the “Judeo-Muslim” tribes of Israel.

Constantinople and the Biblical Models

The traditions about the return of the tribes of Israel as warriors participating in the Islamic battle for Constantinople are not the only indication that the eschatological fall of this city was visualised as a renewed Israelite exodus. There are more traditions to the same effect, which employ Biblical elements gleaned from the description of the Israelite conquest of Canaan.

To begin with, the well-known pattern of the fall of the walls of Jericho was built into the apocalyptic description of the fall of Constantinople. The pattern appears in a tradition that gained entrance into the canonical body of *ḥadīth*. It is a tradition of the Prophet recorded by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*,⁶⁸ which describes an apocalyptic battle against an unnamed city usually interpreted as Constantinople. The battle is attended by “the children of Isaac (Ishāq)”. The tradition has a Medinan *isnād* with the Companion Abū Hurayra (d. AH 57),⁶⁹ and in it the Prophet asks the believers: “Have you heard about a town, part of which faces the land and another the sea?” They say: “Yes”. Then the Prophet states that the Hour (*al-sāʿa*) will not come until that city is invaded by 70,000 of the sons of “the children of Isaac”. They will neither raise arms nor will they shoot their arrows, but will only call out: “There is no god but Allāh, and Allāh is the greatest”. Then one part of the city will collapse. It will be the one facing the sea. They will then cry out again: “There is no god but Allāh, and Allāh is the greatest”, and the other part of the town will collapse. They will then cry out for the third time: “There is no god but Allāh, and Allāh is the greatest”, and the way will open up before them, and they will enter the city and plunder it. Then

⁶⁸ Muslim, VIII, 187-88 (52, *Bāb lā taqūmu l-sāʿa ḥattā yamurra l-rajul bi-qabri l-rajul...*). See also *Mustadrak*, IV, 476; Dānī, *Fitan*, VI, no. 623 (p. 1141); *Kanz*, XIV, no. 38775.

⁶⁹ The *isnād*: Thawr ibn Zayd al-Dīlī (Medinan, d. AH 135) ← Abū l-Ghayth, Sālim, a *mawlā* of Ibn al-Muṭīʿ (Medinan) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

they will hear that the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl) has emerged, and they will leave everything and depart.

The “children of Isaac”, who perform the ritual that brings down the walls of the city, caused much trouble to Muslim scholars who tended to assume that “Ishmael” should be read instead of “Isaac”.⁷⁰ However, all the versions of Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* have “Ishāq”, which strongly suggests that the text is not corrupt. According to Ibn Kathīr (d. AH 774), the children of Isaac are the Rūm, who are the descendants of Esau the son of Isaac, and hence are the cousins of the Children of Israel who descend from Jacob the son of Isaac. He says that their participation in the battle means that among the Rūm there will be at the end of days a righteous group which will be even better than the Children of Israel.⁷¹ Ibn Kathīr actually speaks here about a “Christo-Muslim” group which replaces the “Judeo-Muslim” Israelites of the traditions discussed above. Thus, the Islamic universal perception of the *umma* could include some Christians as well, such as those who shared anti-Byzantine feelings with the Jews of Syria and Palestine.

A further tradition describing the fall of Constantinople according to the model of Jericho uses yet another scene from the Israelite Exodus, namely the crossing of the Red Sea. The latter event is also reproduced in the Qur’ān.⁷² The tradition is cited from the Ḥimṣī Yaḥyā ibn Abī °Amr al-Saybānī (d. AH 148) and is again traced back to Ka°b al-Aḥbār. It describes a scene in a campaign of the Muslims against the Byzantines. The Muslim commander attempts to use water of a river near Constantinople for ritual ablution, but whenever he approaches the river, it retreats. He then says to his soldiers: “Move on, because God has split the water for you like He did for the Children of Israel.” They then charge, calling out *Allāhu akbar* three times, and the towers of the city collapse.⁷³

⁷⁰ See editor’s note in Dānī, *Fitan*, VI, 1141 n. 1.

⁷¹ Ibn Kathīr, *Fitan*, I, 46.

⁷² See mainly Qur’ān 26:52–68. For further references see Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart, 1971), 18 (on 2:50).

⁷³ Dānī, *Fitan*, VI, no. 621. See also Nu°aym ibn Ḥammād, 303–304.

The Evidence from Jewish Documents

Jewish documents of the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsīd period corroborate the evidence of the above Islamic material, showing that Jews too shared the idealised memory of the Arab conquest as a common Jewish–Arab messianic enterprise. They indicate that not only did the Arabs receive from the Jews messianic ideas, but the Jews too were affected by the increased messianic euphoria that the Arab invasion inspired.⁷⁴

The Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿon

The most famous of such Jewish documents is perhaps the *Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿon ben Yohay*.⁷⁵ Scholars have identified this document as stemming from early ʿAbbāsīd times and as containing passages referring to Umayyad history. In the relevant passage, Rabbi Shimʿon sees that the kingdom of Ishmael (i.e. the Muslims) is about to come, and complains that the evil of the kingdom of Edom (= Rome) was already bad enough for the Jews, but now they are going to suffer even more under the Ishmaelites. To this, the angel accompanying him answers:

Do not fear, son of man, for the Holy One, blessed be He, only brings the kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness. He raises up over them a prophet according to His will, and will conquer the land for them and they will come and restore it in greatness, and there will be great terror between them and the sons of Esau (i.e. the Romans).⁷⁶

As already observed by various scholars, the Jewish author of this passage sees in the rise and spread of Islam the preliminaries to messianic redemption.⁷⁷ Such a notion seems to indicate that certain Jews shared

⁷⁴ For Jewish messianism being heightened by the rise of Islam, see e.g. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 28–29.

⁷⁵ Studied in Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 4–5, with reference to Bernard Lewis, “An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13/2 (1950), 308–38.

⁷⁶ The translation of this passage is by Lewis, “Apocalyptic Vision”, 321–22. The passage is also quoted in another translation in Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 53. See also Gil, *History of Palestine*, nos. 76, 77; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 527.

⁷⁷ Lewis, “Apocalyptic Vision”, 323.

with the Arabs the same idealised memory of the Arabian conquest, although other Jewish apocalyptic texts, in which Muḥammad is disparaged as a “crazy man, possessed by a spirit”,⁷⁸ show that this was not common to all Jews.

The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer

There is yet another Jewish passage which reveals the relationship between the Arab conquests and Jewish messianism. This pertains to the eschatological stage of the Arab conquest, that is, the battle for Constantinople. The passage is found in the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*:

Rabbi Ishmael also said: Three wars of trouble will the sons of Ishmael in the future wage on the earth in the latter days, as it is said: “For they fled away from the swords” (Isaiah 21:15)...one in the forest of Arabia...another on the sea...and one in the great city which is in Rome, which will be more grievous than the other two.... From there the Son of David shall flourish and see the destruction of these and these, and thence will He come to the land of Israel, as it is said: “Who is this that comes from Edom” (Isaiah 63:1).⁷⁹

As already observed by Jacob Mann,⁸⁰ the author of this passage “expressed the hope that the Messiah would appear in Rome (i.e. New Rome = Constantinople) to witness the mutual destruction of Esau and Ishmael”. It should be added that this passage sees in the final destruction of the Byzantine capital the starting point of the renewed Jewish exodus to the Promised Land, which is why the Messiah is expected to go from Constantinople (Isaiah’s “Edom”) to the Land of Israel. Nevertheless, Islam too already appears in this passage as a false religion, one which the author hopes will be destroyed together with the Byzantines.⁸¹ This means that the passage is not written in a “Judeo-Muslim” manner, but

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 323. See also Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 531.

⁷⁹ *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer* (trans. and ed. Gerald Friedlander, New York, 1965), 222. Cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 315–16.

⁸⁰ “Proceedings of the American Oriental Society at the Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1927”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 47 (1927), 364.

⁸¹ On the hostility towards Islam as revealed in the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* see Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 155 n. 26.

the role of the anticipated Arab warfare against Constantinople in Jewish messianism remains clear enough.⁸²

The Evidence from Christian Sources

Biblical messianism was employed not only by Muslims sharing with Jews an anti-Byzantine agenda, but also by Christians hoping for the reinstatement of Byzantine domination in the Promised Land and fearing for the fate of Constantinople. After all, the Christians saw themselves as *Verus Israel*, which means that Biblical prophecies about the deliverance of Israel could be taken as denoting Christian deliverance from the Arabs. An easy access to the relevant Christian writings has now been provided thanks to the publication of Robert Hoyland's *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, and a few brief examples may be mentioned here. To begin with, Psalms 78:65–66, which speaks about the Lord rising to smite the enemies of Israel, is probably alluded to in the Syriac *Apocalypse of ps.-Methodius* to describe the eschatological war against the Arabs.⁸³

However, the Christian texts do not see in the Jews partners in a common messianic goal, but rather regard them as enemies of God. This difference between the Islamic and the Christian attitude towards the Jews is revealed in the *Greek Daniel*, in which the apocalyptic role of the tribes of Israel is again revealed. In this document, the “great war” of the Byzantines against the Arabs besieging Constantinople is described. This apocalypse speaks of the coming of “a leader from Judaea named Dan and then the Antichrist, both accepted as kings by the Jews, who proceed to afflict the Christians”.⁸⁴ Dan is originally the name of one of the Lost Tribes (Eldad ha-Dani is named after it), which seems to indicate that this text preserves a reminiscence of the notion that the tribes of Israel will take part in the eschatological battle for Constantinople. In the Christian context the tribes assist the Antichrist, unlike the above Islamic texts in which they assist the Muslims.

⁸² For more such Jewish messianic texts see Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, 93–94.

⁸³ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 297.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 298.

Summing up, the above material preserves a very early stage in the development of the Islamic historiographical self-image, and constitutes a typical product of the situation in Syria where Jews and Arabs were brought into direct contact. Islamic tradition describing these contacts appropriated from the Jews Biblical and post-Biblical messianic notions and employed them to legitimise the conquest and the expulsion of the Byzantines. The legitimisation was achieved by describing the conquest as a divine scheme anticipated in the Bible and endorsed by Jews such as Ka'b, whom the traditions portray as a "Judeo-Muslim". The result was a universal perception of the faith which incorporates all those to whom God revealed Himself through prophets. According to this perception Jews and Arabs share the sacred mission of carrying out the divine scheme, which is to renew the ancient Exodus and to drive the Byzantines out of the Promised Land. The messianic goal is shared with the Arabs not only by contemporary "Judeo-Muslims", but also by the Biblical Children of Israel whom our texts expect to assist the Muslims in the eschatological anti-Byzantine holy war. On the literary level, both the Bible and the Qur'ān appear in these traditions in complete concord, as both scriptures are invoked to confirm the Jewish–Arab messianic mission.

CHAPTER 2

THE ISRAELITES AND ARABIA

The fact that al-Shām was the site of the Promised Land and the focus of Jewish messianic aspirations determined the formation of the universal aspect of the Islamic self-image in that region. However, in other parts of the Islamic world, and mainly in the Ḥijāz, a response to the Israelite orientation of the Syrian Muslims soon came. The response is reflected in reports about Ḥijāzī leaders who revolted against the Umayyads. The most prominent of these rebels was ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, who established his own caliphate in the Ḥijāz. There are many reports about his anti-Umayyad uprising as well as about his attitude towards ʿAbd al-Malik, the builder of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Ibn al-Zubayr is said to have reproved ʿAbd al-Malik for imitating non-Arab religious models in this project and for complying with Jewish aspirations. This is attested in a text studied recently by Amikam Elad, which contains a report to the effect that Ibn al-Zubayr used to besmirch ʿAbd al-Malik, saying:

In his buildings he imitated the palace of the king of Persia and the construction [of the palace of] al-Khaḍrāʾ, as Muʿāwiya had done, and he transferred the circumambulation (*tawāf*) from the House of God (= the Kaʿba) to the *qibla* (“direction of prayer”) of the Children of Israel (= Jerusalem).¹

This text indicates that the Ḥijāzī believers, while criticising the non-Arab models imitated by Syrian Muslims, were particularly alarmed because local Arabian sanctuaries had been neglected in favour of the

¹ Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 54 (I have modified slightly Elad’s translation). On the Jewish background to the Umayyad ritual system in Jerusalem see *ibid.*, 161–63.

Syrian ones. The latter gained much prestige thanks to the messianic link which Arabia lacked. In Arabia, then, the feeling was that the tradition of the non-Arab communities outside of Arabia overshadowed the Meccan and Medinan heritage of the Prophet. This state of mind must be taken into consideration when reading Muḥammad's early biographies (*sīra*), which were composed by Ḥijāzī authors such as Ibn al-Zubayr's own brother, ʿUrwa, as well as by al-Zuhri (Medinan, d. AH 124), Ibn Ishāq (Medinan, d. AH 150), and several others.² Their work seems to have been designed to secure the status of Arabia in the collective historical memory as the birthplace of Islam. The Umayyad caliphs themselves were in need of refreshing their memories of the Prophet, whose career was for them part of a remote past. It is significant that ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr wrote down an account of the life of Muḥammad for no other than ʿAbd al-Malik.³

The Promised Land and Arabia

The Ḥijāzī historiographical efforts to secure for Arabia a prestigious place in the Islamic historical memory were not confined to retelling the story of Muḥammad's Arabian enterprise. Attempts were also made to elevate the status of the Ḥijāz to the rank of the Promised Land and to show that sacred history started to unfold not in Syria, but rather in Arabia.

The available traditions attest to this attempt. To begin with, some of them expand the destination of the Israelite Exodus to include not only al-Shām, but Arabia as well, which thus became a part of the Promised Land. These traditions are recorded in the sources to explain the origin of the Jews of Arabia. There are various explanations for this, but the one relevant to our case is provided in a tradition of ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr. It says that when Moses conquered al-Shām, he sent an Israelite army to the Ḥijāz to slay all the male Amalekites there. The Israelites killed them all but for one son of the Amalekite king, whom they spared because of his

² On the Medinan authors of Muḥammad's biography see e.g. A.A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, ed. and trans. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton, 1983), 22–40, 76–121.

³ Sezgin, *GAS*, I, 278–79.

extreme beauty. They brought him back with them, but by the time they returned Moses had already died, and their brethren denied them access to their land because they had disobeyed Moses' order to smite all the Amalekites. The Israelite warriors had to return to the Ḥijāz, by which time it was fertile and prosperous. This was the beginning of the Jewish settlement in Arabia.⁴ The story echoes the Biblical story about Saul, who failed to complete the destruction of the Amalekites and spared their king.⁵ Muslim historiographers appropriated the story, and in its Islamic version it has become a scene in the Israelite conquests of Moses' time, with the Ḥijāz becoming an extension of the Promised Land from which the Israelites were commanded to remove the infidels.

The Prophets and Arabia

The efforts to extend to the Ḥijāz the Israelite sacredness of Syria and to include it in the scope of the Promised Land are also revealed in traditions trying to turn the Arabian sanctuaries into a destination for Israelite pilgrimage. The link is established in a series of traditions describing the pilgrimage to Mecca of several prominent Israelite prophets. One of the traditions is recorded by al-Wāqidi (d. AH 207) in the chapter about the campaign of Badr; it is attributed to the Companion ʿAmr ibn ʿAwf al-Muzanī. In it, the Prophet takes a mountain track (*fajj*) passing by the town of al-Rawḥā³, and tells his men that the prophet Moses already took the same route leading 70,000 of the Children of Israel. Then the Muslims pray in the nearby sanctuary (*masjid*) called ʿIrq al-Ḍabya.⁶

In another version of this tradition, the same story takes place during Muḥammad's first raid, the one on al-Abwā³. The Prophet prays with the Muslims in the mosque of ʿIrq al-Ḍabya, and then says that al-Rawḥā³ is one of the valleys of Paradise, and that 70 prophets already prayed there before him. Moses rode by it on a pink she-camel, leading 70,000 of the Children of Israel, till he reached the Kaʿba.⁷

⁴ Samhūdī, I, 159 (from Ibn Zabāla).

⁵ I Samuel 15:8–9.

⁶ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, I, 40. The *isnād*: Kathīr ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿAwf (Medinan, d. AH 150–60) ← his father ← ʿAmr ibn ʿAwf ← Prophet.

⁷ Qurṭubi, *Tadhkira*, 446. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muthīr al-gharām*, 376.

In an extended version of the same tradition, the Prophet adds that the Hour will not come until Jesus the son of Mary also passes through the Valley of al-Rawḥā⁹ on a pilgrimage to Mecca.⁸ This statement about Jesus is also available with an *isnād* of the Companion Abū Hurayra.⁹ It expands to Arabia the zone of Jesus' descent, which is originally located in Syria.¹⁰

As for Moses, his passage through al-Rawḥā⁹ on his way to Mecca is also mentioned in a tradition of the Meccan Mujāhid ibn Jabr (d. AH 104), in which the *ṭawāf* (circumambulation) of Moses around the Ka'ba and around the Ṣafā and the Marwa is also described.¹¹ His *ṭawāf* around the latter sites is also mentioned in a tradition of the Meccan 'Aṭā⁹ ibn Abī Rabāḥ (d. AH 114).¹²

The route taken by Moses is different in other traditions about his Meccan pilgrimage, in which he is joined by other prophets. A Baṣran tradition of Ibn 'Abbās relates that the Prophet, while on a campaign with his Companions between Mecca and Medina, saw a vision of Moses riding in a ravine called Wādī al-Azraq, uttering the *talbiya*, which is the ritual slogan of pilgrims approaching Mecca. As the Prophet proceeded to another defile, he had a vision of Yūnus ibn Mattā clad in a woollen garment, riding a red she-camel and uttering the *talbiya*.¹³ In another version of the same tradition, the Prophet sees in his second vision Moses

⁸ Samhūdī, III, 1009 (from Ibn Zabāla).

⁹ Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, 351; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, no. 20842; Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, no. 19342; Muslim, IV, 60 (15, *Bāb ihlāl al-nabiyy*); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 240, 272, 513, 540; Dānī, *Fitan*, VI, no. 694; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab*, III, no. 4005.

¹⁰ E.g. Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, 346–52.

¹¹ Azraqī, 35; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muthir al-gharām*, 375.

¹² Fākihī, II, no. 1408.

¹³ Muslim, I, 105–106 (1, *Bāb al-isrā' bi-rasūli llāh...*); Ibn Māja, II, no. 2891 (25:4); Ibn Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, nos. 2632–33; Abū Ya'ālā, *Musnad*, IV, no. 2542; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, no. 3801; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 215–16; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XII, no. 12756; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab*, III, no. 4004; *idem*, *Sunan*, V, 42; Ibn 'Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXVIII, 114–15. The *isnād*: Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind (Baṣran, d. AH 139) ← Abū l-'Āliya (Baṣran, d. AH 90) ← Ibn 'Abbās. Cf. Abū l-Shaykh, 'Azama, 437 (no. 1169); *Mustadrak*, II, 584. On the *talbiya* of the prophets cf. M.J. Kister, "On a Monotheistic Aspect of a Jāhiliyya Practice", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), 46 [repr. in *idem*, *Society and Religion From Jāhiliyya to Islam* (Aldershot, 1990), I].

performing the rite of throwing pebbles at the *jamra* (in *Minā*).¹⁴ In a Medinan tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās, the Prophet, while on a pilgrimage to Mecca, passes through Wādī ʿUṣfān and declares that Hūd, Ṣāliḥ and Moses already traversed this ravine while on a pilgrimage to Mecca.¹⁵ More traditions describing the Prophet's vision of Moses wrapped up in a woollen cloak and riding to Mecca on a camel or an ox, or going on foot, either do not specify the place in which he is seen, or give the name of one or other of the defiles. Such versions were circulated on the authority of the Companions Ibn ʿAbbās,¹⁶ ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd,¹⁷ and Abū Hurayra.¹⁸

Further versions are preoccupied with the number of the prophets who made the *hajj* to Mecca. In a tradition of Mujāhid, it is stated that 70 prophets, including Moses, came on pilgrimage to Mecca while uttering the *talbiya*.¹⁹ A tradition of ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr says that 1,000 prophets entered Mecca barefoot.²⁰ In a tradition of ʿUthmān ibn al-Aswad (Meccan, d. AH 150), the Prophet states that 70 prophets rode through al-Rawḥā²¹ uttering the *talbiya*, among whom was Yūnus ibn Mattā.²¹ In a tradition of the Baṣran Companion Anas ibn Mālīk, the Prophet states that 70 prophets passed barefoot through al-Rawḥā²² on their way to Mecca, and Moses was among them.²² The same statement is also attributed to the Prophet in a tradition of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī.²³ An additional tradition of Mujāhid from Ibn ʿAbbās says that 60 prophets passed through al-Rawḥā²⁴.²⁴ A tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās says

¹⁴ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XIV, no. 6219.

¹⁵ Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab*, III, no. 4003. The *isnād*: ʿIkrima (Medinan, d. AH 105) ← Ibn ʿAbbās. In other versions of this tradition the name of Moses does not occur. See Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 232.

¹⁶ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XII, no. 12510.

¹⁷ Abū Yaʿlā, *Musnad*, IX, no. 5093; Ṭabarānī, *Awsaṭ*, VII, no. 6483.

¹⁸ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, no. 3755.

¹⁹ Abū l-Shaykh, *ʿAzama*, 437 (no. 1168); Aḥmad, *Zuhd*, 87.

²⁰ Muḥibb al-Din al-Ṭabarī, *Qirā*, 53.

²¹ Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXVIII, 115.

²² Abū Yaʿlā, *Musnad*, VII, no. 4275. Cf. Ibn Bābūya, *Man lā yahḍuruḥu l-faqīh*, II, no. 2283.

²³ Abū Yaʿlā, *Musnad*, XIII, nos. 7231, 7271.

²⁴ Azraqī, 37.

that 70 prophets rode through al-Rawhā³, and that 70 prophets prayed at Masjid al-Khayf [in Minā].²⁵ A similar tradition of Sa^cid ibn al-Musayyab (Medinan, d. AH 94) says that Moses passed through al-Rawhā³ uttering the *talbiya*, and Jesus too went the same way uttering the *talbiya*, and that 70 prophets came riding and prayed at Masjid al-Khayf.²⁶ Yet another tradition of Mujāhid says that 75 prophets made the pilgrimage and prayed in the mosque of Minā (= Masjid al-Khayf).²⁷ A version of Ibn ^cAbbās which is traced back to the Prophet says that Moses was among the 70 prophets who prayed at Masjid al-Khayf.²⁸ The Kūfan ^cAbdallāh ibn Ḍamra al-Salūli says that 77 (*var.* 99) prophets who came on pilgrimage to Mecca were buried in the vicinity of the Ka^cba.²⁹ In another version of his statement, the number given is 70 or 90.³⁰

The identity of the prophets buried near the Ka^cba was also a point that attracted some attention. Muqātil states that 70 prophets are buried near the Ka^cba, including Hūd and Ṣāliḥ.³¹ However, a tradition of ^cUrwa ibn al-Zubayr says that all the prophets made the pilgrimage to Mecca, except for Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, who died without having made the *ḥajj*.³²

A special part in the Arabian *ḥajj* is played by the prophet Ilyās (= Elijah). Since in II Kings 2:1–18 Elijah does not die a natural death, but rather is taken up to heaven by God in a whirlwind, this prophet has gained a special role in Jewish eschatology and messianism. According to Jewish tradition, it is his custom to frequent the earth and reveal secrets to scholars learning the Torah, and help the needy and save Israel from oppression. It is he who will announce to the people of Israel the coming of the Messiah.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38; *Mustadrak*, II, 598.

²⁶ Fākihi, IV, no. 2601. Cf. Aḥmad, *Zuhd*, 58.

²⁷ Fākihi, IV, no. 2599; Azraqi, 35, 400.

²⁸ Fākihi, IV, no. 2593; Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, XI, no. 12283; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, VI, no. 5403.

The *isnād*: Ibn Jubayr ← Ibn ^cAbbās ← Prophet.

²⁹ Bayhaqi, *Shu^cab*, III, no. 4006; Azraqi, 34, 363; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muthir al-gharām*, 375.

³⁰ ^cAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, no. 9129.

³¹ Azraqi, 39.

³² *Ibid.*, 38; Bayhaqi, *Shu^cab*, III, no. 4002.

Islamic tradition adopted this figure and provided it with Arabian links. Al-Ṭabarī recorded a tradition of the Baṣran/Syrian ʿAbdallāh ibn Shawdhab (d. ca. AH 150) which says that Ilyās and al-Khaḍīr use to meet each year in the *mawsim* (i.e. the *hajj*).³³ The same is also related on the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. AH 110).³⁴ More detailed is a tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās in which Muḥammad himself declares that Ilyās and al-Khaḍīr meet each year in the *mawsim* and shave each other's head.³⁵ This meeting takes place either in ʿArafa³⁶ or in Minā.³⁷ A tradition of the Meccan ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Abī Rawwād (d. AH 159) combines the Syrian and the Ḥijāzī spheres of Ilyās' appearance. Here we find that each year Ilyās and al-Khaḍīr fast during Ramaḍān in Jerusalem and then make the *hajj* to Mecca and drink of the water of Zamzam.³⁸ In a tradition of Anas ibn Mālik, the Prophet declares that one yearly drink of Zamzam water suffices them till next year.³⁹

The immortality of the prophet Ilyās makes it possible for him to appear in Arabia as a pilgrim to Mecca and meet the Prophet Muḥammad. Such a meeting takes place in a region close to al-Shām, namely, in al-Ḥijr where Muḥammad is passing through during the raid on Tabūk. The meeting is described in a tradition related on the authority of the Companion Anas ibn Mālik. He hears Ilyās pray to God, asking Him to make him one of Muḥammad's blessed *umma*. Anas informs Muḥammad about it, and the Prophet comes and meets Ilyās in person; God sends them down food from heaven and they feast on it together.⁴⁰ Another version

³³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 365 (I, 415). See also Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, II, 310.

³⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, II, 293.

³⁵ Daylamī, *Firdaws*, V, no. 8895; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muthīr al-gharām*, 194; Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī, *Qirā*, 56, 411–12; Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), V, 27; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, IV, 240; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, II, 305.

³⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, II, 312.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 328.

³⁸ Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il*, no. 149; Thaʿlabī, *Qīṣaṣ*, 230; Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 176; Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), VIII, 67; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, IV, 240; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, II, 306, 310.

³⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, II, 293.

⁴⁰ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Hawātif*, 78–79 (no. 102); Abū l-Shaykh, ʿAẓama, 363 (no. 1010); *Mustadrak*, II, 617; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, V, 421–22; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'is*, II, 109; *idem*, *Durr*, V, 286; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, I, 338.

replaces the name of Ilyās with that of al-Khaḍir.⁴¹ In the version related on the authority of the Syrian Companion Wāthila ibn al-Asqa^c, Ilyās says that he is on his way to Mecca, and that the angel Gabriel has ordered him to meet Muḥammad, and that he has just come from Syria where, together with an army of angels and Muslim *jinn* (“demons”), he fought against the infidels.⁴²

The fact that most statements about the Arabian pilgrimage of the prophets are formulated as a vision of Muḥammad, experienced during his own pilgrimage or campaign, lends Biblical glamour to his Arabian enterprise and turns it into a renewed version of ancient journeys in a sacred land whose sanctity rests on an Israelite basis, like that of Jerusalem. The line linking Muḥammad’s journeys in Arabia to those of the Biblical prophets is drawn explicitly in a tradition recorded in a Shi^ci compilation, saying that Moses, Yūnus, Jesus and Muḥammad rode through al-Rawḥā³, each one uttering a specific version of the *talbiya* on their way to Mecca.⁴³

The Shi^cis indeed seem to have their own special interest in promoting the status of Arabia at the expense of Syria, perhaps due to anti-Umayyad motives. Accordingly, they have elaborated on the theme of Israelite prophets in Arabia, and a Shi^ci tradition of the Medinan Shi^ci *imām* Abū Ja^cfar (Muḥammad ibn ^cAlī al-Bāqir, d. AH 114) adds to the list of prophets who came to Mecca the name of Sulaymān (= King Solomon).⁴⁴

For the Shi^cis, however, not only Arabia, but regions in Iraq also, were blessed by the presence of prophets. This applies mainly to Kūfa, ^cAlī’s capital city and burial place. Shi^ci traditions describe its mosque as located on the soil out of which the prophets were created,⁴⁵ or as the place where 70 prophets prayed⁴⁶ or were buried.⁴⁷ Iraq could easily become an extension of the Promised Land because Abraham’s journey

⁴¹ Tha^clabī, *Qiṣaṣ*, 198–99; *idem*, *Tafsīr*, MS Tel Aviv, 145.

⁴² Ibn ^cAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), V, 27–29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, II, 307–309.

⁴³ Ibn Bābūya, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh*, II, no. 2284.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, II, no. 2285.

⁴⁵ Ibn Qūlawayhi, *Ziyārāt*, no. 68.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 76.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 69.

to Canaan began there. The house from which he set out to fight the Amalekites is believed to have been in Kūfa.⁴⁸

The Mahdī and Arabia

The expansion of the Israelite sanctity of Syria to Arabia is also reflected in the traditions about the *mahdī*, the messianic saviour. The Arabian link of the *mahdī* is demonstrated in a Kūfan tradition of the Companion Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān (Medinan/Kūfan, d. AH 36) who is renowned for the numerous eschatological traditions related on his authority.⁴⁹ He was probably of Jewish descent.⁵⁰ The tradition was recorded by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tahdhīb al-āthār*. In it, the Prophet predicts the emergence of the *mahdī* in Mecca in the year AH 225. His name will be Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdallāh. Upon hearing this, the Companion ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn (d. AH 52) asks the Prophet to describe the *mahdī*, and the Prophet says: “He will be a man of my offspring, and will look like the men of the Children of Israel. He will emerge when my community suffers painstaking trials. His colour will be Arabian, his age 40, his face like a shining star. He will fill the earth with justice, as much as it has been filled with injustice and oppression. He will reign 20 years and will dominate all the cities of the infidels: Constantinople and Rome....” The tradition goes on to say that all the people of Syria, the Mashriq, as well as the Arabian tribes of Muḍar and the Yemen, will pledge allegiance to the *mahdī* in Mecca.⁵¹

The Israelite disposition of the *mahdī* is also stated in traditions with no particular Arabian orientation. One of them is of the Baṣran Qatāda ibn Diʿāma (d. AH 117) in which he quotes the Baṣran ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Ḥārith al-Anṣārī who says that the *mahdī* will be a man of 40, looking like a man of the Children of Israel.⁵² Another tradition of Qatāda states likewise that the age of the *mahdī* will be 40, and he will labour (in bat-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 68.

⁴⁹ About which see e.g. Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, I, 270–83; *Kanz*, XI, 226–33.

⁵⁰ About which see Michael Lecker, “Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān and ʿAmmār b. Yāsir, Jewish Converts to Islam”, *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 11 (1993), 153–58.

⁵¹ Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb (maḥqūd)*, no. 687. Cf. Suyūṭī, *Akhbār al-mahdī*, no. 80. The *isnād*: Sufyān al-Thawrī (Kūfan, d. AH 161) ← Maṣṣūr ibn al-Muʿtamir (Kūfan, d. AH 132) ← Ribʿī ibn Ḥirāsh (Kūfan, d. AH 100) ← Ḥudhayfa ← Prophet.

⁵² Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 225. See also Suyūṭī, *Akhbār al-mahdī*, no. 134.

tle) as did the Children of Israel. Here Qatāda also states that if the *mahdī* is not ʿUmar, then he does not know who he is.⁵³ The tradition was recorded by al-Dānī in a chapter containing traditions to the effect that the *mahdī* is ʿUmar II. This caliph was indeed Qatāda's contemporary.

The Shiʿi *mahdī* was also provided with Hījāzī links. The link is established in Shiʿi Qurʾān commentaries on the Israelite *umma* verse (7:159).⁵⁴ The earliest of them contain a tradition attributing to the *imām* Abū ʿAbdallāh Jaʿfar al-Šādiq (d. AH 148) a statement to the effect that when the saviour (*qāʾim*) of the House of Muḥammad appears in Mecca, he will bring forth out of the Kaʿba twenty-seven people: fifteen of the people of Moses (*qawm Mūsā*), seven of the People of the Cave (*aṣḥāb al-kaḥf*),⁵⁵ Joshua—the successor (*waṣiyy*) of Moses—the believer of the House of Pharaoh,⁵⁶ Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dujāna al-Anṣārī, and Mālik (ibn al-Ḥārith) al-Ashtar.⁵⁷ In this version, the “people of Moses” as well as Joshua are accompanied by other mythological figures known from the Qurʾān as well as from lists of ʿAlī's partisans; all of them are expected to reappear in Mecca with the Shiʿi redeemer.

Polemics and Arabia

The efforts to shift to the Hījāz some of the Israelite sacredness of Syria are also traceable in the general anti-Jewish polemical sphere. Although polemical writings do not belong to the immediate scope of the present study, it is nevertheless worth mentioning that here too Biblical passages have been diverted from Palestine to Arabia in an effort to elevate Mecca to the status of Jerusalem. The Biblical messianic prophecies predicting messianic deliverance in Jerusalem at the end of days were interpreted by Muslim writers as referring to Mecca. For example, Isaiah 28:16, in

⁵³ Dānī, *Fitan*, V, no. 588. Qatāda is quoted here by Abū Hilāl al-Rāsibī (Baṣran, d. AH 167).

⁵⁴ Ṭūsi, *Tabyān*, V, 6; Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, IX, 44–45.

⁵⁵ Sūrat al-Kahf (18):22.

⁵⁶ Sūrat Ghāfir (40):28. He is identified with the prophet Ḥizqil. See Furāt, *Tafsir*, I, 354 (nos. 480–81).

⁵⁷ ʿAyyāshī, II, 35 (no. 90). See also Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, 243–44; al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Irshād*, 365 (“Kūfa” instead of “kaʿba”); Ṭabrisī, *Iʿlām al-warā*, 433 (“Kūfa” instead of “kaʿba”).

which God promises to establish in Zion a “stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone”, was identified by Muslim polemicists with the Black Stone of the Ka‘ba, so that Zion has become a name for Mecca.⁵⁸ Similarly, the “barren that did not bear” of Isaiah 54:1, which opens a prophecy about the deliverance of Zion, was identified with Mecca,⁵⁹ thus making the appearance of the Prophet there the outcome of the divinely predestined scheme of deliverance. Numerous similar instances of Biblical deliverance prophecies based in Mecca may be found in Ibn Rabban’s treatise,⁶⁰ and some of those appearing in later polemical writings were already noted by Goldziher.⁶¹

The Lost Tribes and Arabia

The theme of the Lost Tribes was also expanded to the Ḥijāz, with a “Judeo-Muslim” orientation articulated in clear Arabian colours. The tribes were provided with Ḥijāzī links and the Prophet Muḥammad was brought into direct contact with them. The traditions establishing these links are found in the exegesis of the Israelite *umma* verse (7:159). Al-Ṭabari recorded a tradition with an *isnād* of Ibn Jurayj (Meccan, d. AH 150) ← Ibn ‘Abbās, to the effect that one virtuous tribe (*sibt*) departed from the sinful Israelites at the time of Moses, and was transferred by God to China through an underground passage. The members of this tribe live there as *ḥanīfs*. The tradition relates that these Israelite *ḥanīfs* observe the Islamic direction of prayer (*qibla*), and will reappear together with Jesus the son of Mary.⁶² The term *ḥanīf* is a title given by Muslim historiographers to believers living in the pre-Muḥammadan period, and

⁵⁸ See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*, 160. See also Khargūshi, fol. 74a (Zion of Psalms 50:2 is Mecca).

⁵⁹ Ibn Kathir, *Bidāya*, VI, 180.

⁶⁰ Ibn Rabban, *al-Din wa-l-dawla*, 159, 165, 167, 168, 178, etc.

⁶¹ Ignaz Goldziher, “Ueber muhammadanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 32 (1878), 341–87 [reprinted in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, II (Hildesheim, 1968), 1–47].

⁶² Ṭabari, *Tafsir*, IX, 60 (with reference to Qurʾān 17:104). See also Tha‘labi, *Tafsir* (Ahmet III, 76/II), fol. 103b; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, II, 256. Cf. Wāḥidi, *Wasīṭ*, II, 418–19; Zamakhshari, *Kashshāf*, II, 123; Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, VII, 302.

mainly to those living in Arabia who also adhered to the worship of the Ka'ba and took it as their *qibla*.⁶³

Another tradition affirms the relationship of the Lost Tribes to Arabian rites, and especially to the pilgrimage to Mecca, to which, as seen above, their prophets were also linked. This ceremony is mentioned in a tradition recorded by al-Naqqāsh (d. AH 351) under the Israelite *umma* verse and states that the Lost Tribes dwell beyond an impassable valley of sand, and that they participate with the people in the pilgrimage to Mecca. This specific tradition also says that they belong to the people of Yūnus ibn Mattā who originated from the Children of Israel.⁶⁴ As seen above, this prophet is included in the list of prophets who have been to Mecca on a pilgrimage.

Moreover, Islamic tradition holds that the Lost Tribes met the Prophet Muḥammad, and expressed their belief in him. This accords with what Islamic tradition usually says about Arabian *hanīfs*, for example, Warāqa ibn Nawfal, whose meeting with Muḥammad is described in detail.⁶⁵ Such meetings of attestation also take place outside Arabia between the young Muḥammad and various Christian hermits, the most notable of whom was Baḥirā.⁶⁶ The same model of attestation was applied to the Lost Tribes. They too are said to have met the Prophet, and as a setting for this meeting the story of Muḥammad's nocturnal journey (*isrā'/mirāj*) was chosen. A description of the meeting is already recorded in Muqātil's commentary on Sūrat al-Isrā' (17):104.⁶⁷ He relates here that the Prophet came to the Lost Tribes during his nocturnal journey, and taught them the Islamic call to prayer (*adhān*) and the rules of prayer (*ṣalāt*), which is another "pillar" of Islam. He also taught them some chapters of the Qur'ān, and they embraced Islam.

The story about this meeting reappears in later *tafsīr* compilations under the Israelite *umma* verse. Some versions trace it back to the Com-

⁶³ See Uri Rubin, "Hanīfiyya and Ka'ba—an Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of *Dīn Ibrāhīm*", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), 85–112.

⁶⁴ Suhayli, *Asmā'*, fol. 3a–b (from al-Naqqāsh).

⁶⁵ Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 103–12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 44–45.

⁶⁷ Muqātil, II, 554.

panion Ibn ʿAbbās; the complete version of his tradition was recorded by al-Samarqandī.⁶⁸ Here the Children of Israel lead an ideal life of modesty, piety and social equality, and the description is marked by a utopian messianic atmosphere of peace and harmony between man and beast. The angel Gabriel introduces Muḥammad to the Lost Tribes as the *ummi* prophet, that is, the one whose description has been written in their own holy scriptures,⁶⁹ and they believe in him according to Moses' ancient command. Muḥammad recites to them ten Meccan chapters of the Qurʾān and orders them to observe the duties of prayer and almsgiving (*zakāt*). In some versions, he also orders them to change their day of worship from the Sabbath to Friday, which they do.⁷⁰

In conclusion, the "Judeo-Muslim" Lost Tribes have been turned in these traditions into *hanīfs* who pray towards the Kaʿba and make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Their meeting with Muḥammad has given them a role in the life of the Arabian Prophet. Thus, the originally Syrian context of the universal theme of the Lost Tribes has become Arabian, which marks the growth of the Arab consciousness of the Muslims.

Evidence from Documents

A Hījāzī transformation of the universal perception of the faith that grew in Syria is also revealed in some well-known documents, Islamic as well as non-Islamic.

The Constitution of Medina

The document known as the "Constitution of Medina" is believed to have been drawn up by Muḥammad in Medina. It already establishes a comprehensive community (*umma wāhida*) based on a common territory as well as on a common faith, and comprising Arab and Jewish believers. Within this *umma* the Jews are supposed to retain their own religion, and

⁶⁸ Samarqandī, I, 575–76. For shorter versions see Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, VII, 302; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, II, 556; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, II, 123–24.

⁶⁹ On the messianic context of the title *ummi* see, Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 23–30.

⁷⁰ Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (Ahmet III, 76/II), fol. 103b; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, II, 556; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, II, 124.

they remain an *umma* on their own (*umma ma^ca/min al-mu³minīn*).⁷¹ In other words, the faith is universal, and the Jews are “Judeo-Muslims”.

Modern scholars (including myself) have usually accepted the authenticity of the Constitution as self-evident, and some have recently inferred from it that the conquest of Syria by the caliphs was in accordance with a universal policy formulated by Muḥammad himself.⁷² However, there is no reason why this document should be treated as more authentic, say, than Muḥammad’s letters to the emperors of Byzantium and Persia. A careful textual examination of the Constitution may reveal various layers in it, and the one pertaining to the Jews as part of the *umma* may be shown to be a Ḥijāzī representation of universal concepts that grew in Syria as a result of the Islamic conquests.

A Christian Document: Sebeos

Among the Christian documents of Umayyad and early °Abbāsīd times, there is one in which Islamists have been particularly interested. This is the Armenian chronicle from the early Umayyad period, which is ascribed to Bishop Sebeos (wr. 660s). Patricia Crone and Michael Cook have studied the work in their famous *Hagarism*,⁷³ but in their efforts to present the origins of Islam in a new light they seem to have attributed too much historical value to the chronicle’s text, believing to have discovered in it evidence that Islam did indeed begin as a Jewish–Arab messianic movement aimed at going on a renewed exodus to the Promised Land. They do notice some “ahistorical” elements in it, but stress that “this need not however invalidate the picture which Sebeos gives of the structure of Jewish–Arab relations in the period leading up to the conquest....” It seems, however, that the chronicle’s report is no more than a reflection of Islamic traditions of the kind represented in the texts discussed above.

⁷¹ Uri Rubin, “The Constitution of Medina: Some Notes”, *Studia Islamica* 62 (1985), 5–23.

⁷² Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 554–55. He speaks about a policy aimed at establishing “a politico-religious entity comprising fighting men of different religious affiliations....”

⁷³ Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 6–8. For a recent and somewhat more critical treatment of Sebeos see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 124–32.

The chronicle condenses the Syrian and the Arabian spheres of the theme of the Lost Tribes into one sequence of events. It contains a story according to which a group of the Children of Israel fled from Edessa to Arabia, and sought refuge among the children of Ishmael. Here a merchant named Mahmet was active as a preacher. He preached to them (i.e. to the Israelites and the Ishmaelites) about God and Abraham, and was well acquainted with the story of Moses. They all accepted his leadership, and he instigated them to take possession of the land that God had promised to their father Abraham. The Children of Israel set out for the Land of Israel together with the twelve tribes of the children of Ishmael (= the Arab believers) whom they guided to the Promised Land. In the chronicle's own words:

...All that remained of the peoples of the Children of Israel came to join them (the children of Ishmael—U.R.), and they constituted a mighty army. Then they sent an embassy to the emperor of the Greeks, saying: "God has given this land as a heritage to our father Abraham and his posterity after him; we are the children of Abraham; you have held our country long enough; give it up peacefully, and we will not invade your territory; otherwise, we will retake with interest what you have taken."⁷⁴

Crone and Cook regard this story as highly significant, in fact, as "an unfamiliar one". However, we now see that the story actually reflects ideas that can be traced in extant Islamic sources, and the chronicle probably draws directly on these ideas, even if it pre-dates the actual Arabic texts in which we now find them.

That the source of information of the chronicle's author is Islamic is clear from the fact that Muḥammad is referred to as a merchant—a central theme in the earliest Islamic biographies of the Prophet that must have inspired every literary description of his social background. The meeting of the Israelite survivors with Muḥammad can also be traced back to Islamic sources because, as seen above, these sources contain detailed descriptions of a similar meeting between the Israelite tribes and the prophet of Islam. These stories have been the origin for Eldad ha-Dani's reports, and they seem also to have inspired the report of Sebeos.

⁷⁴ Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 7.

In the above Islamic version of the meeting, the Children of Israel accept Muḥammad's leadership in compliance with the command of Moses, while in the chronicle it is Muḥammad himself who is well acquainted with the story of Moses, and is therefore recognised by the Children of Israel.

Sebeos locates the meeting between Muḥammad and the Israelites within Arabia, where the Israelites arrive as refugees. This seems to be related to the Islamic notion of an Israelite pilgrimage to Arabia. That such a pilgrimage may be aimed at finding asylum is also implied in Islamic traditions. For example, Muḥammad is reported to have stated that every prophet who ran away from his persecuting people fled to Mecca and, until his death, worshipped God there.⁷⁵

The idea that a Jewish–Arab military collaboration began already inside Arabia is not alien to Islamic tradition either. Quite a few traditions assume that the Arabian Jews took part in Muḥammad's campaigns. Al-Zuhri reports that the Jews of Arabia fought together with Muḥammad against the pagans, and received a share of the booty.⁷⁶ A tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās likewise says that the Jews of Banū Qaynuqāʿ assisted Muḥammad in battle,⁷⁷ and al-Wāqidi reports that ten Jews of Medina joined Muḥammad's campaign against Khaybar.⁷⁸ It is also reported that Jews participated in a campaign of Saʿd ibn Mālik (ibn Abī Waqqāṣ).⁷⁹

The entire literary set-up of the chronicle reflects a common Jewish–Arab messianism identical to what one finds in the Islamic traditions discussed in Chapter 1. The Children of Israel participate with the children of Ishmael in an anti-Byzantine campaign that stands for a new exodus. While the Muslim tradition expects the Israelites to return from their place beyond the river, the chronicle assumes that they are exiled from Edessa and join the Arabs in an anti-Byzantine campaign that starts from within Arabia.

⁷⁵ Khargūshi, fol. 167b. See also Zarkashi, *Iʿlām al-sājid*, 194.

⁷⁶ Rubin, "The Constitution of Medina", 12 n. 35, with reference to ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, nos. 9328–29; Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, V, 171 (19:10). See also Ibn Abi Shayba, XII, nos. 15010–12; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 53.

⁷⁷ Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 53.

⁷⁸ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, II, 684; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 53–54 (from al-Wāqidi).

⁷⁹ Ibn Abi Shayba, XII, no. 15013; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 37.

In conclusion, Sebeos only confirms the evidence of Islamic traditions. These traditions do not indicate how Islam began in reality, only how its beginning was envisioned by Muslim historiographers. The notion that the spread of Islam into Syria represented a common Jewish–Arab messianic enterprise is only a retrospective apologetic device designed to legitimise the Islamic conquest of the Promised Land. When repeated in a Christian chronicle, the idea is no longer apologetic and serves instead to expose the Jewish connection of what Christian polemicists regarded as the false Arabian religion.

PART II

THE QUR'ĀN: SINFUL ISRAELITES

IIA. Superior Arabs

CHAPTER 3

THE AFFAIR OF THE SPIES

In the sphere of common Arab–Jewish messianism, as examined in the foregoing chapters, the Children of Israel emerge as righteous believers, or “Judeo-Muslims”, whose model of piety serves to establish the universal perception of the chosen community. This was most appropriate for the initial apologetic needs of the Muslim invaders of Syria. However, the traditions about the “Judeo-Muslim” Israelites did not gain wide circulation and almost none of them entered the canonical compilations of *ḥadīth*. The orthodox compilers were reluctant to accept the righteous image of the Jews as delineated in these traditions, and the image of the Jews as sinful was the one which eventually established itself in the mainstream of Islamic tradition. In fact, even in the realm of *tafsīr*—in which the traditions about the righteous Israelites are mainly found—these traditions are not widely current, and apart from Muqātil very few compilers of *tafsīr* material repeated the stories about the Islamic disposition of the Lost Tribes. The objection to this type of material is reflected in contradictory traditions recorded in *tafsīr* compilations to the effect that the Islamic message never reached the Israelite Lost Tribes,¹ which means that they are unbelievers, and as such can have no place in the chosen community.

A degradation in the status of the Israelites is also evident in traditions in which the righteous are no more privileged than the sinful among them. One of these traditions is of the Syrian al-Raḍīn ibn ʿAṭāʾ. Here God reveals to Joshua the son of Nun that He is about to destroy 60,000 of the evil-doers of his people, as well as 40,000 of the innocent among

¹ Māwardī, *Nukat*, II, 270; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, III, 274. See also Rāzī, XV, 31.

them. The latter are going to perish because of their friendly relations with the sinners.²

The altered attitude towards the Children of Israel is also discernible in additional traditions depriving contemporary “Judeo-Muslim” Jews such as Ka^cb al-Aḥbār of their positive image. In a tradition of Ibn A^ctham seen in Chapter 1,³ Ka^cb in Jerusalem hears from ʿUmar Qurʾān 4:47, which urges the People of the Book to believe in the Qurʾān that confirms (*muṣaddiq*) their own scriptures. Ka^cb immediately responds with Biblical passages asserting that the Islamic conquest of the Promised Land has taken place in accordance with a predestined scheme of messianic redemption. However, in other versions describing his conversion, Ka^cb is far from enthusiastic about the emergence of Islam, and does not volunteer any Biblical passages in praise of the Muslims. In a tradition of Ibrāhīm al-Taymī (Kūfan, d. AH 92), as quoted by the Kūfan ʿĪsā ibn al-Mughīra al-Tamīmī, Ka^cb embraces Islam only for fear of the punishment mentioned in Qurʾān 4:47, and his conversion takes place in Ḥimṣ, far away from Jerusalem.⁴ In another similar version, of the Syrian Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī (d. AH 80), Ka^cb happens to be in Medina when he hears the threat of Qurʾān 4:47; here too he volunteers no Biblical passages predicting the emergence of Islam in the Promised Land.⁵ The notion that Ka^cb sees in the Arabs agents of Jewish redemption has disappeared from these versions, whose authors are no longer aware of a possible chosen community of Jews and Arabs sharing a common messianic goal.

The same change is noticeable in yet another description of Ka^cb’s meeting with ʿUmar, which also reflects the attempts at elevating the ritual status of the Ḥijāz. The details are included in the report of Rajāʾ ibn Ḥaywa, which, as seen in Chapter 1,⁶ contains Ka^cb’s apocalypse about the arrogance of Constantinople. However, the apocalypse is not the only component of this report. It opens with a description of ʿUmar’s

² Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhid*, XXIV, 310.

³ Above, 13–17.

⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, V, 79.

⁵ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr*, III, 969 (no. 5413).

⁶ Above, 20–23.

prayer in Jerusalem, and here a discourse between Ka[‘]b and ‘Umar is recorded. The caliph asks for Ka[‘]b’s opinion as to the preferred direction of prayer, and as the latter suggests the Rock, the caliph accuses him of adhering to Jewish practices, which are also discernible in the fact that Ka[‘]b has been seen taking off his shoes.⁷ Contrary to Ka[‘]b’s advice, ‘Umar decides to locate the place of prayer in front of the Rock (so as to face the Ka[‘]ba) and states that the Prophet ordered that the front walls of mosques be taken as *qibla*. This seems to refer to reports according to which the Prophet prayed in front of the Ka[‘]ba.⁸ The caliph then says: “We were not ordered [to face] the Rock, but [to face] the Ka[‘]ba”.⁹

On the whole, Muslim historiography seems to have shifted its attention from the “Judeo-Muslim” Israelites to the unbelieving Israelites. The change was caused by the fact that most Jews who came under Islamic domination did not recognise Muḥammad as a true prophet. This they could afford to do thanks to the privilege they enjoyed of living in the Islamic state as non-Muslim protégés (*ahl al-dhimma*). From the Islamic point of view, this state of affairs implies a different type of Israelite–Islamic link, one that is based on a contrast between Jews and Arabs and on the exclusion of the Jews from the chosen community. This perception implies a superiority of Arabs over Israelites.

However, although the Israelites have been excluded from the chosen community, Islam has retained the apologetic notion that the Arab conquests represent a divine promise. The texts preserving the notion indicate that the promise has remained, but that the Jews are no longer a part of it. The evidence from scripture to support the notion is now derived directly from the Qur[’]ān. For example, in Sūrat al-Anbiyā[’] (21):105, the Qur[’]ān says that God wrote in the old scriptures: “The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants”. This verse appears in the address of Sa[‘]d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ to his men on the Persian front, as reported by Sayf ibn ‘Umar (d. AH 180). Sa[‘]d tells his men that this verse means that

⁷ For the problem of wearing or taking off shoes in connection with Jewish practices see M.J. Kister, “Do not Assimilate Yourselves...”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 12 (1989), 321–71.

⁸ For these reports see Uri Rubin, “The Ka[‘]ba—Aspects of its Ritual Functions”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986), 103–104, 107–108.

⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 611 (I, 2408). See further Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, 71.

God has promised to give them the land for which they have been fighting.¹⁰ The idea that the conquered land has been promised by God as an inheritance to the Arab believers recurs in reports pertaining to the Byzantine front, and here it is supported by Sūrat al-Tawba (9):33. In this verse, God says that He has “sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion”.¹¹ This verse emerges in the address of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to the Arab warriors before sending them to Syria. The caliph quotes this verse while urging them to set out for the land which God has promised to give them in the Book.¹²

The survival of the idea of a conquest carried out according to a divine will is also evinced in traditions about Muḥammad’s Arabian enterprise, and here the Children of Israel are explicitly excluded from the chosen community, while the Arab believers have become superior to them; they now act contrary to the Israelite historical precedent. These traditions still link Muḥammad’s military campaigns to the Israelite model of journeys to the Promised Land, but the type of this model has changed from Biblical to Qurʾānic. These traditions evince a process of dissociation from the Bible and its replacement by a genuine Arabian scripture that has become the main origin of divine knowledge.

The historiographers could afford to dispense with the Bible and rely solely on the Qurʾān as a source of divine historical lessons, because it too dealt extensively with the history of the nations. Admittedly, the Qurʾān itself borrowed much of its information about world history from the Bible and the Talmud (albeit not necessarily directly),¹³ but the mere fact that this information was found in the Qurʾān provided it with the necessary Islamic legitimacy. Before turning to the traditions that use the Qurʾān for describing Muḥammad’s campaigns, we should look more closely at the Qurʾānic image of the Children of Israel.

¹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 531 (I, 2289). Cf. *ibid.*, III, 508, 528 (I, 2254, 2284). Quoted in Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 131.

¹¹ See also Qurʾān 48:28; 61:9.

¹² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 445 (I, 2160). Quoted in Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 131.

¹³ For a possible Judeo-Christian source of the Qurʾān see Shlomo Pines, “Notes on Islam and on Arabic Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984), 13–52.

Qurʾānic Israelites

The Qurʾān reproduces the Biblical idea of Israel as God's chosen community, which is demonstrated in the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the Promised Land. The most explicit formulation of the idea of Israel's election is provided in Sūrat al-Dukhān (44):30–33, in which God announces that He has chosen the Children of Israel (*ikhtarnāhum*) above all beings. This statement is coupled with the story of Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh, including the "signs" (*āyāt*) that were given to Israel during their deliverance. Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh constitutes the essence of God's *niʿma* ("blessing") unto them;¹⁴ it features as something which the Children of Israel must remember, and consists not only of their preference above all beings,¹⁵ but of sending them prophets and making them into kings.¹⁶ God's *niʿma* also appears in close association with God's covenant (*ʿahd*), which the Children of Israel must keep. Keeping the covenant means that they must believe in the Torah and observe God's laws.¹⁷ God's covenant with the Israelites is often called *mīthāq*,¹⁸ and also applies to the obligation of keeping the Sabbath.¹⁹ The covenant is also made with the "People of the Book".²⁰

The Qurʾān concentrates on the election of Israel only to show that the Children of Israel have violated God's covenant and lost the status of God's chosen community. To prove this, the Qurʾān repeats the Biblical stories about the sins they committed on their way to the Promised Land. A detailed description of their sins is provided in Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (7), in an account of the events that take place after the Children of Israel cross the sea. The major sin is the worship of the image of the calf, which results in the breaking of the tablets (vv. 138–51). Other sins mentioned in this *sūra* are the refusal to say *hiṭṭa*, for which they are destroyed in a disaster

¹⁴ Qurʾān 14:6.

¹⁵ Qurʾān 2:47, 122.

¹⁶ Qurʾān 5:20.

¹⁷ Qurʾān 2:40–43.

¹⁸ Qurʾān 2:63, 83–84, 93; 5:12, 70. On *mīthāq* cf. Pines, "Arabic Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity", 139.

¹⁹ Qurʾān 4:154.

²⁰ Qurʾān 3:187.

(*rijz*) sent from heaven (vv. 161–62), and the violation of the Sabbath, for which they are turned into apes (vv. 163–67). Elsewhere,²¹ the Qurʾān recounts the sin of the Israelites when refusing to wage war on the mighty inhabitants of the Promised Land. As punishment, they must wander for 40 years in the wilderness (till they expire).

The Qurʾān is also aware of further Israelite sins outside the scope of the Exodus, for example, persecuting and killing their prophets,²² a sin which is also stated in the Bible.²³ The Qurʾān also condemns the Children of Israel for inner conflicts (*ikhṭilāf*) which divided them after they had been chosen by God.²⁴ Elsewhere, this is imputed to the People of the Book.²⁵

A major sin committed by the Israelites, which signifies a violation of God's covenant, is the distortion (*tahrīf*) of the word of God, i.e. the Torah.²⁶ The same is also said of the Jews.²⁷ The Qurʾān also mentions those who “conceal” parts of the Book, who are the People of the Book.²⁸

The Qurʾān elaborates on the sinful conduct of Israel for polemical needs; it strives to prove that Islam provides the framework for God's new chosen community, and that the Children of Israel, namely, the Jews and the Christians, are no longer a chosen community. This is explicitly stated in Sūrat al-Māʾida (5):18, in which the Jews and the Christians claim to be “the sons of God and His beloved ones”. The Qurʾān responds to this by asserting that they are no more than mortals (*bashar*) whom God punishes for having sinned.

The elevation of the Muslims to the status of a chosen community replacing the Israelites is indicated in passages that shift to the Arab believers various aspects of God's blessing. Thus, God's *niʿma* emerges as something equivalent to the religion given to the believers,²⁹ and is cou-

²¹ Qurʾān 5:20–26.

²² Qurʾān 2:61, 87, 91; 3:21, 112, 181; 4:155; 5:70.

²³ Jeremiah 2:30.

²⁴ Qurʾān 45:16–17; see also 10:93.

²⁵ Qurʾān 3:19.

²⁶ Qurʾān 5:13.

²⁷ Qurʾān 2:75; 4:46; 5:41.

²⁸ Qurʾān 6:91; see also 2:159, 174; 3:187, etc.

²⁹ Qurʾān 5:3.

pled with God's covenant that is being made with them.³⁰ In this capacity, God's *ni'ama* consists of giving the Arab believers the Book and the Wisdom,³¹ bringing their hearts together,³² protecting them against the schemes of their enemies,³³ and assisting them in battle.³⁴

Islamic tradition picked up the Qur^ānic notion of the Arab believers as God's new chosen community and incorporated it into descriptions of some events in Muḥammad's life. These traditions derive from the Qur^ān various allusions to the sins of Israel and use them to create a contrast between the Children of Israel and the faithful Arab believers of Muḥammad. This reveals a drastic change in the Islamic self-image. The community of believers is no longer universal, but exclusively Arab. The Children of Israel have lost their place in the chosen community, and Muḥammad's Arab believers are the new generation of this community; they revive and preserve the divine scheme which the sinful Israelites failed to follow.

This perception of the community can be demonstrated by means of two Qur^ānic passages which found their way into Muḥammad's *sīra*, that is, his biography, and served to establish the view that the Arab believers are God's new chosen community. The role of one passage will be examined in this chapter; the other will be considered in Chapter 4.

Sūrat al-Mā'ida (5):20–26

Sūrat al-Mā'ida (5):22–26 is based on the well-known Biblical affair of the spies.³⁵ In the Biblical version, as soon as the spies sent by Moses return with the report about the mighty inhabitants who possess the land of Canaan, the Children of Israel lose heart; they refuse to raid the land, and express their wish to return to Egypt. Their punishment for this is that they perish in the wilderness while wandering there for 40 years.

³⁰ Qur^ān 5:7.

³¹ Qur^ān 2:231.

³² Qur^ān 3:103.

³³ Qur^ān 5:11.

³⁴ Qur^ān 33:9.

³⁵ Numbers 13–14.

Only a few of Moses' generation (primarily Joshua and Caleb) enter the Promised Land with the new Israelite generation.

The Qurʾān has reproduced the same story in Sūrat al-Māʾida to demonstrate how the Children of Israel betrayed their status as God's chosen community and as recipients of His *niʿma*.

20. When Moses said to his people: "Oh my people, remember God's blessing upon you, when he appointed prophets among you, and appointed you kings, and gave you such as He had not given to any being.

21. Oh my people, enter the holy land which God has prescribed for you, and turn not back in your traces, to turn about losers".

22. They said: "Moses, there are people in it very arrogant; we will not enter it until they depart from it; if they depart from it then we will enter".

23. Said two men of those that feared God whom God had blessed: "Enter the gate in spite of them! When you enter it, you will be victors. Put you all your trust in God, if you are believers".

24. They said: "Moses, we will never enter it so long as they are in it. *Go forth, you and your Lord, and do battle; we will be sitting here*".

25. [Moses] said: "Oh my Lord, I rule no one except myself and my brother. So judge between us and the people of the ungodly".

26. [God] said: "Then it shall be forbidden them for 40 years, while they are wandering in the earth; so grieve not for the people of the ungodly".

Two verses of this passage emerge in traditions, one in the Syrian sphere and another in the Ḥijāz. In the former the message of continuity is retained, while in the latter it changes into one of contrast.

Jerusalem

The verse that appears in the Syrian sphere is 21, in which Moses commands the Children of Israel to enter the Holy Land. This appears in the story of the Islamic take-over of Jerusalem. Islamic tradition has changed the setting of this command, so that Muḥammad's believers are now the

people ordered to enter the Promised Land. This verse appears in the address of the Muslim commanders besieging Jerusalem, as recorded in a compilation attributed to al-Wāqidi.³⁶ It is related that one morning during prayer, Yazid ibn Abī Sufyān recited the Qurʾānic verse in which Moses commands his people to enter the Holy Land, and it so happened that on the same morning, all the other officers recited to their own soldiers the same Qurʾānic verse, even though they had not arranged to do so in advance.

The spontaneous recitation of this verse by all commanders indicates a divine scheme, and retains the notion that the Arab conquest of Jerusalem has re-enacted the ancient Israelite take-over of the holy city.

Hijāz

The verse that was built into the Hijāzī sphere is 24 (marked above in italics). Unlike the verse used in the Syrian sphere, which merely conveys the divine command, this verse tells the story of the sin of Israel. In it, the cowardly Children of Israel refuse to enter the land, and send Moses and his Lord to do battle on their own. In its Arabian setting, the verse is designed to create a contrast between the disobedient Israelites and the Arab believers who are commanded to wage war on the people of Quraysh who hold Mecca, the Hijāzī holy city. The Arabs accede with utter devotion. The comparison between the Israelites and the Arabs turns Muḥammad's campaigns in Arabia into a new version of an Israelite exodus, and the contrast between the Arabs and the Children of Israel turns Muḥammad's Arab *umma* into the new chosen people replacing the sinful Children of Israel.

The Qurʾānic verse describing the Israelite refusal to go to war was built into the descriptions of two of Muḥammad's military campaigns, Badr (2/624), and al-Ḥudaybiyya (6/628). A scrutiny of the relevant versions reveals not only the consciousness of the superiority of the Arabs over the Israelites, but also the impact of inner conflicts between various sections of early Islamic society. Let us begin with al-Ḥudaybiyya.

³⁶ Ps.-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, I, 145.

Al-Ḥudaybiyya

The general outline of the story of al-Ḥudaybiyya is well known: in 6/628, the Prophet has a vision in which he receives a divine command to set out for Mecca and perform the lesser pilgrimage—*ʿumra*—at the Kaʿba. The sanctuary is still dominated by the unbelievers of Quraysh, and as he and his followers approach the Meccan territory, the Meccans send forth forces to stop them and the Muslims halt near al-Ḥudaybiyya, where negotiations take place between the Meccans and the Muslims. The talks conclude with the well-known treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya.

The affair of al-Ḥudaybiyya is dealt with in the sources as a crucial turning point in the history of Islam, and the commentators of the Qurʾān identify it with the term *fath* (“opening”, and hence “conquest”) of Qurʾān 48:1; they explain that the final agreement concluded in al-Ḥudaybiyya enabled the Prophet to achieve his goal and perform the rites at the Kaʿba, and this in turn opened the final stage of a process culminating in the fall of Mecca.³⁷

Our interest in the present context is focused on the manner in which the Muslims react as soon as they are forced to halt while on their way to the Kaʿba. As in other cases in the *sīra*, the description of the reaction is available in two types of narrative: Qurʾānic and non-Qurʾānic.³⁸

The non-Qurʾānic level is revealed in two parallel versions of ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr which he quotes from Miswar ibn Makhrama (Medinan Companion, d. AH 64) and Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam (the caliph; Medinan, d. AH 65). Both versions describe a scene in which, on his way to Mecca, the Prophet meets some members of the tribe of Khuzāʿa who used to spy for him in Mecca. They break to him the news that the road to Mecca has been cut off. The first version is quoted from ʿUrwa by al-Zuhri, and is included in Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*.³⁹ In this version, the man of Khuzāʿa (of

³⁷ E.g. Ibn Saʿd, II, 104–105, and the commentaries on 48:1. On *fath*, Ḥudaybiyya and Mecca see further in G.R. Hawting, “Al-Ḥudaybiyya and the Conquest of Mecca: a Reconsideration of the Tradition about the Muslim Takeover of the Sanctuary”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986), 1–23.

³⁸ For the interaction between non-Qurʾānic and Qurʾānic layers in the *sīra*—for example, in the story of Muḥammad’s first revelation—see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 103–110.

³⁹ Ibn Hishām, III, 322–24. The same is quoted from Ibn Ishāq in Aḥmad, *Musnad*,

the sub-tribe of Ka^cb) tells Muḥammad that the Quraysh have left Mecca in two parties which have camped in two different places. One group comprises people wearing leopard skins (probably to signify their elevated rank as members of a holy tribe, and as guardians of the sanctuary who should not be attacked⁴⁰) who have brought with them their women and children and have camped in Dhū Ṭuwā. The second party is a cavalry force under the command of Khālīd ibn al-Walīd; it has camped ahead of the former group in Kurā^c al-Ghamīm. Upon hearing this, the Prophet declares that the Quraysh had better leave him alone because they have already been exhausted by the previous battles they waged against him. They should now let him deal freely with the rest of the polytheists, and wait and see who gains the upper hand. If the polytheists should overcome him, that is what the Quraysh desire, and if he should defeat the polytheists, the Quraysh can then choose between joining him as Muslims, or fighting him after having regained their military power. The Prophet then declares:

...by God, I will go on fighting (*ujāhidu*) for the mission with which God has entrusted me, till God makes it prevail....

In attributing such an utterance to the Prophet, the tradition elevates the notion of holy war (*jihād*) to the level of a divine duty that should be carried out at all costs. However, the tradition goes on to relate that the Prophet gave orders to find an alternative road to Mecca, which eventually brought him to al-Ḥudaybiyya, where negotiations finally prevented full-scale war.

The second version of ^cUrwa (again, on the authority of Miswar and Marwān) is quoted by Ma^cmar ibn Rāshīd (Baṣran/Yemeni, d. AH 154) through al-Zuhri. However, a certain change has occurred here: the

IV, 323; Ṭabarāni, *Kabīr*, XX, no. 14.

⁴⁰ The wearing of leopard skins and their use as saddle covers are considered in some traditions as signifying wealth and luxury, and are therefore forbidden. See ^cAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, I, nos. 217, 218, 220; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 95, 96, 99, 132, 135; Abū Dāwūd, II, 388 (31:40); Ṭaḥāwī, *Mushkil*, IV, 263–64. In other traditions, however, leopard skins are permitted. See ^cAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, I, nos. 229, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235; Ṭaḥāwī, *Mushkil*, IV, 264–65.

Prophet's devotion to God's mission is not solely his own, but is shared by one of his Companions, and thus a typical phenomenon in the *sīra* traditions is revealed: scenes that revolve solely around Muḥammad's own image may be expanded to include his Companions. In the latter case, political pressures seem to have left their mark on the shaping of the story, making it assert the virtues (*fadā'il*) of certain Companions.⁴¹

In this version of Ma'car, the Prophet sends out a spy from Khuzā'a who comes back with the news that the Quraysh have gathered their armed forces and are determined not to let the Muslims enter Mecca. The Prophet says to his Companions: "Advise me" (*ashirū 'alayya*). Before hearing the advice of his Companions, the Prophet himself formulates the options, and states that they can consider taking a different route and attack the camp of the unarmed families. Abū Bakr says that they had better resume their original journey to the Ka'ba and attack no one, but should be determined to fight whoever tries to stop them. The Prophet follows his advice and commands his men to go on.

This version, in which the Prophet holds a council of war, was preserved by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. AH 241)⁴² and was the one preferred by several authors of canonical *ḥadīth* collections, including al-Bukhārī (d. AH 256).⁴³ The actual course of the discussion during the consultation is focused on the virtues of Abū Bakr, the first caliph, who is actually the sole speaker. He features as a resolute believer who encourages the Prophet to adhere to his original mission and approach the Meccan sanctuary and fight if necessary.

The interpolation of the scene of consultation (*mashūra*) reflects the role of the life of Muḥammad as a precedent for all kinds of practices. Consultation is indeed an important issue treated in many traditions about the Prophet and his Companions, the latter figuring as Muḥammad's

⁴¹ For further such instances of the political impact on the shaping of *sīra* traditions see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 44–53, 171–75.

⁴² Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 328. See also Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XX, no. 13; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, IV, 99–101.

⁴³ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 161 (64:35); Nasā'i, *Kubrā*, V, nos. 8581–82 (78:1); Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 218; X, 109; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XI, no. 4872. And see also 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, 330–31 (no. 9720), where Abū Bakr's name is not mentioned.

worthy advisers.⁴⁴ These traditions can be found in the commentaries on Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3):159, which requests the Qurʾānic prophet to consult the believers. In some versions of our particular tradition, al-Zuhri adds a gloss to the effect that the Companion Abū Hurayra (d. AH 57) said that he had seen no one consulting his companions as frequently as the Prophet had done.⁴⁵ There were, however, attempts at reducing the scope of recommended consultation to specific matters only, such as military schemes. After all, thanks to divine inspiration, the Prophet did not need to rely heavily on human advice. Therefore, Abū Hurayra’s statement was sometimes expanded to include a remark to the effect that the Prophet only consulted his Companions concerning military actions.⁴⁶ A variant reading of Qurʾān 3:159 was also circulated, turning it into a request for consultation on certain matters only.⁴⁷ At any rate, a scene of council of war frequently reappears in various *futūḥ* stories, for example, in the one about the take-over of Jerusalem, where Abū ʿUbayda consults the local commanders on whether to take Jerusalem first or Caesarea.⁴⁸

The scene of consultation has been discussed at some length because this is the setting in which the Qurʾānic Israelite passage emerges. The Qurʾānic extract appears in the third version of ʿUrwa, which is quoted from him by his own son, Hishām. The *isnād* of this version does not contain a Companion, which makes it *mursal*.⁴⁹ Here one more Companion joins Abū Bakr in the consultation. The Prophet again suggests two options: either to approach the main armed force of the Quraysh, or to raid the unarmed families at the rear of the hostile tribes assisting the Quraysh. Abū Bakr again prefers the first option, and then another Companion speaks. He is al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad, who says:

By God, we shall not tell you what the Children of Israel told their prophet: “Go forth, you and your Lord, and do battle; we will be sitting here”. But [what we

⁴⁴ For more general aspects of the theme of councils as a *topos*, see Noth/Conrad, *The Early Islamic Historical Tradition*, 138–42.

⁴⁵ For the tradition of Abū Hurayra see also Ibn Wahb, *Jāmiʿ*, I, no. 288.

⁴⁶ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, II, 580.

⁴⁷ *Wa-shāwirhum fī baʿḍi l-amri*. See Bukhārī, *Adab*, I, 350 (Ibn ʿAbbās).

⁴⁸ Ps.-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, 143–44. See also Busse, “‘Omar’s Image”, 151.

⁴⁹ Ibn Abī Shayba, XIV, 429–30 (no. 18686). See also Kanz, X, no. 30153.

say to you is]: “Go forth, you and your Lord, and do battle; *we will be fighting with you*”.

The literary device that has been employed here to contrast Israelites and Arabs is obvious. The Arab believer, namely, al-Miqdād, changes the Israelite refusal of 5:24 (“... We will be sitting here”), and turns it into a positive Islamic version (“... We will be fighting with you”). Implicit in this version is the idea that the Islamic war waged by the Arab believers represents a renewal of an ancient command of God that has already been enjoined upon the Children of Israel, though only the Arab believers carry it out.

The selection of al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad for the role of the spokesman of Muḥammad’s Arab believers is not accidental. He features in the *awā’il* traditions as the first to have engaged in war with infidels,⁵⁰ and is also said to have been entrusted with the duty of a *qārī*², that is, one who recites militant Qur’ānic passages during battle to encourage the Muslim warriors.⁵¹ Moreover, a Qur’ānic reading (*qirā’a*) bearing his name was also in existence, and the people of Ḥimṣ reportedly used to follow it.⁵² In our tradition, al-Miqdād acts as a *qārī*² already in Muḥammad’s lifetime, though here he does not merely repeat a Qur’ānic passage, but also edits it and turns it into a statement of distinctive non-Israelite self-definition.

Al-Miqdād belongs to the Muhājirūn (“Emigrants”), and in saying his lines he actually speaks for his comrades, as does Abū Bakr, who belongs to the same group. The *faḍā’il* (“virtues”) of the Muhājirūn as warriors encouraging the entire community of believers on their renewed exodus are brought out here most clearly. However, al-Miqdād is also remembered as a supporter of °Alī and as having refrained from pledging allegiance to Abū Bakr.⁵³ His role in the story, therefore, seems also to have been inspired by an °Alid bias.

There are versions reflecting various degrees of attempts at shifting to—or at least sharing with—other Arab groups the honour of expressing

⁵⁰ Ibn °Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXV, 213.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, XXV, 209 (in the battle of Yarmūk).

⁵² G.H.A. Juynboll, *EJ*², VII, 32, s.v. “al-Miqdād b. °Amr”.

⁵³ E.g. Ya°qūbi, *Tārīkh*, II, 124.

the communal devotion to the idea of holy war. This is the case in al-Wāqidi's report of the Prophet's expedition to al-Ḥudaybiyya. Here a third Companion speaks after Abū Bakr and al-Miqdād. He is Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr, a Medinan leader (*naqīb*) of the Anṣār (of the tribe of Aws), who took part in holy war in Palestine. The occurrence of his name in the scene of al-Ḥudaybiyya projects his valour back to Arabia. After al-Miqdād utters his revised version of the cowardly reaction of the Children of Israel, Usayd says to the Prophet: "We think that we should stick to what we have set out for, and if anyone defies us we should fight him".⁵⁴ The Anṣār suffered from an inferior social status in comparison to the Muhājirūn and Quraysh, and this version is designed to let the Anṣār share the glory with the Muhājirūn.

As usual, traditions with Qur'ānic allusions in them could be used for exegetical purposes. The commentaries on Qur'ān 5:24 indeed contain traditions describing the events at al-Ḥudaybiyya. Al-Ṭabarī recorded a tradition of the Baṣran Qatāda ibn Di'āma that is focused just on the person uttering the revised Qur'ānic verse, namely, al-Miqdād. No council of war is mentioned here, and al-Miqdād is the only Companion speaking.⁵⁵ The tradition concludes with the statement that when al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad spoke, all the Muslims joined in collectively with a similar response.

Badr

Islamic tradition attached the scene of the council of war not only to al-Ḥudaybiyya, but to Badr as well, which took place in 2/624. This event marked the first great victory over the infidels, and therefore the exegetes of the Qur'ān identified this battle with the "day of the *furqān*", which is mentioned in Sūrat al-Anfāl (8):41.⁵⁶ The term *furqān* means "deliverance", and in other Qur'ānic verses it appears as something bestowed by God on Moses and Aaron.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, II, 580–81.

⁵⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VI, 115–16. The *isnād*: Yazīd ibn Zurayc (Baṣran, d. AH 182) ← Sa'īd ibn Abī 'Arūba (Baṣran, d. AH 156) ← Qatāda.

⁵⁶ E.g. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, X, 7.

⁵⁷ Qur'ān 2:53, 21:48. On the Qur'ānic derivatives of *f.r.q.* see further Bashear, "The

The council is said to have been held in the location of the mosque of °Irq al-Zābya,⁵⁸ which, as was seen in Chapter 2,⁵⁹ is also the place where Moses and the Children of Israel are said to have prayed on their way to Mecca. The descriptions of this council yet again contain the same allusion to the Qur^ʿānic refusal of the Children of Israel to go to war, which is likewise designed to mark the contrast between the sinful Israelites and the devoted Muslims.

In the story of the campaign of Badr, as recorded in the compilations of Ibn Ishāq⁶⁰ and al-Wāqidi,⁶¹ the Prophet sets out from Medina on his way to attack a Meccan caravan coming from Syria, but due to news he receives (from his spies) about armed forces having come from Mecca to defend the caravan, he halts on his way and asks his men to advise him. Abū Bakr speaks first, then °Umar, and it is stated that they have spoken well, which seems to mean that they have supported the idea to go to battle.

In al-Ḥudaybiyya, °Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb is not mentioned as taking part in the war council, and his absence accords with his militant disposition and alleged opposition to the final agreement. In the present context, however, his name is coupled with that of Abū Bakr and both act as Muḥammad's senior Companions, with whose advice the Prophet is perfectly pleased. There are, in fact, numerous other traditions in which both Abū Bakr and °Umar are praised as Muḥammad's best advisers.⁶² Most noteworthy are the traditions stating that Qur^ʿān 3:59, which requests the Qur^ʿānic prophet to consult the believers, refers to this pair of Companions.⁶³

Title *Fārūq*, 49–50.

⁵⁸ Samhūdi, III, 1009.

⁵⁹ Above, 38.

⁶⁰ Ibn Hishām, II, 266–67. See also Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, II, 434 (I, 1300).

⁶¹ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, I, 48–49. And see also Balādhuri, *Ashraf*, I, 351.

⁶² E.g. Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 227; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, I, 420 (Aḥmad).

⁶³ See the tradition of al-Kalbī (Muḥammad ibn al-Sāʿib, Kūfan, d. AH 146) ← Abū Šālih (Bādhām, a *mawlā* of Umm Hāniʿ), in Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, I, 420; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 90 (*Mustadrak*). And see also the tradition of °Amr ibn Dinār (Meccan, d. AH 126) ← Ibn °Abbās: Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, X, 109; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, I, 420 (*Mustadrak*); Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 90 (*Mustadrak* and Bayhaqī, *Sunan*).

However, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar are not alone here. As in the story of al-Ḥudaybiyya, another Companion speaks, and he is again the Muhājir al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. To make his point, he repeats the Qurʾānic response of the Children of Israel in the same revised manner as he does in the story of al-Ḥudaybiyya. The Prophet is extremely pleased with his words, and prays for him. Thus, the campaign of Badr has gained a link to the Israelite Exodus, but this link is again based on a contrast between sinful—and hence inferior—Israelites, and devoted—and hence superior—Arabs.

However, this is not the end of the version. After al-Miqdād, the Anṣār are asked to clarify their standpoint, which is essential because they have given Muḥammad shelter in their own town and might therefore refuse to join him in battle outside Medinan territory. Their leader, however, expresses his total support, and is willing to join the Prophet in war anywhere, even far away from their own abode. The name of the Anṣārī leader is this time different, not Usayd, as in al-Ḥudaybiyya, but rather his fellow tribesman, Saʿd ibn Muʿādh. The latter is remembered as a martyr who was mortally wounded during the battle of the Khandaq, which explains why the role of expressing unlimited devotion to the Islamic holy war on behalf of the Anṣār was assigned to him as well. The Prophet is pleased with the Anṣār's reaction.

There are more versions of the episode at Badr, in which the honour of revising the Qurʾānic response of the disobeying Israelites remains with al-Miqdād, but the role of the Muhājirūn, for whom he speaks, is magnified at the expense of the Anṣār. One of the traditions of this kind is traced back to the Anṣārī Companion Abū Ayyūb, a well-known warrior who died in battle at Constantinople. He is made to tell the story in the first person, in such a manner as to place the Anṣār in an unflattering light. The tradition was preserved by al-Ṭabarānī (d. AH 360).⁶⁴ Abū Ayyūb relates that the Prophet summoned the Anṣār to join him in the raid on the Meccan caravan, and they came along. However, when they

⁶⁴ The *isnād*: Ibn Lahīʿa, ʿAbdallāh (Egyptian, d. AH 174) ← Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb (Egyptian, d. AH 128) ← Aslam ibn Yazīd Abū ʿImrān al-Tujībī (Egyptian) ← Abū Ayyūb. See Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, IV, no. 4056. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 287 (on Qurʾān 8:5); *idem*, *Bidāya*, III, 263–64 (from the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Mardawayhi).

found out that the Meccans had discovered their plans, and when the Prophet asked for their advice, the Anṣār said: “By God, we have no power to do battle with the foe, we have only set out for the [unarmed] caravan”. The Prophet asked them again, and they repeated their refusal to fight. Then al-Miqdād spoke, saying: “We will not tell you what the People of Moses told him: ‘Go forth, you and your Lord, and do battle; we will be sitting here’”. Upon hearing this, the Anṣār became ashamed of themselves, and wished they had spoken the words of al-Miqdād.

In this specific setting of the episode, a contrast is implied not only between faithful Arabs and insubordinate Israelites, but also between Muhājirūn and Anṣār. While the Muhājirūn agree to fight, the Anṣār refuse, which puts them on a par with the Israelites and excludes them for the moment from the chosen community.

The tradition of Abū Ayyūb appears in the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. AH 327), in his commentary on Sūrat al-Anfāl (8):5–7.⁶⁵ This passage says that some of the believers showed reluctance when God brought the Prophet out of his home and disputed with him about the truth, wishing that the share with no “sting” (*shawka*) should be theirs. The commentators have linked this passage to the dilemma of Badr, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim has adduced the tradition of Abū Ayyūb to explain which party of the faithful Arabs was the reluctant one. In the present case, they are the Anṣār.

There are more traditions in which the contrast between Arabs and Israelites applies to the Muhājirūn alone, to the exclusion of the disobedient Anṣār. The following tradition focuses in on al-Miqdād, leaving aside all other Companions. Al-Miqdād’s lines are elevated here to the highest rank of devotion and faithfulness to the value of *jihād*. The tradition has an *isnād* reaching back to the Companion ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd (Medinan/Kūfan, d. AH 32),⁶⁶ who declares:

⁶⁵ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, V, 1659 (no. 8805). Quoted from Ibn Abī Ḥātim in *Fath al-bārī*, VII, 224.

⁶⁶ The *isnād*: Mukhāriq ibn ʿAbdallāh (Khalifa) ibn Jābir (Kūfan) ← Ṭāriq ibn Shihāb (Kūfan, d. AH 82) ← Ibn Masʿūd. There is also a less current *isnād*: ʿImrān ibn Zabyān (Kūfan, d. AH 157) ← Abū Yahyā Ḥakīm ibn Saʿd (Kūfan) ← Ibn Masʿūd. For the tradition with the latter *isnād*, see Ṭabarāni, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10502.

I have witnessed a valiant performance (*mashhad*) of al-Miqdād, and to have the same deed to my own credit would be dearer to me than anything else equal to it. He approached the Prophet when the latter was asking God to defeat the polytheists, and said: “Oh prophet of God, by God, we shall not tell you what the Children of Israel told their prophet: ‘Go forth, you and your Lord, and do battle; we will be sitting here’. Nay, we will fight in front of you, behind you, on your right and on your left”. I saw the Prophet’s face brighten with joy.

This version gained wide circulation and was recorded by Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim (d. AH 287) in a chapter entitled: “About the perseverance of the people with their leader under any state of trial”.⁶⁷ The tradition recurs in various historiographical and biographical compilations,⁶⁸ and was included by al-Bukhārī in a chapter about Badr.⁶⁹ In another version with the same *isnād*, the name of Badr is explicitly mentioned, but the admiring comment of Ibn Masʿūd is missing.⁷⁰ There is also a version in which the name of Ibn Masʿūd is missing from the *isnād* as well (*mursal*).⁷¹ These two versions recur in the commentaries on Qurʾān 5:24.⁷²

In contrast to the traditions surveyed thus far, there are traditions pertaining to the council of war at Badr in which the honour of the Anṣār is restored at the expense of the Muhājirūn. These traditions clearly reflect Anṣārī apologetics, as they try hard to highlight the role of the Anṣār in the collective Islamic warlike exertions. It is maintained here that the Anṣār not only provided Muḥammad with shelter in their hometown, but were also ready to support him anywhere outside Medinan territory, in contrast to the Muhājirūn, who were reluctant to join him in battle. This is achieved chiefly by changing the order of the speakers in the council of war.

⁶⁷ Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Jihād*, II, no. 221.

⁶⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 434 (I, 1300); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 389–90, 428; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, III, 45–46.

⁶⁹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 93 (64:4). And see *Mustadrak*, III, 349 (*Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*).

⁷⁰ Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Jihād*, II, no. 220; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, VI, 64–65 (65, *sūra* 5); Nasāʿī, *Kubrā*, VI, no. 11140 (82:114).

⁷¹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 314.

⁷² Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VI, 115; Wāḥidi, *Wasīṭ*, II, 174; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, II, 39.

Some of these pro-Anṣār versions appear in the commentaries on the above-mentioned passage of Sūrat al-Anfāl (8):5–7. In some of them, the Anṣār are those who support the military option. This is the case in the version of the exegete al-Suddī, in which the Anṣārī leader Saʿd ibn Muʿādh is the first to express utter support for the military option, whereas Abū Bakr, who speaks before him, only recommends to raid the caravan, not the armed troops. Al-Miqdād, too, endorses the military option, and again repeats the revised Qurʾānic response of the Children of Israel. However, he makes his statement only after Saʿd ibn Muʿādh, which diminishes the significance of his contribution. The Prophet is, of course, pleased with the militant advice more than he is with that of Abū Bakr.⁷³

In the commentary of Muqātil on the same passage,⁷⁴ the Prophet consults the Muslims concerning “one of the two parties” promised by God, and the Muslims suggest that they deal with the caravan, and not fight the armed forces. Now the Prophet repeats the same question and the same plan is suggested by the Muslims, but then Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda, a leader of the Anṣār, speaks and expresses the Anṣār’s utter readiness to do whatever the Prophet sees fit, even to follow him as far as Aden. The Prophet is happy with this response. The last to speak is the Muhājir al-Miqdād, who confirms that he will join the Prophet. The allusion to the Qurʾānic Israelite verse is missing from his words, which renders al-Miqdād’s belated response completely insignificant.

In this specific version of Muqātil, the name of the Anṣārī leader is slightly different, not Saʿd ibn Muʿādh, but rather Saʿd ibn ʿUbāda. The latter belonged to the Khazraj, and not to the Aws as the former, and after the death of the Prophet, he settled in Damascus where he died. The occurrence of his name in our story is significant because some authorities have claimed that he never witnessed the battle of Badr.⁷⁵ However, since he is remembered as having taken part in all other battles of the Prophet, during which he was the bearer of the standard of the Anṣār,⁷⁶ his name

⁷³ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, IX, 124–25 (on Qurʾān 8:5). The *isnād*: Asbāʾ (Kūfan, d. AH 200) ← al-Suddī.

⁷⁴ Muqātil, II, 100–101.

⁷⁵ See Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), IX, 236.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

could easily replace that of Sa^cd ibn Mu^cādh in Badr. In fact, these two persons were known as al-Sa^cdān (“the two Sa^cds”), which means that their names were interchangeable.

In another tradition of this pro-Anṣārī group, the name of al-Miqdād is entirely omitted from the council of war, and so too is the allusion to the cowardly Israelite reaction of Qur^ʿān 5:24. Moreover, the rest of the Muhājirūn—namely, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar—are told by the Prophet to be seated, which means that he is either uninterested in or dissatisfied with their advice. Only the advice of the Anṣārī leader, Sa^cd ibn ʿUbāda, is quoted verbatim by the narrator. Sa^cd expresses his readiness to follow the Prophet in his battle to the remotest of places. This version, which was recorded by ʿAbd al-Razzāq, is traced back to ʿIkrima, Ibn ʿAbbās’ *mawlā* (Medinan, d. AH 105).⁷⁷ A similar setting of the events is provided in a tradition traced back to Anas ibn Mālik,⁷⁸ which was recorded in several *ḥadīth* compilations.⁷⁹

In further versions, the allusion to the Qur^ʿānic Children of Israel reappears, but al-Miqdād remains absent,⁸⁰ and the role of repeating its revised version has been transferred to the Anṣār. With this change, the process of shifting the glory from the Muhājirūn to the Anṣār has been completed. The most explicit tradition of this kind is the one with the *isnād*: Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿAlqama (Medinan, d. AH 144) ← his father ʿAlqama ibn Waqqāṣ al-Laythī (Medinan), as recorded in the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abi Shayba.⁸¹ Abū Bakr and ʿUmar express an insignificant advice in which they merely refer to the location of the Meccans,

⁷⁷ The *isnād*: Ma^cmar ibn Rāshid (Baṣran/Yemeni, d. AH 154) ← Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī (Baṣran, d. AH 131) ← ʿIkrima. See ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, 350 (no. 9727).

⁷⁸ The *isnād*: Ḥammād ibn Salama (Baṣran, d. AH 167) ← Thābit al-Bunānī (Baṣran, d. AH 123) ← Anas.

⁷⁹ Ibn Abi Shayba, XIV, 377–78 (no. 18555); Muslim, V, 170 (32, *Bāb ghazwat Badr*); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XI, no. 4722. And see also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 257–58; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, III, 47.

⁸⁰ But see Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 219, where Sa^cd’s name is replaced by that of al-Miqdād, as the Anṣār’s (!) spokesman, in the tradition of Anas.

⁸¹ Ibn Abi Shayba, XIV, 355 (no. 18507). And see also Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, III, 264 (from Ibn Mardawayhi); *idem*, *Tafsīr*, II, 287 (on Qur^ʿān 8:5–7).

whereas the Anṣārī leader, who this time is Saʿd ibn Muʿādh, explicitly recommends a military confrontation. He says: “We are not like the Israelites who said to Moses: ‘Go you and your Lord and do battle....’”

There is one more tradition with a similar gist, which is again traced back to Anas ibn Mālik.⁸² Here, however, the Anṣār speak collectively, and no individual spokesman is mentioned by name. The advice of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, who speak first, remains unspecified. The tradition was recorded by Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, and recurs in some *ḥadīth* compilations, as well as in commentaries on Qurʾān 5:24.⁸³

Finally, there is a version which rises above inner Islamic conflicts; here the contrast between the Qurʾānic Children of Israel and the faithful Arabs is expressed collectively on behalf of the entire community of believers. The Companion ʿUtba ibn ʿAbd al-Sulamī (Ḥimsī Companion, d. AH 87), who is renowned as an outstanding warrior, is reported to have recounted that when the Prophet ordered the Muslims to wage war on the infidels, they said:⁸⁴

Oh prophet of God, in that case we shall not tell you what the Children of Israel said: “Go forth, you and your Lord, and do battle; we will be sitting here”. Nay [we say]: “Go forth you and your Lord and do battle. We will be fighting with you”.

The entire Arabian *umma* as one collective group constitutes here the new chosen community that replaces the Children of Israel.

Interlude: the Shīʿī Outlook

The foregoing chapters have exposed two basic trends in the Islamic attitude towards the Children of Israel, one of which focused on their

⁸² The *isnād*: Ḥumayd al-Ṭawīl (Baṣran, d. AH 142) ← Anas.

⁸³ Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Jihād*, no. 222; Nasāʿī, *Kubrā*, V, no. 8580 (78:1); VI, no. 11141 (82:114); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XI, no. 4721; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, X, 109; Wāḥidī, *Wasī*, II, 174–75 (on 5:24); Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 39 (on 5:24). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 105, 188; Abū Yaʿlā, VI, nos. 3766, 3803.

⁸⁴ The *isnād*: al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb al-Ḥaḍramī ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Nāsij al-Ḥaḍramī ← ʿUtba ibn ʿAbd. See Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 183; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XVII, no. 306; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 39 (on Qurʾān 5:24).

virtuous messianic image, and the other, on their sinful Qurʾānic image. Both trends are also discernible among the Shiʿis. The messianic aspect, which in the Sunnī context was designed to legitimise the Arab conquest of the Promised Land (Chapter 1), is used in the Shiʿi context to anchor the status of the Shiʿis and their *imāms* in a predestined Biblical scheme.

Broadly speaking, the Shiʿis have turned the prophets into prototypes of the Shiʿis, and Shiʿi sources contain numerous traditions elaborating on the parallelism between prophets and *imāms*.⁸⁵ Biblical prophecies, which in the Sunnī sphere were interpreted as predicting the emergence of Muḥammad and his followers, have been reproduced in Shiʿi sources where they have become visions about ʿAlī and the *imāms*.⁸⁶ This also comes out in traditions drawing on material seen in the previous chapters. Elements from Kaʿb’s Biblical description of the Islamic *umma* as recited to ʿUmar reappear in a clear Shiʿi context. They emerge in a description of the Shiʿis as given by ʿAlī to his *mawlā*, the Syrian Nawf ibn Fuḍāla al-Bakālī (d. ca. AH 90–100), who was a son of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār’s wife by another marriage. ʿAlī says among other things that the Shiʿis are “devout (*ruhbān*) at night and lions at daylight. When night comes, they wear loincloths”, and so on.⁸⁷ This is the exact Biblical description of the Islamic *umma* as conveyed by Kaʿb.⁸⁸

The theme of the Lost Tribes was especially relevant to the Shiʿi notion of the concealment (*ghayba*) of the *imāms*, and in this context Shiʿi tradition establishes a direct link between the *imāms* and the hidden Israelites. Such a link is revealed in a legend told by the fifth *imām* Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Bāqir (Medinan, d. AH 114). He used to tell that he knew a man in Medina who one night had gone out eastward, met the survivors of the “people of Moses”, settled an argument among them, and returned to Medina. Some said that the man was al-Bāqir himself.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ E.g. Uri Rubin, “Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shiʿa Tradition”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979), 41–65. On the identification of Shiʿis with virtuous Israelites see further Meir M. Bar-Asher, “On Judaism and the Jews in Early Shiʿi Religious Literature”, *Peʿamim* 61 (1994), 26–33 (in Hebrew).

⁸⁶ E.g. Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 92–94.

⁸⁷ Karājiki, *Kanz al-fawāʾid*, I, 88.

⁸⁸ Above, 14.

⁸⁹ Rāwandi, *Kharāʾij*, I, 282 (no. 14); al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Ikhtisāṣ*, 317–18.

It is clear that unlike the Sunnis, for whom Jewish messianism was an apologetic tool when facing non-Muslims, for the Shi'is it served as a similar weapon when facing the Sunnis. On the other hand, the Qur'anic sinful image of the Children of Israel has also been used by the Shi'is to highlight their own superiority to their Sunni opponents. Hence, for the Shi'is, the notion of the superiority of the Arab *umma* meant the superiority of Shi'is—the true *umma*—over Sunnis. The sinful Israelites have become in the Shi'i sphere prototypes of 'Ali's enemies, and the parallelism between them is demonstrated in a series of traditions using various aspects of the Qur'anic sins of the Children of Israel. One set of traditions concentrates on the persecution and execution of the Israelite prophets. One tradition of this group says that God held back rains from the Israelites because they persecuted their prophets, and He will do the same to the Muslims for hating 'Ali.⁹⁰ The Shi'is applied the Israelite sin against the prophets to the Umayyads in particular, whom they held responsible for the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn and his party in Karbalā' (61/680).⁹¹ A link between the guilty Umayyads and the sinful Israelites is established in a speech of al-Ḥusayn's grandson, the *imām* Zayd ibn 'Ali (d. AH 122). He says that the people of Quraysh boast of the fact that Muḥammad is a Qurashī, a fact also acknowledged by the non-Arabs. He then goes on to warn the believers, saying:

Beware of God, oh servants of God, and accept the truth and support those who summon you to the truth, and do not follow the way (*sunna*) of the Children of Israel; they rejected their prophets and killed the family (*ahl bayt*) of their prophet.⁹²

This implies that those who killed the members of Muḥammad's family—i.e. the Umayyads who killed al-Ḥusayn and his party—have followed in the ways of the sinful Israelites who had killed their own prophets. Furthermore, Shi'i traditions maintain that the previous com-

⁹⁰ Karājiki, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, I, 148.

⁹¹ For which see Etan Kohlberg, "Medieval Muslim Views on Martyrdom", *Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Mededelingen van de Afdeling Letterkunde*, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 60 no. 7 (Amsterdam, 1997), 281–307.

⁹² Furāt, *Tafsir*, I, 136 (no. 162). Quoted already in Kister, "Ḥaddithū", 233 n. 149.

munities who killed their prophets were bastards (*awlād zinā*),⁹³ which means that the Umayyads too are the offspring of illicit intercourse. This fits in with the general Shi'ī tendency to see in its enemies *awlād zinā*.⁹⁴ An explicit parallelism between the massacre at Karbalā' and the prophets killed by the Israelites emerges in a tradition in which 'Alī says that 200 prophets, 200 legateses (*awṣiyā'*) and 200 of their children (*sibt*) died as martyrs in Karbalā', together with their followers.⁹⁵

The Qur'ānic sin of the calf was also applied to the massacre in Karbalā'. The link is established in traditions recounting that after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, some Shi'īs decided to avenge his death with self-defiance, relying on the Qur'ānic request of the Children of Israel to "kill themselves", and thus atone for the sin of their brethren who made the calf (Qur'ān 2:54). This implies a parallelism between the massacre of Karbalā' and the worship of the calf. Other Shi'īs, however, refuse to die in a hopeless battle, and claim that contrary to the Children of Israel, the Muslims are not allowed to take their own life.⁹⁶

The violation of the Sabbath by the Qur'ānic Israelites also became a model of the massacre at Karbalā'. This comes out in a tradition saying that al-Ḥusayn was killed on a Saturday, and that the Islamic *umma* assailed him like the Israelites, who had violated the Sabbath.⁹⁷

The Shi'īs applied to the Umayyads not only Qur'ānic models of Israelite sin, but also the Qur'ānic model of Pharaoh, who slew the sons of the Israelites.⁹⁸ In this case, the persecuted Shi'īs are equated with the persecuted Israelites of Pharaoh's time. This equation is drawn in a series of traditions. In one of them, Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ashtar states that what 'Ub-

⁹³ Ibn Qūlawayhi, *Ziyārāt*, no. 205.

⁹⁴ Etan Kohlberg, "The Position of the *Walad al-Zinā* in Imāmi Shi'ism", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48 (1985), 239–41.

⁹⁵ Ibn Qūlawayhi, *Ziyārāt*, no. 686.

⁹⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, V, 554–55 (II, 500–501); Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 205. And see G. R. Hawting, "Two Citations from the Qur'ān in 'Historical Sources' for Early Islam", in G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, eds., *Approaches to the Qur'ān* (London and New York, 1993), 264–65; *idem*, "The Tawwābūn, Atonement and 'Āshūrā'", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 (1994), 168–69; Kohlberg, "Martyrdom", 303.

⁹⁷ Ibn Qūlawayhi, *Ziyārāt*, no. 188.

⁹⁸ Qur'ān 40:25.

aydallāh ibn Ziyād did to al-Ḥusayn [at Karbalāʾ] is worse than what the Pharaoh did to the noble Children of Israel.⁹⁹ Another Shiʿī tradition referring to the massacre of Karbalāʾ attributes to al-Ḥusayn’s son, ʿAlī, who speaks to the Kūfan al-Minhāl ibn ʿAmr al-Asadī, the statement that the Shiʿīs have become like the Children of Israel under Pharaoh; he killed the Israelites’ sons and spared the females.¹⁰⁰

The persecution of the Shiʿīs was also read into Qurʾān exegesis, for example that of Sūrat Banū Isrāʾīl (17):4. Here the Children of Israel are destined to do corruption in the earth twice, and to exceed in doing evil. The Sixth *imām*, Abū ʿAbdallāh Jaʿfar al-Šādiq (d. AH 148), is said to have explained that the verse refers to three instances of enmity against the Shiʿīs—the assault on ʿAlī, on al-Ḥasan and on al-Ḥusayn.¹⁰¹ Thus, the Muslim enemies of the Shiʿīs again emerge as sinful Israelites.

The Israelite sin of the spies occupies a special place in the extant Shiʿī traditions. The traditions alluding to this sin deal with the events that took place in Medina after Muḥammad’s death; they revolve around the notion that Muḥammad’s Companions deprived ʿAlī of his legitimate right to be Muḥammad’s heir and become a caliph. To illustrate the gravity of the sin, the traditions have recourse to the affair of the spies. Such a tradition appears in the commentary of al-ʿAyyāshī (third century AH) on the Qurʾānic passage describing the Israelite refusal to fight. It opens with a widely current Prophetic statement about the symmetry of conduct linking the Muslims and the previous communities. This is a “*sunna* statement”, a type which will be discussed below (Chapter 8):

By God, you will follow ways (*sunan*) as those followed by those who were before you. [The ways] will match each other as a pair of shoes, and as a pair of feathers of an arrow (...*ḥadhwa l-naʿli bi-l-naʿli wa-l-quhdha bi-l-quhdha*). You will not fail to go their way, and they will not fail to go your way.

This Prophetic statement is quoted by the *imām* Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, who goes on to say that 40,000 people of the Children of Israel rebelled

⁹⁹ Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, VI, 88 (II, 711); Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 281.

¹⁰⁰ Furāt, *Tafsīr*, I, 149 (no. 187). Quoted from Furāt in Kister, “*Haddithū*”, 233 n. 145. And see also Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, V, 133.

¹⁰¹ ʿAyyāshī, II, 304 (no. 20); Ibn Qūlawayhi, *Ziyārāt*, nos. 153, 160.

against Moses and refused to fight with him, and only a minority supported him, including Aaron and his two sons, as well as Joshua and Caleb. The rebels wandered for 40 years in the wilderness and perished there because of their sins. This was identical with what happened to the Muslims, as one sole of a shoe matches another, because when the Prophet died, no one followed the right path except for ʿAli and his two sons, as well as Salmān, al-Miqdād and Abū Dharr; 40 years later, ʿAli waged war on his opponents.¹⁰²

This tradition equates the Israelite generation that perished in the wilderness with the Sunnīs of the first Islamic generation. They are those Muslims who did not recognise ʿAli’s right to succeed the Prophet as a caliph. Aaron, Joshua and Caleb are referred to as prototypes of the minority of the faithful entourage that foreshadows the faithful Shiʿis. The Muslims mentioned beside ʿAli and his two sons are venerated by the Shiʿis as valiant warriors in the cause of God.¹⁰³ All of them constitute the hard core of the chosen community that retains the glorious heritage of the righteous Israelites.

The names of Joshua and Caleb are not mentioned in the Qurʾān, and the Shiʿis gained their knowledge of them directly from the Bible. Since these two men were a minority among a majority of sinners, the comparison with the Shiʿis was very apt indeed. Joshua in particular is a central personage in Shiʿi tradition, which compares his role as the successor of Moses to that of ʿAli as Muḥammad’s *waṣiyy*.¹⁰⁴ In one tradition, both are said to have been rejected by some of their respective peoples.¹⁰⁵

Special note should be taken of the occurrence of al-Miqdād’s name among ʿAli’s entourage, which may indicate that the Shiʿis had special interest in disseminating the above traditions in which he is the one expressing his devotion to Muḥammad by revising the Qurʾānic verse about the sinful Israelites. Indeed, a version of the tradition appears in a Shiʿi

¹⁰² ʿAyyāshī, I, 332–33 (no. 68 [on Qurʾān 5:24]). And see editor’s comments (p. 333 n. 3), on the chronology of ʿAli’s career.

¹⁰³ See Shiʿi traditions in praise of al-Miqdād, Abū Dharr and Salmān, in al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Ikhtisās*, 8–9, 222–23.

¹⁰⁴ See Rubin, “Prophets and Progenitors”, 51–52.

¹⁰⁵ Furāt, *Tafsir*, I, 183–84 (no. 235). Quoted from Furāt in Kister, “*Haddithū*”, 233 n. 148.

commentary on the Qur^ʿān.¹⁰⁶ It is close to the version recorded by Ibn Ishāq and al-Wāqidī in which, after al-Miqdād, the Anṣārī leader Sa^ʿd ibn Mu^ʿādh supports the military option. However, a significant revision has taken place here. While in the original version Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, who speak first, say agreeable words, in the present version their names have been omitted and the Prophet tells them to sit down, which means that he is displeased with them. Thus, a typical phenomenon is exposed: Shi^ʿī compilers employ Sunnī versions which fit their purposes, but they do not hesitate to revise them as necessary.

¹⁰⁶ Qummi, *Tafsir*, I, 258–59.

CHAPTER 4

THE GATE OF *HITTA*¹

Another Qur^ʿānic passage used in the *sīra* to mark the contrast between Muḥammad’s Arab believers and the sinful Children of Israel deals with the affair of *hitta*. The Qur^ʿānic story about it is again connected with a command given by Moses to the Children of Israel to enter the Promised Land. The scene occurs both in Sūrat al-Baqara (2):58–59 and in Sūrat al-A^ʿrāf (7):161–62. The former passage reads:

2:58: When We said: “Enter this town and eat plenty in it wherever you want, and enter the gate prostrating yourselves, and say ‘*hitta*’, that We may forgive you your sins; and We shall give the good-doers more [reward]”.

2:59: But those who did evil changed the word which they were told to say, and We brought down upon those who did evil a calamity from heaven, for the sin they had committed.

The command given to the Children of Israel in this passage is to enter the “town” (*al-qarya*), and while going through its gate, to say the word *hitta* and to prostrate themselves. Before we examine the literary role of this passage in Islamic tradition, it would be useful to clarify the Biblical origin of this Qur^ʿānic scene. This has not yet been done by Islamists.

The main problem stems from the word *hitta* which the Children of Israel are commanded to pronounce while entering the gate of the “town”. The word has caused much trouble to Muslim commentators, as well as to modern Islamists. Several of the latter have tried to discover the Biblical origin of the word, but none of their suggestions seem satis-

¹ I am grateful to Michael Lecker, Amikam Elad and Mcir Bar-Asher for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

factory.² The most interesting attempts have been those looking for the origin of the story in Jewish traditions revolving around various liturgical texts uttered by a king or a priest when entering the gates of the Temple in Jerusalem; this line of thought has inspired a recent study by Heribert Busse.³ However, the disadvantages of these suggestions are obvious. The suggested Jewish stories do not refer to the history of the tribes of Israel, they are not connected with the issue of entrance into the Promised Land, and above all, they lack the most essential element of the story as recorded in the Qurʾān, namely, the changing of the word *ḥiṭṭa* and the annihilation of those who have changed it.

In order to elucidate the Biblical origin of the *ḥiṭṭa* story, one has first to clarify the Qurʾānic context of the *ḥiṭṭa* passage. This passage describes a test which all those entering the town must undergo. The test is to say the word *ḥiṭṭa* as well as to prostrate themselves. There are some who fail to accomplish the required undertakings and are therefore destroyed. A similar test is described in the Bible, again in the history of the tribes of Israel; it is designed to decide who will enter the Land of Israel, or more exactly, who will cross the bridges of the Jordan River from east to west. Only those who say a certain word are allowed to cross. Those that say another word instead are denied access and killed. The story is recorded in Judges 12:5–6. In order to get permission to cross the bridges of the Jordan River, all Israelites are put to the test by those in command of the bridges (the Gileadites), and whoever wants to cross has to say the word *shibboleth*. The people of the tribe of Ephraim fail to pronounce it correctly and instead say *sibboleth* (because in their dialect “*sh*” is pronounced “*s*”); thus their tribal affiliation is revealed, which has been the aim of the test, and they are killed on the spot.

Shibboleth in Hebrew means “ear of wheat”, and “wheat” in Hebrew is *ḥiṭṭa*, which provides an obvious link to the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa* passage. In the Qurʾānic transformation of the story the word *shibboleth* was replaced by the synonymous Hebrew word *ḥiṭṭa*. The story thus lost its

² For a summary of the various suggestions made by western scholars, see Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 19–20.

³ Heribert Busse, “*Bāb ḥiṭṭa* in Jerusalem and Surah 2:58”, paper presented at the Seventh International Colloquium: From Jāhiliyya to Islam, Jerusalem, 1996.

point (dialectical peculiarities as a means of identification), and the Qurʾān no longer knows the other word pronounced by the sinful Israelites instead of the word that was supposed to grant them entrance to the Promised Land.

It may be assumed that *ḥiṭṭa* replaced *shibboleth* in the Qurʾānic version because unlike *shibboleth*, *ḥiṭṭa* could be associated with a genuine Arabic root: *ḥ.t.t.*, which means “to put down”, “to remove”, in the sense of forgiveness of sins or atonement. The immediate aim of the test in the Qurʾān is indeed to grant forgiveness of sins to those saying *ḥiṭṭa*, and the majority of the Muslim exegetes explained the word in this sense.⁴ The word also occurs in the same sense in *ḥadīth*.⁵ However, in some interpretations the word has undergone Islamisation, being said to represent well-known Islamic sacred formulae which are regarded as the origins of blessings, such as the *basmala*⁶ or the *shahāda*.⁷

However, the Biblical origin of the term *ḥiṭṭa* was not altogether forgotten, and in a statement attributed to Kaʿb al-Aḥbār it is said to be a Biblical word signifying the name of the month of Ramaḍān.⁸ But here again *ḥiṭṭa* signifies atonement (through fasting).

Moreover, the relationship of the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa* to the Hebrew *shibboleth* has also been preserved to some extent in the manner in which the exegetes interpreted the changing of the word *ḥiṭṭa* by the Children of Israel. Some exegetes say that instead of *ḥiṭṭa*, the Children of Israel said *ḥiṭṭa*: “wheat”,⁹ or *ḥiṭṭa sumqātā*, in the sense of “red wheat” (in Ara-

⁴ Muqātil, I, 110; Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz*, I, 41; ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 46; Huw-wārī, I, 109, 110; Ibn Qutayba, *Gharīb al-qurʾān*, 50; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 238; Samarqandi, I, 121; Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Berlin), 100; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 88; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 283.

⁵ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 195, 196 (...*man ibtalāhu llāhu bi-balāʾin fi jasadīhi fa-huwa lahu ḥiṭṭa*).

⁶ Samarqandi, I, 121.

⁷ See the tradition of al-Ḥakam ibn Abān (ʿAdanī, d. AH 154) ← ʿIkrima, *mawlā* of Ibn ʿAbbās (Medinan, d. AH 105), in ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 47; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 238; Māwardī, I, 126.

⁸ Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab*, III, 307–308 (no. 3616); Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 188 (on Qurʾān 2:185).

⁹ See the interpretation of Ibn Abi Najīh (ʿAbdallāh, Meccan, d. AH 131) ← Mujāhid ibn Jabr (Meccan, d. AH 104), in Mujāhid, I, 76. Saʿid ibn Jubayr (Kūfan, d. AH 95) ← Ibn ʿAbbās: Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241; *Mustadrak*, II, 262.

maic, *sumqātā* means “red”).¹⁰ This interpretation assumes that the form *ḥiṭṭa* is a pun on *ḥiṭṭa*, so that instead of asking forgiveness (*ḥiṭṭa*), the Children of Israel asked for wheat (*ḥiṭṭa*). The assertion that they asked for red wheat in particular indicates that this kind was considered the best, as is also the case in a story about Abraham who brings to his impoverished people seeds of red wheat which produce lots of excellent grains.¹¹

In other interpretations, the pun is made by changing *ḥiṭṭa* into *ḥibba*, “seeds”. This word is usually printed in the sources as *ḥabba*, but the form *ḥibba*¹² is preferable because it rhymes with *ḥiṭṭa*, so that the play on words is fully maintained. Most prevalent is the interpretation traced back to the Prophet himself through Abū Hurayra, to the effect that instead of *ḥiṭṭa*, the Children of Israel said *ḥibba fī shaʿara*: “seeds on a piece of hair (i.e. on a thread)”. The word *shaʿara* (= *shaʿra*), “hair”, is sometimes changed into *shuʿayra* (but printed *shaʿira*, to denote “barley”)—“a small piece of hair”.¹³ The same interpretation (*ḥibba fī shuʿayra*) was also recorded on the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatāda, and Ibn ʿAbbās.¹⁴ Al-Rabīʿ ibn Anas (Baṣran, d. AH 139) is also credited with the same interpretation.¹⁵ Some interpretations with *shaʿara*/

¹⁰ Muqātil, I, 110; Huwwārī, I, 110 (al-Kalbi); Ibn Qutayba, *Gharib al-qurʿān*, 50; Samarqandī, I, 122 (*bi-lughat al-Qabaṭ*); Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Berlin), 100; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 89; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 283 (*bi-l-Nabaṭiyya*); Ibn Abī l-Sinān, fol. 54a (*bi-lughat al-Nabaṭ*); Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, I, 411 (Hebrew). And see Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, I, 266 (*Suryāniyya*). Cf. Lane, s.v. *ḥiṭṭa*.

¹¹ Ibn Abī Shayba, XI, no. 11868; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 116–17 (I thank Aliza Shnizer for this reference).

¹² Cf. Lane, s.v. *ḥibba*.

¹³ The *isnād*: Maʿmar ibn Rāshid (Baṣran/Yemeni, d. AH 154) ← Hammām ibn Munabbih (Yemeni, d. AH 131) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet. See Hammām ibn Munabbih, *Ṣaḥīfa*, 569 (no. 116); Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 240 (here: *ḥibba fī shuʿayra*); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 318. This tradition was also included in *muṣannaḥ* compilations: Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 190 (60:28), VI, 22–23, 75–76 (65, *sūra* 2:58, 7:161); Muslim, VIII, 237–38 (54, trad. 1); Tirmidhī/*Tuhfa*, VIII, no. 4032 (44, *sūra* 2:58; [here: *ḥibba fī shuʿayra*]); Nasāʾī, *Kubrā*, VI, no. 10989; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XIV, no. 6251.

¹⁴ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 47; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241–42.

¹⁵ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241.

shu^cayra again employ the form *ḥinṭa*, instead of *ḥibba*—*ḥinṭa fī shu^cayra*: “wheat on a small piece of hair”.¹⁶

The interpretation of ^cAbdallāh ibn Mas^cūd (Medinan/Kūfan Companion, d. AH 32) runs along similar lines; it says that the Children of Israel said: *ḥinṭa ḥamrā^ʿ fihā shu^cayra*: “a red [grain of] wheat with a piece of hair [passed through] it.”¹⁷ A certain version of the tradition of ^cAbdallāh ibn Mas^cūd provides the supposed Hebrew or the Aramaic origin of the words uttered by the Children of Israel, but the text is too obscure. At any rate, the tradition asserts that the meaning of their words was “a pierced grain of red wheat, or seeds, strung on a black piece of hair.”¹⁸

It is difficult to work out the significance of the allusion to the piece of hair, or thread, on which the grains are strung. One may guess, however, that since the Aramaic for a “thread” is *ḥūṭā*—which could be another pun on *ḥiṭṭa*—this word could also be the origin of the Arabic *sha^cra/shu^cayra*. On the other hand, one should also bear in mind the equally plausible possibility that *shu^cayra* should be read *sha^cira*, “barley”, in which case the Children of Israel ask for wheat mixed with barley. In the version of Abū Hurayra from Ibn ^cAbbās, as recorded in Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*,¹⁹ the Children of Israel say *ḥinṭ fī sha^cir*, which Guillaume renders as “Wheat is in the barley”.²⁰

¹⁶ See the tradition of Sa^cid ibn Jubayr or ^cIkrima from Ibn ^cAbbās on the authority of the Prophet, in Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 240.

¹⁷ The *isnād*: al-Suddī (Ismā^cil ibn ^cAbd al-Raḥmān, Kūfan, d. AH 128) ← Abū Sa^cd al-Azdī (*qāri^ʿ* al-Azd) ← Abū l-Kanūd al-Azdī (Kūfan) ← ^cAbdallāh ibn Mas^cūd. See Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, I, 99; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, IX, no. 9027. There is also a similar interpretation of al-Naḍr ibn ^cArabī (d. AH 168) ← ^cIkrima, *maw-lā* of Ibn ^cAbbās (Medinan, d. AH 105), in Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241.

¹⁸ *Ḥinṭa ḥamrā^ʿ qawiyya fihā sha^cara sawdā^ʿ/ḥabbat ḥinṭa ḥamrā^ʿ mathqūba fihā shu^cayra sawdā^ʿ*. The Hebrew words for this are said to have been: *ḥiṭṭa sumqāta azbah mazbāl/zabā hazbā*. See *Mustadrak*, II, 321 (*Tafsīr*, *sūra* 7:161). See also Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, I, 99; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 71. In Ibn al-^cArabī, *Aḥkām*, I, 21 they say: *sumqātā azahu hazbā*, which is explained as: *ḥabba maqluwwa fī sha^cra marbūta* (“fried grain strung on a piece of hair”).

¹⁹ Ibn Hishām, II, 183.

²⁰ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 250.

Whatever the case may be, this variety of interpretations amounts to the idea that the changing of the word *ḥiṭṭa* by the Children of Israel was connected with wheat, which seems to preserve some of the original Biblical story. Moreover, according to an interpretation recorded in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Zād al-masīr* on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ, they said *sunbulāta*,²¹ which is the most explicit—though isolated—remnant of the relation between the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa* and the original Biblical story of *shibboleth/sibboleth*.

In the Qurʾānic setting, the time of the Biblical story of *shibboleth/sibboleth* has been changed from the days of the judges to the time of Moses, and the test of *ḥiṭṭa* was combined with the command given to the Children of Israel to enter the “town”. In the Qurʾān, the basic situation of the scene has become somewhat more complex. It is no longer only a test, but also a scene of disobedience. The Israelites are not only unable to pronounce the correct word, but actually refuse to pronounce it. Since the word in Arabic means forgiveness of sins, their refusal means rejection of God's mercy. The main function of the story in the Qurʾān is therefore to demonstrate the sinful conduct of the Children of Israel, their failure to say *ḥiṭṭa* being turned into an act of deliberate disobedience.

The trial by *ḥiṭṭa* is coupled in the Qurʾān with the trial by prostration, for which I was unable to find a Biblical origin. It also occurs in the Qurʾān separately from the scene of *ḥiṭṭa* but still in the context of the Exodus.²² At any rate, the Muslim exegetes have detailed explanations of how the Israelites failed the latter test. They say that instead of prostrating themselves while entering the gate, the Israelites merely bent their heads or turned them aside, or slid on their hips or posteriors.²³

²¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, I, 86.

²² Qurʾān 4:154.

²³ Bent their heads: Muqātil, I, 109; Huwwārī, I, 109. See also Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 241, the tradition of al-Rabiʿ ibn Anas al-Bakrī (Baṣran, d. AH 139), and of al-Naḍr ibn ʿArabi [printed: ʿAdī] (d. AH 168) ← ʿIkrima (*mawlā* of Ibn ʿAbbās, Medinan, d. AH 105). Slid on their posteriors: Muqātil, I, 110 (*mastalqīn*). And see ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 46; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 241: the tradition of Maʿmar ibn Rāshid (Baṣran/Yemeni, d. AH 154) ← al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (ibn Abī l-Ḥasan, d. AH 110) and Qatāda ibn Dīʿāma (Baṣran, d. AH 117). And see Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 240; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 89; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, VI, 22–23 (65, *sūra* 2:58): the tradition of Abū Hurayra and Ibn ʿAbbās

Refusal to perform the act of prostration (*sujūd*) properly is indeed a common symbol of arrogance and disobedience, and appears mainly in traditions describing the attitude of Meccan non-believers to the Islamic manner of prayer.²⁴

At this point, we can turn to the function of the Qurʾānic theme of *ḥiṭṭa* in the descriptions of the Arab conquests. As with the affair of the spies, the story of *ḥiṭṭa* likewise emerges in the Ḥijāzī sphere, and is also echoed in the Syrian sphere. Let us begin with the latter.

Jerusalem

The link of the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa* passage to the Syrian sphere is revealed in Qurʾānic exegesis. The earliest available commentaries say that the Qurʾānic *qarya*—that is, the “town”—which the Israelites are commanded to enter is *Īliyāʾ*, or Bayt al-Maqdis, i.e. Jerusalem,²⁵ and that a gate known as *bāb ḥiṭṭa* is found in that city.²⁶ Such interpretations seem to be based on the fact that in Islamic Jerusalem there was indeed a gate named *ḥiṭṭa*. Some commentaries on the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa* passage provide a fairly accurate location of this gate. It is said to be the eighth gate in the wall of Jerusalem,²⁷ but according to a report recorded by Mujir al-Dīn al-Ḥan-

← Prophet (various *isnāds*). And see Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241; *Mustadrak*, II, 262: the tradition of Saʿid ibn Jubayr ← Ibn ʿAbbās; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 241: the tradition of Ibn Abi Najih ← Mujāhid.

²⁴ Cf. Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 166. See also M.J. Kister, “Some Reports Concerning al-Tāʾif”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979), 4 [repr. in *idem*, *Studies*, XI]; Roberto Tottoli, “Traditions and Controversies Concerning the *Suḡūd al-Qurʾān* in *Ḥadīṭ* Literature”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 147 (1997), 371–93.

²⁵ Muqātil, I, 109; ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 46; Huwwāri, I, 109; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 237 (Qatāda, al-Suddī, al-Rabiʿ ibn Anas).

²⁶ Mujāhid ibn Jabr (Meccan, d. AH 104) in Mujāhid, I, 76. ʿAṭiyya ibn Saʿd al-ʿAwfi (Kūfan, Shiʿi d. AH 111) from Ibn ʿAbbās, in family *isnād*: Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 238. See also Ibn al-Jawzi, *Zād al-masīr*, I, 85. And see other similar interpretations in Rāzi, III, 88 (Ibn ʿAbbās, Daḥḥāk, Mujāhid, Qatāda); Ibn Abi I-Sinān, fol. 53a; Qurṭubi, *Aḥ-kām*, I, 410.

²⁷ Māwardi, I, 125; Ṭūsi, *Tabyān*, I, 263; Ṭabrisi, *Majmaʿ*, I, 264.

balī (d. AH 927), the gate thus named is in the northern wall of the Mosque.²⁸

The existence of a gate named *ḥiṭṭa* in Jerusalem (which in pre-Islamic times probably signified the “Wheat Gate”) enabled the Muslims to link the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa* verse to Jerusalem. The link is not smooth, however, because in the Qurʾān, this term is not the name of the gate, but merely a word which has to be pronounced while going through it. This discrepancy notwithstanding, the commentaries seem to attest to the fact that the Muslims in Jerusalem identified the local gate of *ḥiṭṭa* with the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa*, and this fact is most revealing in itself. It again demonstrates that in the Syrian sphere, the Islamic conquest was seen by Muslims as part of a divine scheme, as a renewed exodus which the Israelites had already once been ordered to undertake. Hence the notion that the local gate is already mentioned in the Qurʾān and forms part of the divine command to conquer the Promised Land.

The gate of *ḥiṭṭa* was regarded as particularly blessed, and a tradition was circulated stating that any Muslim praying two *rakʿas* near it will be entitled to the entire reward promised to the Children of Israel who disobeyed the order to enter it.²⁹

Some exegetes who were aware of the Biblical story of the conquest of Canaan knew that this conquest did not begin with Jerusalem, but rather with Jericho, and they felt obliged to fill the gap between the Bible and the Qurʾān. They put forward the explanation that the Qurʾānic “town” is Jericho, or al-Balqāʾ,³⁰ which is the name of the entire district to the east of the Jordan River. “Al-Shām”, which is a more general and

²⁸ Mujir al-Dīn, *Uns*, II, 29. And see also Amikam Elad, “An Early Arabic Source Concerning the Markets of Jerusalem”, *Cathedra* 24 (1982), 38 (in Hebrew), where it is noted that there is to this day in the same vicinity a pool named *Birkat Bani Isrāʾīl*. On *ḥiṭṭa* and Jerusalem see also Busse, “Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem”, 102–104.

²⁹ Ibn al-Murajjā, 139 (no. 172), 268 (no. 407); Minhājī, *Ithāf*, I, 203; Mujir al-Dīn, *Uns*, II, 29.

³⁰ Jericho: Muqātil, I, 110; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 237 (Ibn Zayd); Samarqandī, I, 121 (al-Kalbi); Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Berlin), 100 (Ibn ʿAbbās). And see *idem*, *Qiṣaṣ*, 221. Al-Balqāʾ: Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Berlin), 100; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 88; Ibn Abī l-Sinān, fol. 53a.

neutral location, is also mentioned.³¹ Furthermore, later scholars suggested that the gate of *ḥiṭṭa* had originally been in Jericho and was only later on transferred to Jerusalem.³² Another solution abandons the location of the gate of *ḥiṭṭa* in Jerusalem, and claims instead that the Qurʾān refers to the door of the Tent of Meeting (*al-qubba*), not to the gate of any place within the Holy Land.³³ However, the prevailing view has remained that the gate of *ḥiṭṭa* in Jerusalem is the one referred to in the Qurʾān, and thus the link between the Islamic conquest and the Israelite Exodus has been preserved.

Arabia

In the *Ḥijāzī* sphere, the theme of *ḥiṭṭa* has retained its entire Qurʾānic function as a model of Israelite sin, and serves to highlight the superiority of the Arab believers over the insubordinate Children of Israel. As with the affair of the spies (Chapter 3), this passage too is embedded in the story of Muḥammad's journey to al-Ḥudaybiyya (6/628); an allusion to it is made in the course of the description of a crucial stage of this event following the war council.

The basic non-Qurʾānic narrative framework of this stage is provided in the three parallel versions of ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr describing Muḥammad's approach to al-Ḥudaybiyya. The conditions here are an ordeal. After the council of war the Muslims decide to proceed, but while trying to discover an alternative route to Mecca they face many hardships, and only thanks to their perseverance do they finally locate the right defile (*thaniyya*) that permits them entrance into the sacred territory (*ḥaram*) of Mecca. They proceed through this defile till they halt at al-Ḥudaybiyya. The discovery of the *thaniyya* marks the accomplishment of the mission, and with it the ordeal ends.

The passage of the *thaniyya* is considered a difficult and dangerous phase in any journey to Mecca, as is indicated in further accounts about

³¹ Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Berlin), 100; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzil*, I, 88; Ibn Abī l-Sinān, fol. 53a.

³² Ibn al-Murajjā, 58 (no. 46); Minhājī, *Ithāf*, I, 203.

³³ Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 283; Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, I, 410. See also Ṭūsī, *Tabyān*, I, 263; Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, I, 264.

other armies approaching Mecca. For example, there are some apocalyptic traditions that describe the approach of certain hostile troops towards Mecca which are engulfed by the earth (*khasf*) while passing through the *thaniyya*.³⁴ The successful crossing of the *thaniyya* in the case of al-Ḥudaybiyya is therefore a sign of divine intervention in favour of Muḥammad's believers.

In the version quoted from ^ʿUrwa through al-Zuhri by Ibn Ishāq, the defile is called *Thaniyyat al-Murār*. ^ʿUrwa relates the story on the authority of Miswar ibn Makhrama and Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam. When the Muslims find out that their original route to Mecca has been cut off by Meccan troops, the Prophet orders them to take another course, this time through *Thaniyyat al-Murār*. They head in that direction, moving safely until Muḥammad's she-camel halts at (the end of) the ravine (which is a divine sign that negotiations with the Meccans should now take place).³⁵ The version quoted by Ma^ʿmar ibn Rāshid from ^ʿUrwa through al-Zuhri (again on the authority of Miswar and Marwān) only mentions the defile (*al-thaniyya*), without naming it.³⁶ In the version quoted from ^ʿUrwa by his son Hishām, the defile is named: *Dhāt al-Ḥanzal*.³⁷

The Qur^ʿānic level of the story appears in traditions linking the passage of the *thaniyya* leading to Mecca to the Qur^ʿānic *ḥiṭṭa* story. The *thaniyya* is equivalent to the gate of the town, and the hardships suffered by the Muslims before they pass safely through it are analogous to the test of saying *ḥiṭṭa*. To begin with, in a tradition quoted by Ibn Ishāq from ^ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Bakr (Medinan, d. AH 135), Muḥammad decides to take another track instead of the one controlled by the Meccans, and a man of the tribe of Aslam volunteers to guide him. He leads the Muslims through a rugged rocky passage which is very hard on them, and when they finally emerge from it on to the easy ground, the Prophet tells his men: "Say: 'We ask God's forgiveness and repent towards Him.'" They do as they are bid, and then the Prophet declares: "By God, this is the

³⁴ Nu^ʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 203; *Kanz*, XI, no. 31512. See also below, 217–18.

³⁵ Ibn Hishām, III, 323–24. See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 323.

³⁶ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 329. See also Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, XX, no. 13; Bayhaqi, *Dalāʿil*, IV, 100. Cf. ^ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, V, 332 (no. 9720); Bayhaqi, *Sunan*, IX, 218; Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XI, no. 4872.

³⁷ Ibn Abī Shayba, XIV, 430 (no. 18686). See also *Kanz*, X, 485 (no. 30153).

[word] *ḥiṭṭa* that was suggested to the Children of Israel, but they did not say it.”³⁸

In this setting, the term *ḥiṭṭa* seems to be used in its original Qurʾānic function, i.e. a word that must be uttered while entering the town. The word is probably understood here in the sense of forgiveness of sins, which means that the faithful Arabs who have entered the *thaniyya* and traversed it successfully are entitled to God’s mercy, which was withheld from the sinful Children of Israel. The successful passage through the *thaniyya* has thus become equal to the ancient command to enter the Promised Land, and the Arab believers are the new generation of a chosen community from which the sinful Children of Israel have been excluded.

A more detailed description of the same trial on the road to Mecca is provided by al-Wāqidi.³⁹ He does not give an *isnād*, but the name of the Companion is mentioned in the tradition itself as the narrator. He is the Anṣārī Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d. AH 65). The full *isnād* was preserved in another later source.⁴⁰ In al-Wāqidi’s version of the tradition, the Prophet asks who knows the way to the defile of Dhāt al-Ḥanẓal and a man of Aslam volunteers to guide them, but he soon loses his way among the cliffs and the tangled bushes. A second man of Aslam takes over, but he too loses his way, and only the third guide of Aslam manages to lead the Muslims through the right passage. By some marvel, this path becomes wide and smooth, so that they proceed easily, while the night is bright as though a full moon were shining right above them. Then the Prophet says:

By God, tonight this passage is like the gate of which God said to the Children of Israel: “Enter the gate prostrating yourselves, and say: *ḥiṭṭa*.”

³⁸ Ibn Hishām, III, 323: *Wa-llāhi innahā la-l-ḥiṭṭatu llatī ʿurīdat ʿalā banī Isrāʾīla fa-lam yaqūlūhā.*

³⁹ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, II, 583–84.

⁴⁰ Zayd ibn Aslam (Medinan, d. AH 136) ← ʿAṭāʾ ibn Yasār (Medinan storyteller, d. AH 103) ← Abū Saʿīd. See *Kashf al-astār*, II, 337–38 (no. 1812). Cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, I, 99; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 71 (from Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mardawayhi); *idem*, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, II, 33 (from Abū Nuʿaym).

At this point, al-Wāqidi inserts a tradition of Abū Hurayra to the effect that instead of the word *ḥiṭṭa*, the Children of Israel said *ḥibba fī shu-ʿayra*.⁴¹ In the subsequent part of the story of Abū Saʿid,⁴² this Companion relates that the Prophet stated: “Whoever crosses this passage tonight, God will forgive him his sins.” All the people hasten to cross, and in the morning the Prophet proclaims that God has forgiven them all, except for one person riding a red she-camel. The Muslims look for him, and he turns out to be a stranger from the Yemen (Sif al-Baḥr) who has joined the Muslims in his search for his lost she-camel. The Muslims advise him to go to Muḥammad and appeal for forgiveness, but he claims that the Muslims have hidden his lost she-camel and says that retrieving it is more important to him. He soon leaves them and finds his death elsewhere while looking for his she-camel.

The scene of the stranger brings out clearly the contrast between Muḥammad’s followers and the others, and marks the former as a chosen community collectively enjoying the mercy of God. In this case, not only the Israelites, but also the Arab unbelievers, have been excluded from the chosen community.

Another version of the same scene reveals the impact of inner divisions on the story. While the Arabian Muslims as a whole act as a chosen community, one specific group emerges as more devoted than the other. They are the Anṣār of the Medinan tribe of al-Khazraj. As seen in the case of the spies (Chapter 3),⁴³ the Anṣār suffered from an inferior social status in comparison to the Muhājirūn and Quraysh, and the present version reflects the well-known efforts to restore their position in Islamic society. This version, which gained entrance into the canonical *ḥadīth* compilation of Muslim, is traced back to the Medinan Companion Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh.⁴⁴ The defile is here called Thaniyyat al-Murār. The Prophet states that whoever climbs the passage will have his sins removed from him (*yuḥaṭṭu ʿanhu*), as with the sins which had been removed from the Children of Israel (i.e. from those who obeyed—U.R.). The first to

⁴¹ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, II, 584–85.

⁴² *Ibid.*, II, 585–86.

⁴³ Above, 69.

⁴⁴ Muslim, VIII, 123 (50, 12). The *isnād*: Qurra ibn Khālid (Baṣran, d. ca. AH 155) ← Abū l-Zubayr (Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn Tadrus) (Meccan, d. AH 126) ← Jābir.

comply are the people of the Medinan tribe of al-Khazraj, and they are followed by the rest of the Muslims. The Prophet declares that all are granted forgiveness of sins, except for one person looking for his lost she-camel.

The emergence of a single Arabian group as the first to obey marks the bending of the notion of the chosen community to interests of various Islamic factions vying for eminence in the early Islamic society.

The Shi'is and *Ḥiṭṭa*

The Shi'is used the Qur'ānic model of Israelite sin to rebuke their opponents,⁴⁵ but at the same time they gleaned from the Qur'ānic history of past communities some symbols of divine mercy and guidance, and used them to highlight the virtues of the *imāms* and those who follow them and recognise their divine authority. This means that the Shi'is sought to become the chosen section that retains among the Muslims the unblemished Israelite heritage of divine guidance and mercy. The theme of *ḥiṭṭa* was indeed appropriate for the latter purpose. Being a key to divine mercy for those who uttered it, the Shi'is turned it into a symbol of the mercy and guidance assured for the Shi'is by their *imāms*. Implicit here is the notion that those Children of Israel who refused to say *ḥiṭṭa* foreshadowed the enemies of the Shi'a who rejected the authority of the *imāms*.

The word *ḥiṭṭa* stands in Shi'i traditions for the name of the gate leading to the promised town, and is often coupled with another typical symbol of mercy and deliverance, although not specifically Israelite. This is Noah's Ark, which our traditions also derive from the Qur'ān, where it serves to save the minority of believers who survived the Deluge with Noah.⁴⁶

Most of the traditions about *ḥiṭṭa* and Noah's Ark are Prophetic, that is, they are attributed to Muḥammad. The similes of *ḥiṭṭa* and the Ark illustrate in them the function of *ahl al-bayt*, i.e. 'Alī and the rest of the Shi'i *imāms*, as a source of deliverance and guidance. In one of these

⁴⁵ See above, 77–82.

⁴⁶ E.g. Qur'ān 29:15. On Noah's role in Twelver Shi'i literature, see Etan Kohlberg, "Some Shi'i Views on the Antediluvian World", *Studia Islamica* 52 (1980), 49–64.

traditions, the Prophet is quoted by the Companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. AH 32), who is a very popular figure with the Shiʿīs and is therefore a suitable authority on traditions praising ʿAlī’s family. The tradition is quoted from Abū Dharr by the Kūfan Ḥanash ibn al-Muʿtamir (or Rabiʿa) al-Kinānī and was transmitted from Ḥanash by the Shiʿī Kūfan Abū Ishāq al-Sabiʿī (d. AH 126–29). This version was recorded by al-Ṭabarānī (d. AH 360),⁴⁷ and here the Prophet states:

The fellow-members of my house amongst you are similar to Noah’s Ark amongst Noah’s people—whoever sails it will be saved, and whoever stays behind will be drowned, and like the gate of *ḥiṭṭa* amongst the Children of Israel.

The clause “and like the gate of *ḥiṭṭa*” seems to be a gloss added to the basic statement concerning the Ark, the latter simile being a more typical symbol of deliverance than *ḥiṭṭa*. It has been known to the Muslims not only from the Qurʾān but also from Biblical tradition, whereas the term *ḥiṭṭa* has only been associated with redemption since the Qurʾān.

The *ḥiṭṭa* gloss appears in further versions with different *isnāds*, one still with the Companion Abū Dharr, who is this time quoted by the Shiʿī Abū I-Ṭufayl (ʿĀmir ibn Wāthila, Meccan Companion, d. AH 110).⁴⁸ In another version the Companion is Abū Saʿid al-Khudrī, who is quoted by the Shiʿī ʿAṭiyya ibn Saʿd al-ʿAwfī (Kūfan, d. AH 111). Here it is added that whoever enters the gate of *ḥiṭṭa* of the Children of Israel will be granted forgiveness of sins.⁴⁹

Finally, the Ark statement glossed by the *ḥiṭṭa* one is also available with an *isnād* of ʿAlī, who this time delivers it as his own statement; the Prophet has no role at all. The Shiʿī message of the statement is thus brought out into the open. In this version, which was recorded by Ibn Abī Shayba (d. AH 235),⁵⁰ ʿAlī declares:

⁴⁷ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, III, no. 2637; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, IV, no. 3502; *idem*, *Ṣaḡhīr*, I, 139–40.

⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *Maʿālib*, IV, no. 4004.

⁴⁹ Ṭabarānī, *Ṣaḡhīr*, II, 22. See also Khargūshī, fol. 68a.

⁵⁰ Ibn Abī Shayba, XII, no. 12164. The *isnād*: Aʿmash (Sulaymān ibn Mihrān, Kūfan, d. AH 148) ← al-Minhāl ibn ʿAmr al-Asadī (Kūfan) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Ḥārith al-Anṣārī (Baṣran) ← ʿAlī.

We are like the Ark of Noah, and like the gate of *ḥiṭṭa* amongst the Children of Israel.

The Shīʿī message of the statement becomes even more explicit in another version in which the utterance is delivered again by the Prophet and transmitted on the authority of the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās. The gate of *ḥiṭṭa* is here the only simile, and the tradition uses the explicit name of ʿAlī instead of the somewhat vague expression *ahl al-bayt*. The Prophet here states:⁵¹

ʿAlī ibn Abi Ṭālib is the gate of *ḥiṭṭa*—whoever enters it is a believer, and whoever comes out of it is an infidel (*kāfir*).

The Shīʿī Compilations

None of the above versions gained entrance into the canonical *ḥadīth* compilations, which is due to their defective *isnāds* as well as to their blunt Shīʿī message. However, Twelver Shīʿī writers picked up these traditions and reproduced them without hesitation in their own compilations. Thus, various versions of Abū Dharr, which compare the *ahl al-bayt* with Noah’s Ark and the gate of *ḥiṭṭa*, reappear in the Shīʿī sources.⁵² Some of them (transmitted by Ḥanash ibn al-Muʿtamir) were reportedly recorded by Sulaym ibn Qays (Kūfan, d. ca. AH 90), one of the earliest Shīʿī figures of the Umayyad period to whom a book was attributed.⁵³ These sources also contain a version of Ibn ʿAbbās as quoted by his *mawlā* ʿIkrima. It compares the gate of *ḥiṭṭa* to “the *imāms* of *ahl al-bayt*”, and thus leaves no doubt as to the purport of this version.⁵⁴

The Companion quoting the Prophet was replaced in some versions by a more adequate Shīʿī authority, namely, the *imām* Abū Jaʿfar al-Bā-

⁵¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Aḥādīth al-wāḥiya*, I, 238 (no. 384). See also *Kanz*, XI, no. 32910. The *isnād*: Aʿmash ← ʿAtāʾ ibn Abi Rabāḥ (Meccan, d. AH 114) ← Ibn ʿAbbās ← Prophet.

⁵² Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 254; *Bihār al-anwār*, XXIII, 105 (no. 3), 119–20 (no. 40), 123 (no. 48).

⁵³ Sulaym ibn Qays, 66–67. See also Ṭabarsī, *Ihtijāj*, 156–57; *Bihār al-anwār*, XXIII, 119 (no. 38), 124–25 (no. 52).

⁵⁴ *Bihār al-anwār*, XXIII, 119 (no. 39).

qir. He allegedly quoted from the Prophet the statement referring to Noah's Ark, as well as the one referring to the gate of *ḥiṭṭa*.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Muḥammad himself was replaced in some cases by an *imām*, and thus the same Abū Jaʿfar is said to have stated, while commenting on the Qurʾānic *ḥiṭṭa* passage: *nahnu bāb ḥiṭṭatikum* ("We are your gate of *ḥiṭṭa*").⁵⁶ The same statement was also attributed to the eighth *imām* Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā (ʿAlī ibn Mūsā, d. AH 203).⁵⁷ Similarly, al-Ḥasan the son of ʿAlī was made to state in a sermon of his that ʿAlī was the gate of *ḥiṭṭa*, and whoever entered it was safe....⁵⁸ ʿAlī himself appears as the ultimate origin of the *ḥiṭṭa* statement; he says that *ahl al-bayt* were appointed as the community's gate of *ḥiṭṭa*, so that the sins of those following the *imāms* may be forgiven. However, the *ḥiṭṭa* gate of the Muslims, says ʿAlī, is worthier than that of the Children of Israel because it was made only of wood (*akhāshīb*), whereas the *imāms* are the most righteous and elevated source of guidance, like the stars in the sky....⁵⁹

The changing of early *isnāds* and the interpolation of names of *imāms* into them is a typical method which Twelver Shīʿis employed to adapt early *ḥadīth* material to their own purposes. This phenomenon is also demonstrated in the story of al-Ḥudaybiyya; the above version, with the theme of *ḥiṭṭa* embedded in it, reappears in the Shīʿi sources,⁶⁰ but here the *isnād* is traced back to the *imām* Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.

Finally, it is interesting to observe that the "gate of *ḥiṭṭa* of the Children of Israel" appears in a Shīʿi source in a list of sacred sites,⁶¹ but the exact location of the gate thus named is not specified.

Summing up, the Shīʿi employment of the *ḥiṭṭa* theme exemplifies the role of Israelite symbols as a model of the guidance offered to the believers by the *imāms*. The other function of this theme, that is, to denounce those who ignore the mercy inherent in *ḥiṭṭa*, pertains in the Shīʿi context

⁵⁵ Nuʿmānī, *Ghayba*, 28.

⁵⁶ ʿAyyāshī, I, 63 (no. 47). See also Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, I, 264.

⁵⁷ *Bihār al-anwār*, XXIII, 122 (no. 46).

⁵⁸ Ps.-Masʿūdi, *Ithbāt*, 172.

⁵⁹ *Bihār al-anwār*, XXIII, 122–23 (no. 47).

⁶⁰ Kulīnī, VIII, 322 (no. 503).

⁶¹ See Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 44.

to the enemies of the Shi'is, while in the Sunni context it is designed to establish the superiority of the Arab believers as members of a chosen community, from which the Jews have been excluded.

CHAPTER 5

THE TABLETS OF MOSES AND MUḤAMMAD'S *UMMA*

The replacement of the Children of Israel by Muḥammad's believers as God's chosen community emerges not only in the realm of Muḥammad's campaigns, but also on a more global level that is revealed in the realm of Qur'ānic exegesis. Here the sin of the calf has become the main reason for the exclusion of the Israelites from the chosen community and their replacement by the Arab believers. This sin leads to fatal consequences in the Bible (Exodus 32) as well as in the Qur'ān. The most detailed Qur'ānic description is provided in Sūrat al-A^ḥrāf (7):144–57, where it is combined with the scene of the smashing of the tablets. In the Qur'ānic version, the Children of Israel make the calf while Moses is away receiving the tablets (7:144–49). Moses comes back furious and smashes the tablets. A punishment is then promised to the sinners, and mercy to those who repent (7:150–53). When Moses regains his calm, he takes the tablets (that is, what has remained of them) on which are inscribed words of guidance and mercy (7:154), and then elects 70 people to attend an audience before God (7:155); this particular detail originates in Numbers 11:16–17. The 70 delegates are seized by an earthquake (*rajfa*), and Moses then prays for God's mercy. God's response is also described (7:155–57). This episode is derived from Exodus 32:30–34.

The traditions recorded in the commentaries on these verses reveal significant aspects of the notion that the Arabs have replaced the Israelites as God's chosen community. Some of them describe Moses' reception of the tablets, the idea underlying the portrayal being that Muḥammad's *umma* is described in the Torah. The traditions in which Ka^ḥb al-Aḥbār recites to ʿUmar in Jerusalem the Biblical description of the

Muslims to express his conviction that the Islamic conquest of the Promised Land corresponds to Jewish messianism, have already been seen in Chapter 1.¹ Moses too is said to have read a similar description in his own tablets, but unlike Ka'ab, he is deeply disappointed with what the tablets say, and in his rage he smashes them. His reaction is caused by the fact that the chosen community described in the tablets is not the Israelite one. The contrast between the attitudes of Ka'ab and Moses represents the contrast between the universal perception of the community as revealed in the tradition about Ka'ab and the particularistic, or exclusive, perception of the community as revealed in the story of Moses. Here the chosen community is confined to Muḥammad's Arab followers, and Moses' people are explicitly denied the right to be included. Thus, the notion of superiority of Arabs over Jews is manifested at its clearest.

The story of Moses and the smashed tablets is included in a tradition of the Baṣran Qatāda ibn Di'āma (d. AH 117), which appears already in the *Tafsīr* of 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. AH 211),² as transmitted from Qatāda by Ma'amar ibn Rāshid (Baṣran/Yemeni, d. AH 154). Moses reads the tablets and finds in them seven virtues of a chosen community. Moses appeals to God, and the following dialogue takes place:

Moses: "I find in the tablets a community whose members are described as....

Let this community be mine."

God: "This is the Community of Aḥmad" (*tilka ummat Aḥmad*).

This exchange recurs seven times over, following Moses' reading of each of the seven virtues of the chosen community. At last, Moses smashes the tablets because God has rejected his request to let this community be his own. He then asks God: "Let me become one of them then (that is, of Aḥmad's community)". God again refuses, saying: "You will not live to see them" (*innaka lan tudrikahum*). Nevertheless, God is willing to give Moses some compensation, and He reveals two passages which are now included in the Qur'ānic story of Moses and the tablets. One is 7:144, in

¹ Above, 14–18.

² 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 236–37. For Qatāda's tradition see also Huwwārī, II, 48–49 (without *isnād*); Ibn Abi Ḥātim, V, 1564–65 (no. 8967). Cf. Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, IX, 45.

which God says that He has chosen Moses above all men, and the second is the Israelite *umma* verse (7:159), in which, as seen in Chapter 1, a group (*umma*) who guides by the truth is said to have been among the people of Moses (which means that not all of them are guilty of the sin of the calf).³ About this verse, Qatāda says that it “was added” (*wa-zīda*), so that the Israelite *umma* verse is merely a secondary gloss, or an after-thought, which does not diminish the essential wicked nature of the majority of the Israelite people. That this verse was only revealed to “appease Moses” (*al-murādāt li-Mūsā*), who had become upset after having seen the contents of the tablets, is also stated in a tradition of Ibn Jubayr (Kūfan, d. AH 95) ← Ibn ʿAbbās.⁴

In the story of Moses and the tablets, the failure of this prophet is twofold. He neither becomes the leader of the chosen community, nor does he gain membership to it under Muḥammad's leadership.

The seven exclusive virtues of the chosen community as enumerated in Qatāda's tradition represent the basis on which Islamic tradition established the major features of the superiority of Muslims over others. The following scrutiny of these virtues will reveal their firm Qurʾānic basis and demonstrate the role of this scripture in shaping the distinctive Islamic identity.

1. They are the “best *umma* ever brought forth to men, bidding good (*maʿrūf*) and forbidding evil (*munkar*)”.

This is a verbatim representation of Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3):110, which says: “You were the best *umma* ever brought forth to men...(*kuntum khayra ummatin ukhrijat li-l-nās...*)”⁵ The reading of this verse into the tablets of Moses corresponds to the fact that the Qurʾānic verb that opens the verse, *kuntum* (“you were”), has been interpreted in the sense of a pre-existent past. In other words, the statement about the best *umma* is perceived as though forming part of a pre-existent divine text from which the tablets of Moses originate. This perception emerges in direct interpretations of the Qurʾānic verse. For example, al-Farrāʾ (d. AH 207) says that

³ Above, 25.

⁴ Ibn Abi Ḥatīm, V, 1587 (no. 8369).

⁵ On the exegesis of this verse cf. Bashear, *Arabs and Others*, 14–15.

kuntum khayra ummatin means that [the passage exists] in the “guarded tablet” (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*),⁶ the name of the pre-existent version of all sacred scriptures. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. AH 370) adds an interpretation of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. AH 110) to the effect that the statement was included in the annunciation about the nations as recorded in the previous scriptures.⁷

Our Qurʾānic verse was read not only into the tablets of Moses, but also into Isaiah's revelation. Wahb ibn Munabbih (Yemeni, d. AH 110), the renowned expert on the *Isrāʾiliyyāt* (“Tales of the Israelites”), is reported to have transmitted a story about Isaiah in which this prophet tells the Children of Israel that God is about to send a prophet, *ummi*, who is “not crude nor coarse, who does not raise his voice in the streets”. This is derived from Isaiah 42:2, which, as seen in Chapter 1, was taken to predict the emergence of the Islamic community as well as of ʿUmar and of the Prophet himself.⁸ In Wahb's report, Isaiah goes on to say that God will make the community of this prophet the “best *umma* ever brought forth to men, bidding good and forbidding evil”.⁹

The Prophet himself was also credited with a vision revolving around this crucial Qurʾānic passage. Commenting on this verse, Muḥammad is reported to have said: “You (that is, the Muslims) will conclude [a line of] 70 communities, and you will be the best of them all and most respected in the eyes of God.” This statement is included in a tradition of the Baṣran Companion Muʿāwiya ibn Ḥayda, and has been recorded by al-Tirmidhī.¹⁰

⁶ Farrāʾ, I, 229. See also Zajjāj, I, 456; Naḥḥās, I, 400; Naqqāsh, fol. 89a; Jaṣṣāṣ, II, 322; Samarqandī, I, 291; Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Tel Aviv), 144; Māwardī, *Nukat*, I, 416; Wāḥidī, *Wasīf*, I, 479.

⁷ Jaṣṣāṣ, II, 321. See also Māwardī, *Nukat*, I, 416.

⁸ Above, 16.

⁹ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *ʿUqūbāt*, 151 (no. 225).

¹⁰ Tirmidhī/*Tuhfa*, VIII, 352 (44, *Sūra* 3). Also *Mustadrak*, IV, 84. The *isnād*: Bahz ibn Ḥakim ibn Muʿāwiya (Baṣran) ← Ḥakim ibn Muʿāwiya ibn Ḥayda ← Muʿāwiya ibn Ḥayda ← Prophet. For other versions of the same apocalypse, without allusion to Qurʾān 3:110, see Ibn Māja, II, nos. 4287–88 (37:34); Dārimī, II, no. 2760 (20:47); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 5; *Mustadrak*, IV, 84.

The explicit statement about a “best *umma*” won for Qurʾān 3:110 this important role in traditions asserting the predestined superiority of the Muslims, and for this reason, it has also been built into the first virtue on Moses’ list.

The rest of the features of the chosen community which Moses discovered in his tablets are:

2. They are the “last” (*al-ākhirūn*) and the “first” (*al-sābiqūn*) on the day of resurrection.

Al-sābiqūn is a common Qurʾānic appellation,¹¹ which in the present tradition appears in an eschatological context and means that Muḥammad’s believers will be the first to be resurrected and the first to enter Paradise. The statement that they are “last” means that they are the last of all the nations in world history, which creates an inverted symmetry with their priority in the world to come. The combination *al-ākhirūn al-sābiqūn* recurs as the epithet of the Islamic *umma* in a widely current saying of the Prophet which is usually combined with other Prophetic utterances describing aspects of the distinctive virtues of the Islamic *umma*, especially their Friday ceremonies. The tradition is reported by the Companion Abū Hurayra, and is quoted from him by quite a few Successors.¹²

Sometimes the utterance is combined with the statement that 70,000 members of the Islamic *umma* will enter Paradise without having to account for their deeds.¹³ This latter privilege is another important aspect of

¹¹ E.g. 23:61, 56:10.

¹² By al-Aʿraj (Medinan, d. AH 117): Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 243, 249; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 2 (11:1); Muslim, III, 6 (7, *Bāb hidāyati hādhihi l-umma li-yawmi l-jumʿa*); cf. Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, 68–69 (4:68), IX, 8 (87:15), 176 (97:35). By Abū Salama ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf (Medinan, d. AH 94): Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 502–503. Abū Ṣāliḥ: Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 274; Muslim, III, 6–7 (7, *Bāb hidāyati hādhihi l-umma li-yawmi l-jumʿa*). By Hammām ibn Munabbih (Yemeni, d. AH 131): Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 312; Muslim, III, 7 (7, *Bāb hidāyati hādhihi l-umma li-yawmi l-jumʿa*). Cf. Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, VIII, 159–60 (83:1), IX, 53 (91:40). By Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān (Yemeni, d. AH 101): Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 341–42; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 7 (11:12); IV, 215 (60:54).

¹³ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 504. The *isnād*: Ismāʿil ibn Abī Khālid ← Ziyād a *mawlā* of Banū Makhzūm ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

the superiority of the Muslims over the other communities and is dealt with in numerous traditions.¹⁴ They present the most explicit manifestation of the idea that Muḥammad's *umma*, being God's chosen community, enjoys the unlimited range of His mercy and forgiveness.

As for the privileged 70,000, the statement concerning them was also elevated to the rank of a Biblical vision, as is demonstrated in a tradition describing the Jewish frustration at the Biblical laudatory descriptions of the Arabs. Reported on the authority of the Kūfan Companion al-Falatān ibn ʿĀṣim, the tradition describes a discourse between the Prophet and a Jew who refuses to acknowledge Muḥammad's prophethood. The Prophet asks him whether he has found his description in the Torah, and the Jew asserts that a description has been found in the Torah which could fit Muḥammad except for one trait. Muḥammad asks what this trait is, and the Jew says that the community of this prophet must include 70,000 people who will enter Paradise without reckoning, whereas Muḥammad has only a small group of followers. Thereupon Muḥammad says triumphantly: "By God, I am this prophet, and they are my community, and their number exceeds 70,000, and twice as much!"¹⁵

3. Their scriptures are in their breasts (that is, they know them by heart). This trait distinguishes the Muslims from the Jews, who always use the written text of the Torah. It also falls back on the Qur'ān and is included in Ka'b's statement to ʿUmar, as discussed in Chapter 1.¹⁶

4. They take their own alms (*ṣadaqāt*), eating them and filling their bellies on them, yet they are rewarded as if they give them away. This too already appears in Ka'b's statement to ʿUmar.¹⁷ In the present tradition, Qatāda adds an explanation to the effect that previous communities used to sacrifice their alms which, when accepted, were consumed by fire that would appear, and when rejected, were left for the beasts.

5. They are intercessors (*shāfi'ūn*), and their intercession is accepted (*mashfū' lahum*). This clause refers to the privilege of intercession (*sha-*

¹⁴ For an extensive survey of the various versions see Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, I, 392–96 (on 3:110). See also *Kashf al-astār*, IV, 202–10; *Majma' al-zawā'id*, X, 408–14.

¹⁵ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XVIII, nos. 854–55; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, V, 377–78; *Kashf al-astār*, IV, no. 3544; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'is*, I, 38; *Majma' al-zawā'id*, X, 410.

¹⁶ Above, 15.

¹⁷ Above, 15.

fā^ca), which is a pillar of the superiority of Muḥammad's community over the other communities. Numerous traditions asserting that the Muslims entertain the privilege to intercede with God for any other Muslim are scattered in the commentaries on various Qur^ʿānic verses. For example, Qur^ʿān 42:26 states that God answers (*yastajību*) those who believe. An interpretation of Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd al-Nakha^ci (Kūfan, d. AH 96), as quoted by Qatāda, says that the believers will intercede for their brothers and their brothers' brothers.¹⁸ In 4:11, the Qur^ʿān says: "Your fathers and your sons—you know not which of them is nearer in profit to you". A tradition of ʿAlī ibn Abī Talḥa (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 143) ← Ibn ʿAbbās says on this verse that God will let the believers intercede for each other.¹⁹ Qur^ʿān 74:48 says about the non-believers: "The intercession of the intercessors shall not profit them". The commentators took this as implying that only the believers shall enjoy the *shafā^ca*. Qatāda, as quoted this time by Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūba (Baṣran, d. AH 156), says: "God will let the believers intercede one for another". He then quotes the Prophet to the effect that due to the intercession of a single man of his community, God may grant entrance into Paradise to people exceeding in number the entire tribe of Tamīm (which is considered huge).²⁰ Qur^ʿān 19:87 says that only those who have taken covenant with God shall have power of intercession. Commenting on this verse, Ibn Jurayj (Meccan, d. AH 150) says: "On that day the believers will intercede one for another".²¹

Outside the immediate exegetical context, more traditions of the Prophet to the same effect may be found. Some of them repeat the notion that more people than the entire tribe of Tamīm will enter Paradise thanks to the intercession of a single person of Muḥammad's *umma*.²² In other versions, they are more than the people of Muḍar,²³ or more than

¹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXV, 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 190.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, XXIX, 105.

²¹ *Ibid.*, XVI, 97.

²² Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VII, no. 2555 (35:11); Ibn Qānī^c, *Ṣaḥāba*, II, no. 530; *Mustadrak*, I, 70–71. The *isnād*: Khālid al-Ḥadhdhā^ʿ (Baṣran, d. AH 141) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Shaḥīq al-ʿUqayli (Baṣran, d. AH 108) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī l-Jad^cā^ʿ al-Tamīmī (Companion) ← Prophet.

²³ Ibn Qānī^c, *Ṣaḥāba*, I, no. 203; *Mustadrak*, I, 71. The *isnād*: al-Ḥārith ibn Uqaysh

the people of Rabī^ca and Muḍar.²⁴ Sometimes this privilege was employed to promote the virtues of some prominent Companions, for instance, °Uthmān ibn °Affān, about whom the Prophet reportedly said that on the day of resurrection he would intercede for more people than Rabī^ca and Muḍar.²⁵

The significance of the *shafā^ca* as signalling the superiority of Muslims over non-Muslims emerges most explicitly in traditions describing Muḥammad's own power of *shafā^ca*, as contrasted with the very limited powers of the other prophets. The scope of the present study does not allow us to delve into the details of these traditions.²⁶ Neither is there any room here for elaborating on the impact of inner political tensions which prompted versions trying to single out specific groups of Muslims claiming prior rights of *shafā^ca* and entrance into Paradise before other groups.²⁷ Suffice it to say that Muḥammad's power of *shafā^ca* for his community was adduced to illustrate the exclusion of Jews and Christians from the scope of the chosen community. This is the case in a report about Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who is asked whether the Jews and the Christians belong to Muḥammad's *umma*. He answers angrily that this is an obscene question which does not even deserve to be answered seriously.²⁸ In some versions of his response, he adduces the *shafā^ca* tradition to prove that Muḥammad only intercedes for his own *umma* (and not for the Jews and the Christians), saying, *ummatī, ummatī* ("my community, my community").²⁹

6. They answer and are answered (*al-mustajībūn al-mustajāb lahum*). This is probably an elaboration on Sūrat al-Baqara (2):186, in which God

(or Wuqyash, Baṣran Companion) ← Prophet. See also Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8059, with the *isnād*: Abū Ghālīb al-Bāhili (Nāfi^c, Baṣran) ← Abū Umāma al-Bāhili (Syrian Companion, d. AH 81–86) ← Prophet. And see also the tradition of Abū Barza (Baṣran Companion, d. AH 64) in Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 212.

²⁴ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 7638. The *isnād*: Abū Umāma al-Bāhili ← Prophet.

²⁵ Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VII, no. 2557 (35:11). The *isnād*: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī ← Prophet.

²⁶ For which see Uri Rubin, *The Prophet Muḥammad in the Early Literature of Ḥadīth*, Ph.D. Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1976 [in Hebrew], 270–302.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 303–40.

²⁸ Khallāl, *Aḥkām ahl al-milal*, nos. 1–3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, nos. 5–7.

says that He is near to answer the call of His servants and requests them to respond to Him (*fa-l-yastajībū li*). It follows that Muḥammad's believers are distinguished from the other communities in obedience to God as well as in having their invocations answered by God.

7. They will wage war on the people of error and the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl).

The struggle of the Muslims against the Antichrist places Muslims and Jews on opposing sides, because Jews are considered to be the accomplices of the Dajjāl. For example, in a tradition of Abū Umāma al-Bāhili (Syrian Companion, d. AH 81–86), the Prophet states that 70,000 Jews will be with the Dajjāl, all clad in dark garments (*sāj*) and bearing ornamented swords.³⁰ This stands in clear contrast to the traditions discussed in Chapter 1, in which Joshua the son of Nun is expected to assist Jesus, which means that the Israelites too are expected to fight the Antichrist.³¹ Therefore, the traditions placing the Jews on the side of the Antichrist, as well as the present statement about the combat of Muḥammad's *umma* against the Antichrist, fit in perfectly with the perception of the Jews as a sinful people that has lost its status as a chosen community.

Qatāda's survey of the exclusive virtues of the chosen community, of which Moses' *umma* was deprived, is available in another version transmitted from him by Sa'īd ibn Abī 'Arūba (Baṣran, d. AH 156).³² The seven virtues are repeated here, one of which contains additional details. It is the one about the Dajjāl (no. 7 above), and is now listed as number 4. In it the people fighting the Dajjāl are described as believing "in the First Book and in the Last Book". This trait is a clear distinctive feature of the Muslims, who believe in all the scriptures revealed by God as well as in the Qur'ān. That the scriptures revealed before the Qur'ān are included in the Islamic faith is a Qur'ānic notion which is formulated most clearly in Sūrat al-Baqara (2):136:

... We believe in God and in that which has been sent down on us and sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given

³⁰ Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, 346.

³¹ Above, 29.

³² Ṭabari, *Tafsir*, IX, 45.

to Moses and Jesus and the prophets of their Lord; we make no division between any of them and to Him we surrender (*muslimūn*).

Thus a contrast is delineated between, on the one hand, Muslims, and, on the other, Jews and Christians, who not only rejected the Qurʾānic message, but also distorted their own scriptures (*tahrīf*).³³

There are two extra virtues of the chosen community (listed as nos. 6, 7) which are not included in Maʿmar's version of Qatāda's list. They are:

6. If one of them plans to do a good deed (*ḥasana*) but does not do it, it is written down for him as one good deed, and if he does it, it is written down for him as ten like it (*ʿashru amthālihā*) till 700.

7. If one of them contemplates an evil deed, it is not written down against him unless he does it, and if he does, it is written down against him as only one evil deed.

These two complementary traits reveal the predominance of God's love for the chosen community. They too represent an elaboration on a Qurʾānic idea, which is stated in Sūrat al-Anʿām (6):160:

He who does a good deed shall have ten the like of it; and he who does an evil deed shall only be recompensed by the like of it....

Commenting on this verse, Qatāda says that when a man (*ʿabd*) plans to do a good deed but does not do it, it is written down for him as one good deed, and if he plans to do an evil deed, it is not written down against him unless he does it.³⁴ The same idea is also embedded in an utterance of the Prophet, who is said to have heard it from God Himself. This makes it a *ḥadīth ilāhī* or *qudsī*. The utterance is available with *isnāds* of several Companions, such as Ibn ʿAbbās,³⁵ Abū Hurayra,³⁶ and others.³⁷ These versions sometimes link the utterance to specific deeds as well as

³³ See above, 60.

³⁴ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, V, 1433 (no. 8172); Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 64 (from Ibn Abī Ḥātim).

³⁵ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, VIII, 128 (81:31); Muslim, I, 83 (1, *Bāb idhā hamma l-ʿabdu bi-ḥasana...*); Dārimī, II, no. 2786 (20:70); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 227, 279, 310, 361.

³⁶ Muslim, I, 82–83 (1, *Bāb idhā hamma l-ʿabdu bi-ḥasana...*); Tirmidhī/*Tuḥfa*, VIII, 450–51 (44, *sūra* 6). Non-*Qudsī isnād*: Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 234, 411, 498.

³⁷ See Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 64–66.

to specific groups within the Islamic *umma* who are presented as more entitled than others to the duplicated reward.

In the version of the Baṣran Companion Anas ibn Mālik,³⁸ God's utterance is contained in the story of Muḥammad's nocturnal journey to heaven (the *mi'raj*), and pertains to the daily prayers which have been prescribed to the Muslims during this event. God utters it to confirm that each one of the five daily prayers will be considered for the Muslims as ten like it, that is, 50. This is the number of prayers which God originally intended to prescribe, but He eventually reduced it to five due to the intervention of Moses, who claimed that judging by his experience with the Israelites, the burden of 50 prayers would be too heavy for the Muslims. God's utterance affirms that although the daily prayers have been reduced from 50 to five, they have nevertheless remained equal to 50 in their reward.

These are the virtues that constitute the distinction of Muslims from others; in Qatāda's traditions, they have been read back into the Torah and have become the reason for Moses' rage and his smashing of the tablets. This latter point—that is, Moses smashing the tablets in dismay at their displeasing contents—aroused opposition among several commentators who, in accordance with the concept of the infallibility (*iṣma*) of the prophets, rejected the notion that Moses could ever react in such a manner to the word of God, and therefore denounced Qatāda's tradition as "vicious". In their view, the tablets were smashed only because the Israelites had worshipped the calf.³⁹ Nevertheless, the scene of Moses reading the virtues of Muḥammad's *umma* in the tablets continued to be elaborated through the ages, albeit not as the reason for the smashing of the tablets. This is indicated in major *tafsir* compilations later than al-Ṭabarī's. In some of them, the figure of Ka'b al-Aḥbār emerges yet again, but he has now completely lost his Israelite identity and his knowledge of the Torah is employed for anti-Jewish polemics. In a tradition recorded by al-Tha'labī (d. AH 427), Ka'b meets a weeping Jewish rabbi and compels him to admit that his sorrow has been caused by the story of

³⁸ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 148–49.

³⁹ Ibn 'Atīyya, VII, 167; Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, VII, 288; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsir*, II, 248.

Moses and the tablets as written in his own Torah, in which each and every trait of the chosen community was reserved for Muḥammad's *umma* and not for the people of Moses.⁴⁰

The scene of Moses and the tablets was also circulated on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih.⁴¹ More elaborated versions containing expanded lists of the traits of the Muslims are also available with *isnāds* traced back to some Companions quoting the Prophet, such as Ibn ʿAbbas⁴² and Abū Hurayra.⁴³

In due course, the scene of Moses and the tablets has assumed new forms in which it is not Moses who discovers the content of the tablets by reading them; rather it is God Himself who conveys their message while addressing Moses directly (*yā Musā...*). The content of God's address has risen beyond the specific virtues of the chosen community and has become exhortation covering a wide range of universal values of religious and moral significance. The various versions of God's address continue to be circulated on the authority of persons renowned for their knowledge of Jewish lore, such as Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, Wahb ibn Munabbih and others, and there are also versions traced back to the Prophet himself.⁴⁴

The Transfer of God's Mercy

The exclusion of the Children of Israel from God's mercy and from the scope of the chosen community also emerges in interpretations of the Qurʾānic verses describing Moses' entreaty for God's mercy after the earthquake that seizes the 70 delegates. In His response to Moses' prayer, God delineates three circles of those entitled to His mercy. The widest possible range is delineated in God's words: "My mercy embraces all

⁴⁰ Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (Ahmet III, 76/II), fol. 98b–99a; *idem*, *Qiṣaṣ*, 181–82; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, V, 384–86; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, I, 31–32 (from Abū Nuʿaym).

⁴¹ Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil*, I, 379–80. See also Suyūṭī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, III, 207–208; *idem*, *Nuzūl ʿIsā*, 31–35 (from al-Bayhaqī).

⁴² Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (Ahmet III, 76/II), fol. 98b.

⁴³ Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXV, 366–67; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 124; *idem*, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, I, 29–30 (from Abū Nuʿaym).

⁴⁴ E.g. Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXV, 364–67, 370–81.

things" (7:156), but this is immediately restricted to god-fearing believers giving alms, and then to those who follow the *ummī* prophet (7:157).

The commentators read into this passage the idea that God's mercy was withdrawn from the first two circles and given to the third one, that is, to Muḥammad's followers. The first two circles are said to have been those of Iblīs (= Satan) and the Jews, respectively. A statement to the effect that God's mercy was withdrawn from Satan and the Jews appears already in Muqātil's *Tafsīr*.⁴⁵

Traditions recorded by al-Ṭabarī repeat the same idea. One bears an *isnād* of Ibn Jurayj,⁴⁶ who says that God "took away" (*nazaʿa*) His mercy from Iblīs and the Jews and gave it to Muḥammad's *umma*. The same is also stated by Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī (Baṣran, d. AH 167).⁴⁷ According to Sufyān ibn ʿUyayna (Meccan, d. AH 196), God "stole" (*ikhtalasa*) His mercy from Iblīs and from the Jews and the Christians and made it an exclusive possession of "this community".⁴⁸

A more detailed description is given in a tradition of Nawf ibn Faḍāla al-Bikālī. He relates that when Moses chose 70 people to attend God's audience, God said to Moses that He expects his people to know the Torah by heart, to put the *sakīna* in their hearts, and to use the earth as a place of prayer. Moses forwarded these demands to his people, and they said: "We will only learn the Torah by reading its written text (*nazarān*), and will only pray in the synagogues, and will only have the *sakīna* within the Ark of the Covenant (*al-tābūt*). Thereupon, God revealed the verses that restrict His mercy to those believing in the *ummī* prophet.⁴⁹ In this setting, the Jews lose their status as a chosen community due to their inferior ritual customs and manners of prayer.

On the whole, the material examined in this chapter has demonstrated the virtues of Muḥammad's *umma* in the global sphere of sacred history, in

⁴⁵ Muqātil, II, 67.

⁴⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IX, 55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, IX, 54–55.

⁴⁸ Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab*, I, no. 379.

⁴⁹ Ibn Abi Ḥātim, V, 1579 (no. 9053). Also ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 238; Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (Ahmet III, 76/II), fol. 102b; Māwardī, *Nukat*, II, 267; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, III, 272; Qurtubī, *Aḥkām*, VII, 297–98; Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXV, 367–68.

which their superiority over the other communities, and mainly over the Children of Israel, forms part of a predestined scheme of God.

IIB. Arabs and Others Alike

CHAPTER 6

ISRAELITE AND ISLAMIC SECTS: THE *FIRAQ* TRADITION

The superiority of Arab believers over others, as discussed in the previous chapters, is dramatically missing in other traditions in which the sins of Israel are also the sins of the Muslims. These traditions no longer make mention of the notion of the Muslims being God's chosen community, and in them the Muslims are no better than any other nation under the sun. These traditions delineate another link between Muslims and non-Muslims, one that is based on similarity in the sense that Muḥammad's community shares with the other communities the same fate of sin and punishment. Glimpses of such a notion have already been seen in Shi'ī traditions comparing the Muslim enemies of the Shi'a to the sinful Israelites.¹ There are, however, Sunnī traditions in which a similar incriminating comparison is drawn between Israelites and Muslims, and they will be the subject of the following chapters.

The major sin that emerges in the traditions as being shared by Muslims and others is that of inner division and civil wars. These conditions of crisis are presented in the traditions as the main reason why Muslims have become like other sinful communities. The underlying message of these traditions is anti-heretical. They are aimed at such groups as Kha-wārij, Qadaris, Shi'īs and others, who are accused of introducing into Islamic society Israelite modes of dissension and schisms. As will be seen below, such accusations were not merely abusive mannerisms but stemmed from substantial parallels between Israelite and Islamic division. The attack on these groups is marked by a fear of assimilation with

¹ Above, 76–81.

others, and is designed to maintain for the believers a distinctive Islamic identity.

The present traditions continue to draw on the Qurʾān, but now the Qurʾānic models of Israelite sin are adduced to rebuke the Muslims, not to praise them.

The Qurʾānic model of the Israelite sin of schism is presented in various passages. In Sūrat al-Jāshiya (45):16–17 (see also Sūrat Yūnus [10]:93), God condemns the Children of Israel for their inner conflicts (*ikhtilāf*) which divided them after He had given them the Book, the judgement and the prophethood, and after He had preferred them above all beings. Therefore, God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. In Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3):19, God says the same about the People of the Book.

Islamic tradition equates the Israelite division with that within Islam, and the most explicit statement asserting this parallelism is provided in the *firaq* tradition, which establishes a numerical symmetry between the Israelite and Islamic sects. This Prophetic tradition deserves particular attention, not only for the idea of Muslims and others being dominated by the same fate, but also because many aspects of its textual history have not yet been scrutinised.²

The *firaq* tradition consists of two basic parts, an apocalyptic one that says that the Muslims are about to split into 72 “parties” (*firaq*), and a historical one that says that the Children of Israel have also split into about 70 parties. The tradition states that all the Islamic parties are doomed to Hell, but this sweeping pessimism is moderated by the assertion that there is still one group that retains the original core of the chosen community and will therefore go to Paradise. This optimistic mitigation reveals the didactic aim of the *firaq* tradition, which is to show the believers how to maintain their special status among the nations, and how to secure for themselves a distinctive Islamic identity. As will be seen

² For previous studies on this tradition see Ignaz Goldziher, “Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Šiʿa und der sunnitischen Polemic”, *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 78 (1874), 444–46 (reprinted in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, I Hildesheim, 1967); *idem*, “Le dénombrement des sectes mohamétanes”, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 26 (1892), 129–37 (reprinted in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, Hildesheim, 1968).

below, the saved Islamic party is equated with a saved party among the divided Israelites, and thus the notion of a “Judeo-Muslim” group among the Children of Israel is revived. This time it serves as a model for righteous values abandoned by the divided Muslims, as well as by the sinful Children of Israel.

Origins

The link between the Israelite and Islamic schisms as established in the *firaq* tradition is based on a numerical parallelism. The origin of this numerical structure needs clarification. Modern scholars have usually connected the notion of 70-odd Islamic sects to the Islamic heresiographical system. For example, Keith Lewinstein has assumed that the *firaq* tradition “presumably reflects the appearance of extended schematic *firaq* works”, and holds that it was put into circulation round about the mid-second century.³ This would mean that the *firaq* tradition is based on ideas of Muslim heresiographers who created systematic lists of 70-odd Islamic parties and sects. However, such an assumption implies that the Islamic parties predicted in the *firaq* tradition indeed stand for the Islamic sects as listed by the heresiographers. However, the term *firaq* may just refer to embryonic trends and groups that emerged due to division (*furqa*) among Muslims, and nothing seems to restrict the origin of the apocalypse to an already systematically developed Islamic heresiography.

It is more likely that the *firaq* tradition was already in existence before any systematic list of sects was drawn up, and when lists began to be put together, the *firaq* tradition served as their model and was the origin of their numerical structure. In other words, the lists of sects provided the already existing *firaq* tradition with specific contents. This is confirmed in the following story about Yūsuf ibn Asbāṭ al-Shaybāni (Kūfan/Syrian, d. AH 195). The latter is reported to have been approached by al-Musayyab ibn Wāḍiḥ (Ḥimṣī), who said to him:

³ Keith Lewinstein, “Making and Unmaking a Sect: the Heresiographers and the *Ṣūfīyya*”, *Studia Islamica* 76 (1992), 77–78. Cf. G.H.A. Juyboll, s.v. “Sunna”, *El*², IX, 880.

I have not come to hear *ḥadīths*, but rather to learn their interpretation (*tafsīr*) from you. There is this *ḥadīth*: “The Children of Israel split into 71 parties (*fīraq*), and this community will split into 72 parties”. Instruct me who these parties are, so that I can avoid them.

Yūsuf ibn Asbāt answered that the Islamic parties had stemmed from four sources (*asl*): Qadariyya, Murjiʿa, Shīʿa and Khawārij; each of these parties (*fīraqa*) had generated eighteen more parties.⁴ Here the list is produced within an exegetical process designed to link the apocalypse of the *fīraq* tradition to a reality of heretical sects, as known to the scholars of the second Islamic century. However, the lists of real parties were being built not only to match the apocalypse, but also to draw a clear line separating the chosen community of believers from those who remain outside of it.

ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. AH 181) too is already said to have provided a list of 72 Islamic parties, stemming from four sources: Shīʿa, Ḥārūrīyya, Qadariyya and Murjiʿa. He says that they produced 22, 21, 16, and 13 parties, respectively.⁵ Although he does not mention the *fīraq* tradition, he obviously elaborates on it.

In these reports, the number of the Islamic parties, as indicated in the *fīraq* tradition and as retained in the elaborated lists, is 72. This seems to be a symbolic number based on the well-known typology of the number 12, duplicated by six. This number is used not only in the apocalypse discussed here, but also in numerous other apocalyptic contexts. For example, 72 Dajjāls will portend the Hour;⁶ 72 months will elapse between Shuʿayb ibn Ṣāliḥ and the Mahdī;⁷ a man of Hāshim and his son will rule for 72 years.⁸

Outside the apocalyptic sphere, the number appears as part of an entity larger by one, i.e. consisting of 73 components. For example, God’s

⁴ Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 953 (end missing); Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, no. 277 (full text). See also no. 276.

⁵ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, no. 278. Cf. W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973), 58.

⁶ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 165, 188 (I am grateful to Yaron Klein for these references).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 124, 419.

Greatest Name consists of 73 letters, 72 of which have been revealed to the Prophet and to some of the Shī'ī *imāms*.⁹ Or, God bestows 73 portions of mercy on a man helping the needy, one portion in this world, and 72 in the next.¹⁰ As will be seen below, the same pattern recurs in the *firaq* tradition, in versions speaking about 73 Islamic sects, 72 of which go to Hell and one to Paradise.

The apocalyptic part of the *firaq* tradition is therefore based on a widely current symbolic number, which means that the tradition did not come into being to serve heresiographical needs, but rather was the outcome of an apocalyptic drive.

The basic apocalyptic nature of the *firaq* tradition is further intensified in versions basing the predicted Islamic schism in the sphere of *ash-rāṭ al-sā'a*, "the portents of the Hour". This is the case in a Syrian version of the Companion 'Awf ibn Mālik. The Prophet describes to 'Awf the time at which the division into 72+1 sects going to Hell and to Paradise, respectively, will occur. He mentions a series of different signs of moral disintegration and corruption that will appear among the Muslims; when these become manifest people will seek shelter in Syria, but the enemies of the Muslims will soon conquer it, and then there will be tribulations (*fitan*) which will last till the emergence of the Mahdī.¹¹ This version puts at the core of the Islamic pessimism the fear of a Byzantine counter-attack in Syria.¹²

The Historical Part

In the historical part of the *firaq* tradition, the Children of Israel provide the historical model of schisms. The number of their own parties is lesser by one, that is, 71, which creates with the 72 Islamic sects an ascending scale of schism.

The information about the Israelite schism is assumed to have come to the Prophet directly from a Jewish source, and some Muslim traditions identify him by name. He is 'Abdallāh ibn Salām (d. AH 43), the Medi-

⁹ Ps.-Mas'ūdī, *Ithbāt*, 133, 160, 254; Kulini, I, 230.

¹⁰ Kulini, II, 199.

¹¹ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XVIII, no. 91.

¹² Such fears were mainly in Ḥims, for which see Conrad, "Arwād", 339–40.

nan convert. His meeting with Muḥammad is described in a tradition of Qatāda ibn Di‘āma, as recorded by ‘Abd al-Razzāq. The Prophet asks him into how many parties (*firaq*) the Children of Israel split up. Ibn Salām replies that they divided up into 71 or 72 parties, whereupon the Prophet adds the apocalyptic part of the *firaq* tradition, saying that the Muslims will split into a similar number of parties, or into a number lower by one. All parties but one will go to Hell.¹³ A similar exchange between the Prophet and Ibn Salām is recounted in a tradition of the Baṣran Companion Anas ibn Mālik.¹⁴

In these texts, the number of the Israelite parties varies between 71 and 72. While the number 71 renders the Islamic schism more drastic, the number 72 places the Israelite and Islamic schisms on an equal basis.

The specific Jewish origin of the notion that the Children of Israel split into 70-odd parties is not clear. It has been suggested that it may be linked to the Talmudic notion of the Torah being written out in the 70 or 72 different languages of the various nations.¹⁵ However, this is somewhat strained, because the *firaq* tradition speaks about sects among the Israelites themselves. A clue to a more specific Talmudic origin may be found in the commentaries on Qur’ān 3:19. This is one of the verses condemning the People of the Book for being divided after God has given them the Book, that is, the Torah. While some interpretations, such as the one transmitted by Ibn Ishāq from Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far ibn al-Zubayr (Medinan, d. ca. AH 110–20),¹⁶ say that the verse refers to conflicts among Christians, other interpretations link it to schisms among the Jews. One is of al-Rabi‘ ibn Anas al-Bakrī (Baṣran, d. AH 139), who says that before his death Moses assembled 70 rabbis (*ḥabr*) of the Children of Israel and entrusted to each one of them one part of the Torah. He then appointed Joshua the son of Nun as his successor. When three generations (*qarn*) elapsed, the sons of the 70 rabbis to whom the knowledge had come down were beset by division (*furqa*), and they shed each other’s blood as disagreements and war broke out among them. This was

¹³ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, no. 18675.

¹⁴ Ājurri, *Shari‘a*, no. 24; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 270.

¹⁵ McAuliffe, *Qur’anic Christians*, 199 n. 77.

¹⁶ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, III, 142.

the outcome of their greediness and of their passion for power and wealth, and God therefore established tyrants to rule over them.¹⁷

That the Israelites had 70 rabbis, or “elders”, as leaders is a well-known Biblical idea,¹⁸ and that these elders received the Torah in a succession of transmission beginning with Moses is a well-known Talmudic concept. In the Mishnah, the sequence of transmission is: God → Moses → Joshua → elders → prophets → the men of the Great Keneseth.¹⁹ The distribution of the Torah among these people could mean that it originated various ways of interpreting and implementing the Torah. In view of the tradition of al-Rabī^c ibn Anas, it may be assumed that when speaking about 70-odd sects among the Children of Israel, the *firq* tradition most probably refers to conflicts among the descendants of the 70 Israelite elders who received the Torah.

However, in most versions of the *firq* tradition, the historical part is vague; no specific indication as to the identity of the 70-odd Israelite parties is provided, only their number. Such identification is, in fact, not essential, because the Israelite schism figures within the *firq* tradition only as a model for the Islamic schism, which the apocalyptic part is designed to denounce. In the Islamic sphere, a concrete context can be detected, which may shed light on the circumstances in which the *firq* tradition was first put into circulation. The following material will show that this tradition first appeared in the Syrian sphere where it was designed to equate the Israelite schism with the Khārijī dissension, and by implication, to equate the righteous Israelites with the Umayyad caliphs.

Before turning to the relevant evidence, some introductory remarks on the Khawārij are in order. The people named “Khawārij” are usually identified with those who seceded from ʿAlī’s camp in Şiffīn, where a battle between ʿAlī and Muʿāwīya took place in 37/657–58.²⁰ The con-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 142. See also Tha^clabī, *Tafsir* (MS Tel Aviv), 68; Zamakhshari, *Kashshāf*, I, 419; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 440; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 13.

¹⁸ Exodus 24:1.

¹⁹ Aboth 1:1.

²⁰ For which see e.g. W. Montgomery Watt, “Khārijite Thought in the Umayyad Period”, *Der Islam* 36 (1961), 215; M.A. Shaban, *Islamic History: a New Interpretation. Vol. I: A.D. 600–750* (Cambridge, 1971, repr. 1977), 76; N.J. Coulson, *A History of Is-*

ventional view has therefore been that “Khawārij” are those who “went out” (*kharajū*) from ʿAlī’s camp after Ṣiffin.²¹ However, this is just an etiological interpretation placing the term “Khawārij” in a concrete historical context. The term itself is much earlier than Ṣiffin. To begin with, the form *khawārij* is the plural of *khārijī*, which is pre-Islamic by origin. It means “one excellent in running, or that outstrips others, not the offspring of a sire and dam possessing the like qualities”.²² This might suggest that the term was not initially pejorative in its Islamic usage—although usually connected with heretics—but rather signified courageous rebellion against oppressors.

The label “Khawārij” was applied to groups involved already in the assassination of ʿUthmān (35/656), the third of the Righteous Caliphs. This is the case in a Khārijī text considered to be a letter of Ibn Ibād, the real or fictitious founder of the Ibāḍiyya. Here the term is evidently laudatory.²³ Mālik ibn Anas (d. AH 180) too is said to have called those who rebelled against ʿUthmān: “Khawārij”; here it is associated with *ahwāʾ* (“deviations”), and hence pejorative.²⁴ The pejorative association of the term Khawārij with heretics of evil “deviations” is the prevailing one, and it is indicated in a statement of Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī (Baṣran, d. AH 131) to the effect that all people of deviations (*ahl al-ahwāʾ*) are Khawārij; they differ in name, but are all alike in using the sword.²⁵ The title *ahl al-ahwāʾ* is based on a Qurʾānic designation of people of evil inclinations,²⁶ and the traditions apply it not only to the Khawārij, but also to the Qadaris, the Murjiʾis and others.²⁷

Islamic Law (repr. Edinburgh, 1994), 103; Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. Vol. 1: the Formative Period* (London and New York, 1990), 49; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: the Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (London and New York, 1994), 79.

²¹ Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. “Khārijī”.

²² *Loc. cit.*

²³ The letter of Ibn Ibād is usually taken to be authentic. See e.g. Watt, *Formative Period*, 16. For a penetrating reevaluation of the dating and significance of the letter, see Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma* (Cambridge, 1981), 57–67.

²⁴ Firyābī, *Qadar*, no. 387.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 375; Lālikāʾi, I, no. 290.

²⁶ E.g. Qurʾān 5:77; 6:150; 45:18, etc.

²⁷ On the Qadaris see below, 177–80. On the Murjiʾis see e.g. Cook, *Dogma*,

The Khawārij and the *Firaq* Tradition*Abū Umāma and the Beheaded Khawārij*

The anti-Khārijī connection of the *firaq* tradition is evident in numerous texts. To begin with, this tradition appears in some versions of a story about the Syrian Companion Abū Umāma al-Bāhili (d. AH 81–86), on whose authority many anti-Khārijī statements are circulated. This accords with the fact that he was on ʿAlī’s side in Šiffīn.²⁸ In one particular case, Abū Umāma makes a statement against the Khawārij in front of their cut-off heads. The story takes place in the days of al-Muhallab ibn Abi Šufra, who fought many battles against the Khawārij in Iraq, first under ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, and then under the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik. In one case al-Muhallab is said to have beheaded 60 or 70 Khawārij and sent their heads for display outside the mosque of Damascus.²⁹ Abū Umāma is reported to have come to watch, and there are numerous versions of what he said on that occasion. Most of these contain two basic elements: one is that the Khawārij are “dogs of Hell” (*kilāb al-nār*), and the other is that they are the worst people ever killed and that the people killed by them are the best people ever killed. Abū Umāma swears that these curses are not his own invention, but that he heard them from the Prophet.

Many versions contain one or both of these statements. One account is that of Sayyār al-Umawī (Syrian), as quoted by ʿAbdallāh ibn Baḥīr (Yemeni storyteller).³⁰ More prevalent, however, are the versions of the Baṣran Abū Ghālib, who is said to have accompanied Abū Umāma to look at the beheaded Khawārij. Abū Ghālib’s story was disseminated by numerous traditionists whose versions were recorded by al-Ṭabarānī in his *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*.³¹ The account by Sufyān ibn ʿUyayna (Meccan,

23–106; Khalil Athamina, “The Early Murji’a: Some Notes”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 35 (1990), 109–30. On the term *ahl al-ahwāʾ* see further, Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, 29.

²⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, III, 420.

²⁹ See Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 188; Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XI, 77.

³⁰ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 250.

³¹ The traditionists quoting Abū Ghālib are: Ḥusayn al-Khurasānī (Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8041); Abū Khalda (*ibid.*, VIII, no. 8043); Ashʿath ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (*ibid.*,

d. AH 196) from Abū Ghālib gained entrance into the canonical collection of Ibn Māja.³² Somewhat different is the version of al-Azhar ibn Ṣāliḥ, in which Abū Ghālib sees with Abū Umāma bodies of Khawārij who revolted in Syria, not in Iraq, and were thrown into a pit.³³

In some expanded versions of the story about Abū Umāma and the beheaded Khawārij, related on the authority of Abū Umāma by Abū Ghālib, the *firaq* tradition appears side by side with some Qurʾānic passages (which will be discussed in the following chapter), and usually immediately after these verses, and with it the entire statement of Abū Umāma is concluded. In all of these expanded versions the number of the Islamic parties is 72, while the number of the Israelite parties is the same or lower by one, which creates a rising scale of schism with the Islamic sects.

The recitation of the *firaq* tradition in front of the beheaded Khawārij leaves little doubt as to its purport: to berate the Khawārij for spreading among the Muslims Israelite modes of schisms.

The earliest available source in which the *firaq* tradition appears as a part of the story of Abū Umāma is the *Muṣannaḥ* of Ibn Abī Shayba (d. AH 235). Abū Ghālib transmits the story to Abū Mirā Qaṭan ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥarrānī, and in it the *firaq* tradition—as is said to have been heard by Abū Umāma from the Prophet—reads:³⁴

The Children of Israel split into 71 parties (*firqa*), and the number of parties in this community will be higher by one. All will go to Hell, except for *al-sawād al-aʿzam*. Upon them (i.e. upon *al-sawād al-aʿzam*) rests what is laid on them, and upon you rests what is laid on you. If you obey, you are righteous. The duty of the messenger of God is just to deliver. Hearing and obedience (*ṭāʿa*) are better than division (*furqa*) and rebellion (*maʿṣiya*).

VIII, no. 8040); ʿImrān ibn Muslim (*ibid.*, VIII, no. 8044); Jaʿfar ibn Sulaymān (*ibid.*, VIII, no. 8039); Qaṭan ibn Kaʿb Abū l-Haytham (*ibid.*, VIII, no. 8055).

³² Ibn Māja, I, no. 176 (*Muqaddima*, 12). See also ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 1471; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8036.

³³ Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 57.

³⁴ Ibn Abī Shayba, XV, no. 19738. See also *Kanz*, XI, no. 31583. Isolated: Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 68.

Similar versions were transmitted from Abū Ghālib by Ḥammād ibn Zayd (Başran, d. AH 179),³⁵ Sulaym ibn Zurayr,³⁶ and Ḥammād ibn Salama (Başran, d. AH 167).³⁷

This version declares that the Muslims are free to choose between joining the chosen community and going to Paradise, or joining the doomed parties and going to Hell. The text draws heavily on Qurʾān 24:54, which urges the believers to obey God and His messenger, adding that each one bears his own burden. Just as the Qurʾān does, the tradition elevates the value of obedience (*tāʿa*) to the rank of a major duty, which stands in contrast to division (*furqa*) and rebellion (*maʿṣiya*). The occurrence of such a statement in an anti-Khārijī context is to be expected since the Khawārij were renowned for rejecting the principle of *tāʿa*, which triggered off Sunnī traditions in support of this principle. Most famous is the statement that the ruler must always be obeyed, even if he be a “black slave” (*ʿabd ḥabashī*).³⁸ Although some modern Islamists have held that this notion of submission was originated by the Khawārij themselves, it was already proven to be a Sunnī anti-Khārijī statement.³⁹

al-Sawād al-Aʿzam

In the present version, the saved party is one of the 72 groups and is designated as *al-sawād al-aʿzam*: “the great blackness”. The locution denotes the bulk of the Islamic *umma*, and is designed to balance the impression that may be gained from the fact that the saved party is only one out of 72, that is, a minority. By being called *al-sawād al-aʿzam*, the

³⁵ Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, VIII, no. 8035; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 188.

³⁶ Lālikāʿi, I, no. 152. Isolated: Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, VIII, no. 8054.

³⁷ Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 285.

³⁸ E.g. ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, II, no. 3783; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 78 (93:4); Muslim, VI, 14–15 (33, *Bāb wujūb ṭāʿat al-umarāʾ*); Tirmidhī/*Tuḥfa*, VII, no. 2815 (39:16); Marwazī, *Sunna*, nos. 70, 71; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 942, 1062, 1063; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, nos. 64, 69, 70; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, p. 307; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 159; *idem*, *Shuʿab*, VI, nos. 7515–16; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 183; Lālikāʿi, IV, nos. 2293–97; *Kanz*, VI, nos. 14812, 14816, 14818.

³⁹ For a detailed survey of the issue see Patricia Crone, “Even if an Ethiopian Slave: the Transformation of a Sunnī Tradition”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57 (1994), 59–67. Cf. Bashear, *Arabs and Others*, 88–92.

saved party explicitly becomes the one representing the majority of the community, which means that the right way of God is with the masses.⁴⁰ The tradition stresses that the believers must “obey”, and the saved party therefore clearly consists of those accepting the principle of obedience to the ruling leaders, that is, the caliphs. The recitation of this statement in front of the beheaded Khawārij means that they belong to the doomed parties who preserve among the Muslims an Israelite model of dissension and rebellion.

Jamā^ca–Ṭā^ca

Other versions of the *firaq* tradition provide further designations of the saved party; these reveal additional aspects of its inherent anti-Khārijī purport. Thus, in the version of Dāwūd [ibn Bakr] ibn Abī l-Furāt (Medinan), as quoted from Abū Ghālib—which is isolated from the scene of the beheaded Khawārij—the group called *al-sawād al-a^cẓam* is identified further as *al-jamā^ca*.⁴¹ This term denotes “togetherness”⁴² and is the opposite of *furqa*, “division”.

The value of *jamā^ca* means that one should adhere to the accepted rulings of the religious leaders, and is closely associated with the value of *ṭā^ca* which appears in the above version of the *firaq* tradition. Both appear together in various other texts. For example, a letter said to have been sent by the Prophet to the leader of Baḥrayn⁴³ contains a clause to the effect that the local leader should “obey and join the *jamā^ca*” (...*wa-tuṭī^cu wa-tadkhulu fī l-jamā^ca*).

The values of *jamā^ca* and *ṭā^ca* stand in clear contrast to the Khārijī disposition, which points to the anti-Khārijī import of the *firaq* tradition. The contrast between *jamā^ca* and *ṭā^ca*, on the one hand, and the Khawārij, on the other, is indicated in traditions in which these values appear as the ones impaired by acts described with derivatives of the root *kh.r.j.*,

⁴⁰ Compare the Latin saying *Vox populi vox Dei*, and the Hebrew *qol hamon ke-qol shadday*: “The voice of the masses is the voice of God”.

⁴¹ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 56.

⁴² For the various connotations of the term *jamā^ca* see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh, 1998), 5–6.

⁴³ Ibn Sa^cd, I, 275. Cf. Gardet, “Djamā^ca”, *Et*².

the very root of the term “Khawārij”. This is the case in traditions cursing him who abandons (*tarakalfāraqa*) the “togetherness” (*jamāʿa*) of the Muslims and separates himself (*kharaja*) from the collective obedience (*al-tāʿa*).⁴⁴ In some versions, the term *tāʿa* is interchangeable with that of *sultān* (“the ruling power”), as the object abandoned by him who performs the act of *kharaja* (*kharaja mina l-sultāni*).⁴⁵

In other versions of Abū Umāma the rising scale of schism has disappeared, and thus the implicit inferiority of Muslims to Israelites has been diminished. The elimination of the rising scale is achieved either by raising the number of the Israelite parties to 72 to match the Islamic ones, or by reducing the Islamic doomed parties to 71 to match the Israelite ones. In the following version, quoted from Abū Ghālib by Quraysh ibn Ḥayyān (Baṣran), the former device has been employed:⁴⁶

The Children of Israel were divided into 72 parties (*firqa*); this community will be divided into the same number of parties, as well as into an extra party. All will go to Hell, except for the *sawād*....

In this version, the saved Islamic party has been excluded from the 72, and thus gained a more distinctive status.

In the following version, the number of the doomed Islamic parties has been reduced to 71 to match the Israelite ones, while retaining the extra party that goes to Paradise. This version is transmitted from Abū Umāma by Abū Ghālib to Abū l-Haytham Qaṭan ibn Kaʿb (Baṣran), and it does not have the story of the beheaded Khawārij. Abū Ghālib relates that someone asked Abū Umāma who were “those in whose hearts there is deviation (*zaygh*), who follow the *mutashābih* of the Qurʾān”. These

⁴⁴ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, no. 20707; Muslim, VI, 21 (33, *Bāb al-amr bi-luzūm al-jamāʿa*); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 133 (*nazaʿa yadan min*), 296, 306, 488, 488 (*khālafa*); Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Ḥimān*, I, nos. 108 (*taraka*), 109, 110 (*khālafa*), 111, 112; Lālikāʿi, I, nos. 141, 142; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 156; *idem*, *Shuʿab*, VI, nos. 7495–96; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XXI, 281.

⁴⁵ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 59 (92:2); Muslim, VI, 22 (33, *Bāb al-amr bi-luzūm al-jamāʿa*).

⁴⁶ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8053.

terms are derived from Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3):7, a Qurʾānic verse which, as will be shown in the next chapter, is closely related to the Khawārij. Abū Umāma replies that they are the Khawārij, which means that the Qurʾānic verse deals with them. He goes on to ask the man to join the *sawād aʿẓam*, and then recites the *firaq* tradition, which reads:⁴⁷

The Children of Israel have been divided into 71 parties, all of which are in Hell; this community will have one more party that will go to Paradise.

Jews and Christians (71–72)

In further versions of the *firaq* tradition as quoted from Abū Umāma, a significant change is noticed both in the numerical structure and in the identity of the past communities. The title “Children of Israel” has been replaced by the two ethnic groups which this term covers, namely, “Jews” (*Yahūd*) and “Christians” (*Naṣārā*). This change reflects the tendency of the traditionists to use designations more relevant than the remote “Children of Israel”. With this change, the dual structure of the historical-apocalyptic equation (Israelites–Muslims) has become a triple one (Jews–Christians–Muslims). Such a triple structure appears in a version uttered by Abū Umāma in front of the beheaded Khawārij, which is quoted from him (through Abū Ghālib) by Dāwūd ibn (Abī) al-Sulayk:⁴⁸

The Jews have been divided into 71 parties (*firqa*); 70 parties are in Hell and one party is in Paradise. The Christians have been divided into 72 parties; 71 parties are in Hell and one party is in Paradise. This community will be divided into 73 parties; 72 parties go to Hell and one to Paradise.

When asked to describe the Muslim party that goes to Paradise, Abū Umāma said that they were the *sawād aʿẓam*.

Here the basic number of 71 Israelite parties has been allotted to the Christians, while the Jewish parties are of a lesser number by one (70). These numbers only include doomed parties, while the saved party in each community is an extra one. This version thus draws a line connecting the saved Islamic party to the righteous groups of the Jews and the

⁴⁷ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 55.

⁴⁸ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, nos. 8051–52; *Lālikāʾī*, I, no. 151.

Christians, which have thus become a model foreshadowing the Muslim believers who have remained loyal to the true values of the Prophet's faith.

"Judeo-Muslims" and "Christo-Muslims"

The saved parties among the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims were eventually provided with Qur'ānic links established in independent traditions not explicitly related to the Khārījī schism. One of these is a tradition about ʿAlī, recounted by Yaʿqūb ibn Zayd ibn Ṭalḥa (Medinan judge, d. ca. AH 140), who says that ʿAlī transmitted the *firaq* tradition from the Prophet. Whenever he did so, he used to recite three Qur'ānic verses, which in this context are perceived as referring to the saved parties among the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims, respectively. For the saved party among the Jews, ʿAlī is said to have recited Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (7):159. This is the Israelite *umma* verse which, as seen above,⁴⁹ states that a righteous *umma* exists among the people of Moses. For the saved party among the Christians, ʿAlī is said to have recited Sūrat al-Māʿida (5):65–66, which deals with the People of the Book, that is, the Jews as well as the Christians. Here it is stated that there is among them *umma muqtaṣida* (a "righteous community"), while many other of the People of the Book are evil-doers.⁵⁰ For the saved party among the Muslims, ʿAlī is said to have recited Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (7):181, which refers to a righteous *umma* among those created by God.⁵¹

There is one more tradition about ʿAlī in which he appends the three Qur'ānic passages to the *firaq* tradition. In this tradition, ʿAlī is engaged in a polemical debate with a Jewish rabbi (*raʾs al-jālūt* = Rosh Golah⁵²) and a Christian archbishop. ʿAlī puts the knowledge of his rivals to the test. He first asks the rabbi how many parties the Children of Israel split up into after Moses, and the rabbi says: "Into none at all". ʿAlī accuses him of lying, and says that the Children of Israel were divided into 71

⁴⁹ Above, 25–26.

⁵⁰ Cf. McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 194–203.

⁵¹ Abū Yaʿlā, VI, p. 342 (in no. 3668); Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, III, 227.

⁵² For this type of encounter between ʿAlī and the Rosh Golah see Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 108–16.

parties, and all but one will go to Hell. Then the same discourse is repeated between ʿAlī and the archbishop. ʿAlī tells him at last that the Christians were divided after Jesus into 72 parties, and that all but one will go to Hell. Finally, ʿAlī recites to the Jewish rabbi and the Christian archbishop the three Qurʾānic passages to illustrate the saved parties among the three communities.⁵³

Sometimes a different Qurʾānic passage was adduced for the saved party among the Christians, namely, Sūrat al-Ḥadīd (57):27. This verse speaks about Christians who invented *rahbāniyya* (“asceticism”).⁵⁴ The verse says that God has rewarded the believers among them, but even more among them are *fāsiqūn*, “transgressors”. A tradition of the Prophet attaches to this verse a similar version of the *firaq* tradition. The Prophet’s statement is included in a tradition occurring in an interpretation attributed to the Medinan/Kūfan Companion ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd (d. AH 32). One version is quoted from Ibn Masʿūd by Suwayd ibn Ghafala (Kūfan, d. AH 81), and has been recorded by al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on 57:27;⁵⁵ it already appears in earlier sources.⁵⁶ A similar version is quoted from Ibn Masʿūd by his son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.⁵⁷

In the version recorded by al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Masʿūd hears the Prophet say:

Those who were before us became divided into 71 parties, three of which were saved and the rest perished.

In this version, the notion of three saved parties has been condensed into the Christian sphere. The Prophet goes on to relate the history of the

⁵³ Marwazi, *Sunna*, no. 60. See also Ibn Abi Ḥatīm, V, 1587–88 (no. 8370); ʿAy-yāshī, II, 35–36 (no. 91, on Qurʾān 7:159). Cf. Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 136.

⁵⁴ Cf. Sara Sviri, “*Wa-rahbāniyyatan ibtadaʿūhā*: an Analysis of Traditions Concerning the Origin and Evaluation of Christian Monasticism”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), 195–208; McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians*, 260–84.

⁵⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXVII, 138–39.

⁵⁶ Marwazi, *Sunna*, no. 54. Cf. Ibn Abi ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 70 (abridged). And see also Ṭabarānī, *Ṣaḡhīr*, I, 223–24; *idem*, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10531; *Mustadrak*, II, 480; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, IV, 315–16.

⁵⁷ Ibn Abi ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 71 (abridged); Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10357; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, IV, 315.

three saved Christian parties, saying that the first one defied the oppressing kings and fought for the sake of the religion of God and Jesus, but the kings killed them in the end. The second party did not have the power to fight and remained among its people, preaching quietly to them the religion of God and Jesus. However, in the end the oppressing kings killed them too. The third party did not have the power even to stay quietly among its people, and retreated to the desert and the mountains and took to asceticism (*fa-tarahhabū*). Their descendants are those referred to in the Qurʾānic verse about *rahbāniyya*. The Prophet then says about the believers among them: “They were those who believed in me and said that I was truthful” (*wa-humu lladhīna āmanū bī wa-ṣaddaqūnī*). This statement no doubt alludes to the Christian “hermits” (*rāhib*, pl. *ruhbān*) of Muḥammad’s own time who are said to have believed in Muḥammad. Stories about such hermits are indeed available in the sources. The best-known figure is Baḥīrā, who recognises Muḥammad as the future Arabian prophet when he is still a child.⁵⁸

All the Qurʾānic passages adduced for the saved parties among the Jews and the Christians are perceived as referring to groups of believers who have remained loyal to the message of their respective prophets. This message also obliges them to believe in the prophet of Islam, whose emergence is predicted in their own scriptures. Hence, reference to what may be called a “Judeo-Muslim” and a “Christo-Muslim” group among the Jews and the Christians respectively is resumed. These elevated groups represent the global level of the values abandoned by the divided Muslims.

The Khārijī Archetype

The Khārijī connection of the *firaq* tradition was projected back into the life of Muḥammad and became part of an allegorical story in which the future history of the Khawārij was condensed into a single episode attended by the Prophet, as well as by Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿAlī, the future caliphs. The story turns the emergence of the Khawārij into a fatal predestined scheme. The obligation to fight them becomes a Prophetic

⁵⁸ For a recent study on several traditions about him see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 50–52.

command, and the failure of the “Righteous Caliphs” to crush them becomes the origin of the rift that has pervaded the community. In this story, the Prophet and his three Companions discuss a person who, although not explicitly defined as Khārījī, nevertheless figures as a Khārījī archetype: a valiant warrior and a devoted worshipper who is convinced that he is better than everyone else. The Prophet says that in order to prevent dissension, this man must die. However, although each of the three Companions tries to kill him, none of them succeeds (which is why the Khawārij emerged in later generations).

The story is available in several versions, transmitted on the authority of various Companions, such as the Baṣran Abū Bakra al-Thaqafī (Nufay^c ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Kalada; d. AH 50),⁵⁹ and the Anṣārī Abū Sa^cid al-Khudrī.⁶⁰ In the latter’s version, the Prophet describes the associates of the man as pretentious Qur’ān lovers, and as *māriqūn*, i.e. “passing through” the religion and leaving it behind. This is the standard description of the Khawārij.

The most prevalent versions are those of the Baṣran Companion Anas ibn Mālīk. One is transmitted from Anas by Sufyān,⁶¹ and another is quoted from Anas by the Syrian Hūd ibn ‘Aṭā’.⁶² This version is usually appended by a remark of Muḥammad ibn Ka^cb al-Quraṣī (Medinan, d. AH 117) to the effect that the man is Dhū l-Thudayya,⁶³ a Khārījī killed by ‘Alī at Nahrawān in 37/657–58, whose emergence is said to have been predicted by the Prophet.⁶⁴

The *firaq* tradition appears within the version of Anas, as related by the Baṣran storyteller Yazīd ibn Abān al-Raqāshī (d. AH 110–20). The

⁵⁹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 42; *Majma^c al-zawā³id*, VI, 228.

⁶⁰ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 15; *Majma^c al-zawā³id*, VI, 228.

⁶¹ *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1851 (printed: Abū Sufyān; Sufyān is either al-Thawrī or ibn ‘Uyayna).

⁶² Ājurri, *Sharī^ca*, no. 48. (printed: Hawdha instead of Hūd).

⁶³ Abū Ya^clā, I, no. 90; VII, no. 4143; *Majma^c al-zawā³id*, VI, 229–30; Ibn ‘Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XXVII, 158.

⁶⁴ See e.g. ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, nos. 18650–53; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 243 (61:25); Muslim, III, 114, 115, 116 (12, *Bāb dhikri l-khawārij*); Abū Dāwūd, II, 543, 545, 546 (39:27).

earliest source in which it occurs is the *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq.⁶⁵ In this version, the Companions of the Prophet admire the courage and religious devotion of the person, but when the Prophet meets him for the first time, he says: “There is a stroke from the Devil (*ṣafʿat shayṭān*) on his forehead”. As the man draws nearer, the Prophet asks him: “Have you not been telling yourself just now that no one among the people is better than yourself?” He says: “Yes”, and goes away. Then the Prophet asks who will kill this man, and Abū Bakr volunteers. He follows the man, but returns almost immediately, saying: “I reached him and saw him absorbed in prayer within a line he had drawn on the ground around himself. I did not dare to kill him.” Then the Prophet asks for another volunteer, and this time it is ʿUmar, but he too, like Abū Bakr, fails to carry out the mission. The third volunteer is ʿAlī, who, unlike the previous pair of Companions, cannot find the man. As he returns, he says to the Prophet that had he found him, he would have brought his cut-off head to the Prophet. This is probably an allusion to ʿAlī’s future anti-Khārijī campaign, and mainly to the killing of Dhū l-Thudayya at Nahrawān. Then the Prophet says: “This [man] is the first horn (*qarn*) of the Devil that has emerged in my community. Had you killed him, not even one of you would have ever disagreed with another.” This is immediately followed by the *firaq* tradition. Its present version is again of the dual structure, and the saved party is included in the initial number of 72:

The Children of Israel split into 71 parties, and the number of parties among you will be the same or higher; none will be righteous but one.

The people ask which party is the righteous one, and the Prophet says: “The *jamāʿa*. The others will go to Hell.”

In the version recorded by Abū Yaʿlā (d. AH 307), Yazīd al-Raqāshī asks Anas where the *jamāʿa* is, and Anas answers: “With your leaders, with your leaders.”⁶⁶ Here the anti-Khārijī message of the *firaq* tradition is again focused on the principles of *jamāʿa* and obedience to the rulers.

⁶⁵ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, no. 18674 (the name of Anas is missing from the *isnād*).

⁶⁶ Abū Yaʿlā, VII, no. 4127. For more versions with the *isnād* Yazīd al-Raqāshī ← Anas, see Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 53 (abridged); Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, III, 52–53.

Another of Anas' versions of the story of the Khārijī archetype is transmitted from him by Zayd ibn Aslam (Medinan, d. AH 136). It appears in the *Musnad* of Abū Ya'la,⁶⁷ but a shortened form (only the *firaq* tradition) is already recorded by al-Ājurri (d. AH 260).⁶⁸ In this version, the *firaq* tradition appears in its more elaborate triple form, that is, instead of the Children of Israel we have the Jews (70 parties), the Christians (71 parties), and the Muslims (72). The saved party of each community is again excluded from the number of the respective parties. The Jewish and the Christian communities are here referred to as *ummat Mūsā* and *ummat 'Īsā* respectively.

After having demonstrated the link between the *firaq* tradition and the Khawārij, the question arises as to what this link signifies and where it originates. This issue will be examined in the next chapter. Here, the survey of the various versions of the *firaq* tradition will be continued, unveiling more aspects of the anti-heretical message of the tradition.

Anti-Heretical Versions

Several versions of the *firaq* tradition are not embedded in a clear anti-Khārijī context, but nevertheless contain anti-heretical hints indicating the original anti-Khārijī context. Some of these are attributed to Mu'āwiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. His versions are directed at the heretics at large, who are called *ahl al-ahwā'*: "people of deviations". One of Mu'āwiya's versions is quoted by the Ḥimṣī traditionist Abū 'Āmir al-Hawzanī, and its basic text was recorded by al-Dārimī (d. AH 255); here the saved Islamic party forms an extra group separated from the 72. The previous communities are referred to as "People of the Book", a label which here represents a condensed form of Jews and Christians, and thus the tradition forms a concise version of the triple type. The Prophet says:

⁶⁷ Abū Ya'la, VI, no. 3668; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, III, 226–27; *Majma' al-zawā'id*, VI, 229.

⁶⁸ Ājurri, *Shari'a*, no. 23. See also Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 269; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, II, 76–77 (on 5:66); Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 297–98.

Those who were before you of the People of the Book became divided into 72 denominations (*milla*), and this community will be divided into 73, 72 in Hell and one in Paradise, the *jamā'a*.⁶⁹

The *ahl al-ahwā'* are not mentioned in this specific version, but in the version recorded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. AH 241),⁷⁰ which has gained much wider circulation as well as canonical authority,⁷¹ the anti-heretic touch is explicit. This version contains an additional passage appended at the end of the *firaq* tradition:

There will come out of my community people in whose souls these deviations (*tilka l-ahwā'*) will spread like rabies (*kalab*)....

This expanded version recurs in commentaries on Qur'ānic passages prohibiting division and dissension.⁷²

A similar version of Mu'āwiya's, which is likewise directed against the heretics, is embedded in a story which takes place in Mecca during the pilgrimage. Mu'āwiya meets a storyteller who relates "disagreeable things" (*ashyā' tunkaru*), which seems to imply that he tells *Isrā'īliyyāt*, i.e. Israelite stories. The caliph asks him why he does it, and the storyteller says that his only aim is to spread knowledge. Mu'āwiya warns him never to practice his art again, and at the noon-prayer of that day, he includes the *firaq* tradition in his sermon. The term *ahwā'* appears in this case as a gloss within the text of the tradition:

Those who were before you of the People of the Book became divided into 72 denominations (*milla*), that is, deviations (*ahwā'*), and this community will be divided into 73 denominations, that is, deviations (*ahwā'*), 72 in Hell and one in Paradise, the *jamā'a*. Hold fast to it, hold fast to it.⁷³

⁶⁹ Dārimī, II, no. 2518 (16:75). See also Ājurri, *Shari'a*, no. 27.

⁷⁰ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 102.

⁷¹ Abū Dāwūd, II, 503–504 (39:1); Ibn Abi 'Āṣim, *Sunna*, no. 2; Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, XIX, no. 885; Lālikā'i, I, no. 150; Bayhaqi, *Dalā'il*, VI, 541–42.

⁷² On 3:103: Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, IV, 160. On 3:105: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, I, 390.

⁷³ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 50. See also no. 51; Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, XIX, no. 884; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 268; *Mustadrak*, I, 128.

The appearance of the *firaq* tradition in Mu^ʿāwīya's reaction against storytelling means that the tradition is used as a weapon against Israelite religious and cultural influence on Islamic society. Storytelling emerges here as causing dissension, and as supporting heretics who left the *jamāʿa* and followed the Israelite ways of dissension. Since storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) derived much of their material from Jewish sources, this charge against them is quite conceivable.

Anti-Shiʿī Versions

Although the *firaq* tradition does not seem to have come into existence as an anti-Shiʿī impulse, it nevertheless gained an anti-Shiʿī momentum with time. After all, the Shiʿīs became the best-known representatives of schism in Islam. The anti-Shiʿī message that was added to the *firaq* tradition is reflected in a re-shaped version attributed to ʿAlī himself and included in a story in which ʿAlī is again engaged in a polemical debate with a Jewish rabbi (*raʾs al-jālūt*) and a Christian archbishop. This time the rabbi puts ʿAlī's knowledge to the test by asking him into how many parties the Jews split up. ʿAlī answers correctly (71 parties), and goes on to say that the Muslims too will be divided into the same number of parties, the worst of which will be the one that urges the people to love the house of ʿAlī, while cursing the caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.⁷⁴ This is an explicit anti-Shiʿī statement which, for the sake of authentication, is attributed to none other than ʿAlī himself. It is also available with an *isnād* of Mujāhid ibn Jabr (Meccan, d. AH 104) ← Ibn ʿAbbās.⁷⁵

Isolated Versions

Isolated versions of the *firaq* tradition detached from any specific event are also available. Again, many of them are circulated on the authority of Anas. These versions are of the dual structure (Israelites–Muslims), and the saved party of each community is included in the initial numbers of parties (71–72). One such version has the above *isnād* of Yazid al-

⁷⁴ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 275.

⁷⁵ Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 995; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 277 (end of paragraph).

Raqāshī ← Anas. Here too the saved party is the *jamāʿa*, but an added allusion is made to a Qurʾānic verse in which the root *j.m.ʿ* is used, so that the value of the *jamāʿa* gains divine authority. The verse is Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3):103, which says that the believers should hold fast to the “rope” (*ḥabl*) of God “together” (*jamīʿan*), and not become separated (*wa-lā tafarraqu*). The verse is alluded to in the version recorded by al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on the verse. The Prophet utters the *firaq* tradition and the audience inquires as to which is the saved party; the Prophet bends his fingers into a fist, asserting that it is the *jamāʿa*, and then recites the verse.⁷⁶ The insistence on the value of *jamāʿa* retains the anti-Khārijī message of the tradition.

In more isolated versions, the saved party is again *al-jamāʿa*. The one quoted from Anas by Qatāda gained entrance into the canonical compilation of Ibn Māja.⁷⁷ Another is quoted from Anas by the Egyptian Saʿīd ibn Abi Hilāl (d. AH 135), and is recorded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.⁷⁸ Aḥmad also recorded a version quoted from Anas by the Baṣran Ziyād ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Numayrī, and here the rising scale of schism was removed yet again; the number of Israelite parties was raised to 72 to match the Islamic ones.⁷⁹

In contrast to these versions, the one quoted from Anas by the Baṣran ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Ṣhayb (d. AH 130) calls the saved Islamic party *al-sawād al-aʿzam*, with no further definition. This time the saved party is an extra one, not included in the 72.⁸⁰

In another version of Anas, the saved party stands apart from the 72 and gains yet another definition. The *firaq* tradition is adduced here only with its apocalyptic part, with no reference to the historical Israelite precedent. Such a shortened form conveys the fatalistic message more forcefully, and the urgency of joining the saved party becomes all the more vital. The Prophet here says: “This community will split into 73 parties, all of them in Hell but one”. Some people ask him: “What is this

⁷⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IV, 22. See also Lālikāʿī, I, no. 148; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 60–61.

⁷⁷ Ibn Māja, II, no. 3993 (36:17).

⁷⁸ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 145.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 120.

⁸⁰ Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, no. 25; Abū Yaʿlā, VII, nos. 3938, 3944; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 271.

one party?" The Prophet: "They are those who adhere to what my Companions and I are following today."⁸¹ Here the value of obedience to the caliphs has been condensed into loyalty to the model of Muḥammad's contemporaries.

There are more Companions to whom the *firaq* tradition was attributed, and this indicates the importance attached to the campaign against schism. One of them is Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, whose version is quoted from him by his Medinan daughter, ʿĀʿisha bint Saʿd (d. AH 117). This is a short version of the dual structure in which the number of Islamic parties has been reduced to 71 to match the Israelites, and thus the rising scale of schism has been removed again. The saved party is included in the 71, and is named as the *jamāʿa*.⁸²

Versions of yet other Companions are based on the triple structure in which the ascending scale of schism is retained. The versions of this type are the ones preferred by the authors of the more authoritative *ḥadīth* compilations, apparently thanks to the explicit reference to Jews and Christians, who replace the remote—and hence less relevant—Children of Israel. The saved party of each of the three communities (Jews, Christians, Muslims) is an extra one. One such version is again of the Syrian Companion ʿAwf ibn Mālik, and was recorded by Ibn Māja.⁸³ However, the most prevalent version of this structure is a Medinan one, of the Companion Abū Hurayra, as quoted by Abū Salama ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf (d. AH 94). It only provides the ascending numerical scale of the total number of the parties of the three communities, which includes the saved party of each of them (71–72–73). However, none of the saved parties is explicitly mentioned. This compact and neat version gained

⁸¹ Ṭabarānī, *Ṣaḡhīr*, I, 256; Jawraqānī, *Abāṭīl*, I, no. 283. The *isnād*: ʿAbdallāh ibn Sufyān (Medinan) ← Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd ibn Qays al-Anṣārī (Medinan, d. AH 144) ← Anas ← Prophet.

⁸² Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 57; Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 26. See also Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, nos. 263, 266; *Kaṣh al-astār*, IV, 97 (no. 3284); *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VII, 262 (Bazzār).

⁸³ Ibn Māja, II, no. 3992 (36:17). See also Ibn Abi ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 63; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XVIII, no. 129; Lālikāʿi, I, no. 149.

entrance into numerous *ḥadīth* compilations, including some canonical ones.⁸⁴

Sectarian Versions

Although the *fīraq* tradition came into existence to serve the Sunnī anti-heretical campaign, and eventually also an anti-Shiʿī aim, non-Sunnī Islamic minorities—and especially Shiʿīs—soon adapted the tradition to their own needs. This was achieved by identifying themselves with the saved party, that is, the *jamāʿa*. This means that the notion of the *jamāʿa* never remained confined to the majority of Muslims, and minorities could also claim to represent the one authentic *jamāʿa*.

In fact, *jamāʿa* could also bear an individual significance, and this in itself is an idea to which Sunnis too could subscribe. This is indicated in some early traditions. For example, Ibn Saʿd (d. AH 230) has recorded a tradition in which the Prophet says to the Companion al-Ḥakam ibn ʿUmayr al-Thumālī that *jamāʿa* embodies two persons or more.⁸⁵ Also, ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd is said to have told ʿAmr ibn Maymūn (Kūfan, d. AH 74) that the masses (*jumhūr*) of the *jamāʿa* embody only those departing from the [true] *jamāʿa*, while the [true] *jamāʿa* is that which conforms to the obedience (*tāʿa*) of God, even if this be one person only.⁸⁶ An individual perception of the term *jamāʿa* is also reflected in the statement of ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī (d. AH 181), to the effect that the *jamāʿa* consists of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.⁸⁷

The same even applies to the notion of *al-sawād al-aʿzam* which initially denotes the bulk of the *umma*. This term too was turned into an abstract metaphor which could apply to a single person. Indeed, it was

⁸⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 332; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, nos. 19, 20; Ibn Māja, II, no. 3991 (36:17); Abū Dāwūd, II, 503 (39:1); Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VII, 397 (38:18); Ibn Abī ʿĀsim, *Sunna*, nos. 66–67; Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 58; Abū Yaʿlā, X, nos. 5910, 5978, 6117; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XIV, no. 6247; XV, no. 6731; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, no. 273; *Mustadrak*, I, 6, 128; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, X, 208; Baghdādī, *Farq*, 9.

⁸⁵ Ibn Saʿd, VII, 415.

⁸⁶ Lālikāʿī, I, no. 160: ...inna jumhūra l-jamāʿati hiya llati tufāriqu l-jamāʿata; innamā l-jamāʿatu mā wāfaqa ṭāʿata llāhi wa-in kunta waḥdaka. Cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XXI, 274.

⁸⁷ Lālikāʿī, IV, no. 2326.

attached to the traditionist Muḥammad ibn Aslam al-Ṭūsī, a contemporary of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. AH 241) who composed an anti-heretic treatise against the Jahmiyya and transmitted anti-heretic sayings of the Prophet, including the *firaq* tradition.⁸⁸ The title was conferred on him by Ishāq ibn Rāhūyah, who says that the ignorant people think that *sawād aʿzam* are the masses (*jamāʿat al-nās*), but they do not know that the *jamāʿa* is actually any [single] scholar adhering to the legacy (*athar*) of the Prophet and to his way (*tariq*). This scholar and his followers are the *jamāʿa*.⁸⁹

The label *sawād aʿzam* was also applied to an earlier traditionist, namely, Abū Ḥamza al-Sukkari (d. AH 166). This is again stated by ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Mubārak.⁹⁰

With this abstract significance of *jamāʿa* and *sawād aʿzam*, the *firaq* tradition could be reproduced in Shīʿī writings without changing one single word in it. The tradition appears intact in Ibn Bābūyah's *Khiṣāl*, with one of the above *isnāds* of Anas ibn Mālik (as quoted by Saʿid ibn Abī Hilāl). It is of the complete structure which contains both the historical as well as the apocalyptic part. The saved party is the *jamāʿa*, and this is repeated by the Prophet three times over. The Shīʿī author adds a remark of his own here: "The *jamāʿa* are the people of the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*), even be they few (*wa-in qallū*)."⁹¹

However, just repeating the already existing Sunnī versions of the *firaq* tradition was not enough for the Shīʿīs. Ibn Bābūyah recorded another version which this time is equipped with a proper Shīʿī *isnād* going back to the Prophet through a successive line of Shīʿī *imāms*. The content of the tradition has nevertheless remained intact.⁹²

There are also Shīʿī versions with re-shaped contents as well as *isnāds*. One such version has been recorded by al-Kulīnī. It is attributed to the fifth *imām* Abū Jaʿfar (Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Bāqir, Medinan, d. AH

⁸⁸ About him see Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, IX, 238–54.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, IX, 239. See also Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ighātha*, 85.

⁹⁰ Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, IX, 239 (printed: "al-Sakūnī" instead of "al-Sukkari").

⁹¹ Ibn Bābūyah, *Khiṣāl*, 584 (no. 10).

⁹² *Ibid.*, 585 (no. 11). The *isnād*: Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (6th *imām*, d. AH 148) ← his father Muḥammad al-Bāqir (5th *imām*, d. AH 114) ← his father ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (4th *imām*) ← his father Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ← ʿAlī ← Prophet.

114), who not only repeats the well-known details about the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim parties, but also provides a specific definition of the saved party among the 73 Islamic groups, i.e. people professing loyalty and love for the *imāms*. The 72 Islamic parties that will go to Hell are also described in a significant manner. They include twelve parties of people professing loyalty and love for the *imāms*, and 60 parties of the rest of the people.⁹³ In this version, the Imāmi stream seems to be singled out as the only saved party among thirteen Shīʿi trends. This means that the Shīʿis too faced problems of division and dissension among themselves, and the *firaq* tradition, including the Israelite historical precedent, was employed to support the Imāmi mainstream which represented a Shīʿi transformation of the idea of *jamāʿa*.

A similar version is attributed to ʿAlī himself, and here the saved parties of the Jews and the Christians are also described in detail. The Jewish saved party is the one that has remained loyal to Joshua, the *waṣiyy* (“legatee”) of Moses. The Christian saved party is the one that has remained loyal to Shamʿūn (Peter), the *waṣiyy* of Jesus.⁹⁴ Thus ʿAlī, the *waṣiyy* of Muḥammad, has been put on a par with the noble and legitimate legatees of the Israelite prophets, and his supporters emerge as the saved party among the Muslims.

It is interesting to observe that a version of ʿAlī’s statement, as conveyed to the Kūfan Zādhān Abū ʿUmar (d. AH 82), found its way into a non-Shīʿi compilation, namely the *Kitāb al-sunna* of al-Marwazī.⁹⁵ It seems that the idea that twelve Shīʿi parties out of thirteen will go to Hell gained al-Marwazī’s attention for the tradition.

Anti-Sectarian Reaction

The flexible way in which the *firaq* tradition was handled by various sections of the Islamic society was eventually criticised in more versions which were put into circulation, the most typical of which is the one with the *isnād* of Abū ʿUbayda al-Tamīmī (Muslim ibn Abī Karīma) ← Jābir ibn Zayd (Abū l-Shaʿthāʾ al-Azdi, Baṣran, d. ca. AH 93–104) ← Ibn ʿAb-

⁹³ Kulīnī, VIII, 224 (no. 283).

⁹⁴ Sulaym ibn Qays, 214.

⁹⁵ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 61.

bās. Here the Prophet states that his *umma* will split up into 73 parties, all of which will be going to Hell, except one which will be saved. Each party will claim that it represents the saved one.⁹⁶

Inverted Versions

The apocalyptic prediction that most of the Islamic parties will go to Hell, as the Jewish and the Christian ones will do, could not have been attractive to all Muslims, even if the saved one was the precious *jamā'a*. Some Muslims liked to think that any one of them—unlike Jews and Christians—could hope for a better future in the world to come. Therefore, there are versions, most occurring in later sources, in which the text of the *firaq* tradition has been twisted so as to eliminate from it any notion of parallelism of fate between the Muslims and the Jews and the Christians. In these versions, the numerical relationship between the doomed and the saved sections of the Muslim community is inverted in favour of the saved one. The inverted versions are all recorded in al-Jawraqānī's *Abāṭil*, which is a collection of what is regarded as spurious *ḥadīth*. All of these “false” versions again go back to Anas ibn Mālik, and in them the Prophet states that his community will split into 70-odd parties, the whole going to Paradise (!), except for one which will go to Hell. The tradition also specifies the identity of the doomed party: the *zanādiqa* (sing. *zindiqa*), who are further defined as Qadarīs.⁹⁷

Despite their more flattering implication for the Muslims, these inverted forms do not occur in the earliest versions of the *firaq* tradition and have gained no canonical status.⁹⁸

Attempts to reconstruct the idea that the Islamic community as a whole retains the status of the chosen community which secures God's mercy to all its members whatever they do, are also discernible in another tradition that, likewise, only appears in the non-canonical compilations.

⁹⁶ Rabi' ibn Ḥabīb, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 41.

⁹⁷ Jawraqānī, *Abāṭil*, I, nos. 277–82. See also Albānī, *Silsila, Ṣaḥīḥa*, I, 361 (from 'Uqayli's *Ḍu'afā'*); Josef Van Ess, *Zwischen Hadīth und Theologie: Studien zum Entstehen prädestinationischer Überlieferung* (Berlin and New York, 1975), 134–36.

⁹⁸ See the discussion on these versions in Albānī, *Silsila, Ṣaḥīḥa*, I, 361–67. See also editor's note in Dānī, *Fitan*, III, 630–31.

The tradition explicitly refers to the state of division and discord, which is regarded in the *firaq* tradition as a major sin. The tradition tries to eliminate the evil impact of division by attributing to the Prophet the statement: “The disagreement of my community is mercy” (*ikhtilāf ummatī rahma*). However, if this tradition was meant to show the bright side of inner division, it failed to do so. Many compilers noted that the statement does not appear in early authoritative sources, and that it lacks a traceable *isnād*. They therefore rejected it as spurious, stressing that the Qurʾān specifically condemns divisions. Others explained that whatever the case may be, the statement does not endorse inner division, only differences over the practical implication of the law. God’s mercy, they add, shows that the believers had the Prophet—or, according to the Shiʿis, the *imāms*—to guide them.⁹⁹

To the same group belongs a tradition that tries to turn civil wars from sin into purging trial, and thus regain the chosen status of Muḥammad’s *umma*. The tradition is of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿari, as quoted by his son Abū Burda. Of all the canonical compilations, it occurs only in Abū Dāwūd.¹⁰⁰ In it the Prophet says:

My community is under God’s mercy (*ummatī hādhihi umma marhūma*); it shall incur no punishment (*ʿadhāb*) in the next world. Its punishment is meted out to it in this world: it is civil wars (*fitan*), earthquakes (*zalāzil*) and killing (*qatl*).

Some versions add that on the Day of Resurrection, every Muslim will get hold of a person of the other congregations who will be his ransom for his own release from Hell.¹⁰¹ Similar versions are available on the authority of the Companions Anas ibn Mālik,¹⁰² ʿAbdallāh ibn Yazid al-Khaṭmī,¹⁰³ and Abū Hurayra.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ See e.g. Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, IV, 159; *Kanz*, X, no. 28686; Karājiki, *Kanz al-fawāʿid*, II, 215; Ibn Shādhān, *Īdāh*, 17; Albānī, *Silsila, Daʿīfa*, I, no. 57.

¹⁰⁰ Abū Dāwūd, II, 420–21 (34:7). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 410, 418; *Mustadrak*, IV, 444.

¹⁰¹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 408; Tabarānī, *Awsaṭ*, I, no. 1.

¹⁰² Ibn Māja, II, no. 4292 (37:34).

¹⁰³ Tabarānī, *Awsaṭ*, VIII, no. 7160.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, VII, no. 6905.

The existence of these versions indicates that in spite of the danger of assimilation with others that stemmed from inner division, the Muslims have not entirely lost the initial pride in their own distinctive status among the nations.

CHAPTER 7

ISRAELITE FORMS OF SCHISM: THE KHAWĀRIJ AND THE QUR'ĀN

As seen in the previous chapter, the Khawārij are one of the main targets of the *firaq* tradition. This is not accidental because, as will be demonstrated in the present chapter, they were closely associated with Israelite modes of dissent which the *firaq* tradition was designed to oppose. It will become clear that the core of the Khārijī dissension was the Qur'ān, and that similar disputes revolving around the Torah brought about the identification of the Khārijī dissent with Israelite modes of schism.

The Khawārij and Sūrat Āl 'Imrān (3):7

To demonstrate the Israelite connection of the Khawārij, we must return to Abū Umāma's statement in front of the beheaded Khawārij and look at the Qur'ānic verses that are included in it. The most notable one is Sūrat Āl 'Imrān (3):7. This well-known verse¹ distinguishes between two types of Qur'ānic revelations: passages which are called *muḥkamāt* ("clear-cut"), and those which are called *mutashābihāt* ("ambiguous"). About the latter type, the Qur'ān says:

As for those in whose hearts is deviation (*zaygh*), they follow the ambiguous parts (*mā tashābaha*) of [the Book], seeking dissent (*fitna*) and seeking to interpret it (*ta'wīlihi*).

Islamic exegesis reveals the relationship of this passage to the Khawārij, which in turn exposes their Israelite link. The exegetes perceived this

¹ On this verse cf. Leah Kinberg, "Muḥkamāt and Mutashābihāt (Koran 3/7): Implication of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis", *Arabica* 35 (1988), 143–72.

passage as attacking people who pursue *fitna*, “dissension” and *taʾwīl*, “interpretation”, by means of the *mutashābihāt*, that is, people who attempt to lead astray the righteous by means of deceitful interpretation of the Qurʾān. The earliest commentaries say that these persons are the People of the Book. According to Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, the clause refers to the Jews.² Other commentators add that the *mutashābihāt* on which the Jews relied were the mysterious Qurʾānic letters. They used the numerology of these letters to calculate the number of years remaining till the end of the world.³ However, the same clause was also linked to the Christians, and more specifically, to the delegation of the Christians of Najrān who came to Medina to discuss matters of dogma with the Prophet. The *mutashābihāt* they reportedly tried to use to lead Muḥammad astray were certain verses stating that Jesus is the Word of God and a Spirit from Him.⁴

However, not only Jews and Christians, but also heretical groups within the Islamic community itself were linked to this verse, thus turning the heretics into counterparts of Jews and Christians. To begin with, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. AH 110) says that the verse refers to the Khawārij.⁵ A detailed interpretation linking our verse to the Khawārij, as well as to the Jews and Christians, appears in a Baṣran tradition of Qatāda ibn Diʿāma recorded in the *Tafsīr* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq. Commenting on the identity of the people meant by this verse, Qatāda says: “If they are not the Ḥarūriyya (= early Khawārij) or the Sabaʿiyya (= early Shiʿis), I do not know who they are”. At this point, Qatāda describes the attitude of Muḥammad’s Companions towards these heretics, saying that not even one Companion joined the Khawārij, although many Companions were still alive when the Khawārij first emerged. The Companions did not support them, but rather transmitted statements of the Prophet deploring them, and hated them in their hearts and rebuked them when they met. Qatāda goes on to say that the Khawārij acted against the will of God, and they therefore became divided among themselves and failed to achieve their

² Muqātil, I, 264.

³ Farrāʾ, I, 190; Huwwāri, I, 78–81, 267–68; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, III, 118.

⁴ Cf. Qurʾān 4:171. See Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, III, 118.

⁵ Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Tel Aviv), 51; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 427; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, I, 353.

goals. Qatāda finally says: “By God, Judaism is an innovation (*bidʿa*), Christianity is an innovation, Ḥarūriyya is an innovation, Sabaʿiyya is an innovation. Not one book has been revealed in support of these trends, and no prophet set them as a *sunna*.”⁶

Qatāda’s statement draws attention to the rift between the Khawārij and the Companions, and equates the Khawārij—as well as the Sabaʿiyya⁷—with Jews and Christians, which means that their dissension is considered to be of a similar nature. The association of these groups with Qurʾān 3:7, that is, with those who spread *fitna* and indulge in *taʿwīl*, means that all of them are regarded as being involved in disputations revolving around the meaning and the status of sacred scriptures. That this was the main grudge held against the people linked to the verse discussed here is corroborated in the following tradition of the Prophet. He is said to have recited the verse to his wife ʿĀʾisha, saying: “If you see those who argue (*yujādilūna*) about the Book, they are those of whom God spoke; beware of them”.⁸

The Khawārij in particular were identified with the people accused by the Qurʾān of using the Qurʾānic *mutashābihāt* for the wrong purposes. This is indicated in a tradition about Ibn ʿAbbās, who is asked to describe what happens to the Khawārij when they read the Qurʾān. He says: “They believe in its *muḥkam* but perish with its *mutashābih*.”⁹ The same is implied in some versions of the story of Ṣabīgh ibn ʿIsl, who is said to have asked about the *mutashābih* of the Qurʾān, and was therefore pun-

⁶ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 115–16. See also Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, III, 119. For an abridged version of Qatāda’s text see Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, nos. 784–85; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 427–28; Ibn ʿAṭiyya, III, 20; Qurtubī, *Aḥkām*, IV, 13. For an indirect allusion to Qatāda: Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām*, II, 285. Cf. the Shiʿi *tafsīr*: Ṭūsī, *Tabyān*, II, 399; Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, III, 16.

⁷ On the relationship between the Sabaʿiyya, the Jews and the Christians see Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 153; Watt, *Formative Period*, 59; Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, 103. Cf. also Sayf ibn ʿUmar, 55–56 (no. 57).

⁸ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 116; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, VI, 48; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, III, 120; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, nos. 142–43; Ibn Māja, I, no. 47 (*Muqaddima*, 7); Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, I, 345–46; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 5.

⁹ Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, no. 19748; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, no. 43; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, III, 121 (printed *farār* instead of *qurʾān*).

ished by ʿUmar. This caliph reportedly suspected that Ṣabīgh had a shaven head, that is to say, he was a Khārijī.¹⁰

Khārijī Scripturalism

The association of the Khawārij with people spreading *fitna* and deceitful *taʾwīl*, as revealed in the exegesis of Qurʾān 3:7, points to the centrality of the Qurʾān in their dissension. This requires a closer examination, because it is the basis of the parallelism between Khārijī and Israelite dissension.

The role of the Qurʾān in the Khārijī dissension is revealed in what is termed by some modern scholars their “scripturalism”.¹¹ This means that their main object was to turn the scripture—that is, the Qurʾān—into the sole source of guidance (to the exclusion of the precedent of the Companions). Their scripturalistic goal is reflected in the slogan: *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*, “decision is God’s alone”, which is derived from the Qurʾān itself.¹² In this slogan, “God’s decision” (*ḥukm Allāh*) is equivalent to the

¹⁰ E.g. Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 144. See also Dārimi, I, nos. 144, 148 (*Muqaddima*, 19); *Fath al-bārī*, VIII, 159; Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XI, 45–46. Cf. Harris Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition Against Interpretation of the Koran* (Oslo, 1955) 13–14; Fred Leemhuis, “Origins and Early Development of the *Tafsīr* Tradition”, in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān* (Oxford, 1988), 16–18.

¹¹ See e.g. Martin Hinds, “Kūfan Political Alignments and their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century A.D.”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971), 364–65 [repr. in *idem*, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, ed. Jere Bacharach, Lawrence I. Conrad and Patricia Crone, Princeton, 1996), 1]; *idem*, “The Ṣiffīn Arbitration Agreement”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17 (1972), 97–98, 101–102 (repr. in *idem*, *Studies*, 3); G.R. Hawting, “The Significance of the Slogan *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh* and the References to the *Hudūd* in the Traditions about the Fitna and the Murder of ʿUthmān”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978), 460–63; Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs*, 61; Michael Cook, “ʿAnān and Islam: the Origins of Karaite Scripturalism”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), 169–72; Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, I, 38.

¹² Watt, *Formative Period*, 14. The Qurʾānic origin of the slogan is explicitly stated in the traditions. See ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, X, no. 18678; *Mustadrak*, II, 150–52; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 179; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10598; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 103–104; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VI, 243.

“Qurʾān’s decision” (*ḥukm al-Qurʾān*), and in the reported speeches of some Khārijī leaders these two expressions are indeed interchangeable.¹³ Their initial dependence on the Qurʾān is also indicated by the fact that the earliest group of Khawārij are often called *qurrāʾ*, a term which, in spite of various suggestions made by some modern scholars,¹⁴ seems to denote “Qurʾān readers” and nothing else.

In the traditions attacking the Khawārij, their attachment to the Qurʾān is denounced as false and as representing a distortion of the true meaning of scripture. One of these accounts is an apocalyptic tradition bearing the Baṣran *isnād* of Qatāda ← Anas ibn Mālik ← Prophet and consisting of two parts, each also widely current individually. In the first part the Prophet declares: “There will be in my community discord (*khi-lāf*; var. *ikhtilāf*) and division (*furqa*).” This is immediately followed by the well-known standard description of the Khawārij:

People who speak eloquently, but act badly; they recite the Qurʾān, but it does not extend past their throats (i.e. it does not reach their hearts).... They pass (*yamruqūna*) through the religion like an arrow passing through the shot animal (i.e. they have left the religion behind).... They invoke the Book of God, but they are not related to it in any way. Whoever fights them will be closer to God than they are....

Finally, the Prophet provides their typical sign: their heads are shaved.¹⁵

¹³ Compare e.g. the two monologues of ʿAbdallāh ibn Wahb al-Rāsibī, in Ṭabari, *Tārikh*, V, 74–75 (I, 3363–65).

¹⁴ For attempts at explaining the term *qurrāʾ* in a different sense from “Qurʾān readers”, see Shaban, *Islamic History*, I, 23, 50–51; Gautier H.A. Juynboll, “The Qurrāʾ in Early Islamic History”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16 (1973), 113–29; *idem*, “The Position of Qurʾān Recitation in Early Islam”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 19 (1974), 240–51; Norman Calder, “The Qurrāʾ and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 36 (1991), 297–307.

¹⁵ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 224. See also *ibid.*, 197; ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 1475; ʿAjurri, *Sharīʿa*, no. 38; Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, V, 280–81; *Mustadrak*, II, 147, 148; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 171.

Khawārij and Sunna

Khārijī scripturalism means above all rejection of the *sunna*, which unlike the divine Qurʾān, is a human source of law. *Sunna* literally means way or manner of conduct, and stands for the practical precedent of Muḥammad’s Companions, whose conduct is considered a model and a source of law, and is regarded as the most reliable implementation of the Book of God.¹⁶

The rejection of the *sunna* by the Khawārij is revealed in many reports. To begin with, several traditions say that when one wishes to refute the Qurʾānic arguments of the Khawārij, he must fall back on the *sunna*. This advice is attributed to various leaders of the Islamic community. One of them is ʿAlī, whose struggle against the Khawārij made him an authority on heretics in Sunnī as well as in Shiʿi traditions.¹⁷ In the following tradition, ʿAlī sends Ibn ʿAbbās to reason with the Khawārij, and tells him: “If they dispute with you by means of the Qurʾān, rebut them by means of the *sunna*.”¹⁸ This indicates a contrast between Khārijī thought and the *sunna*, and means that the Khārijī reliance on the Qurʾān should be refuted using the precedent set by the Companions.

The following statement is also attributed to ʿAlī: “There will come people who will dispute with you. Take them (i.e. rebut them) by means of the *sunna*, because the masters of the *sunan* are more knowledgeable about the Book of God”.¹⁹ A similar statement is attributed to ʿUmar in which an allusion is made to Qurʾān 3:7: “There will come people who will dispute you by means of the *shubuhāt* (var. *shibh, mutashābih*) of the Qurʾān; rebut them by means of the *sunan*. The masters of the *sunan*

¹⁶ The history of the notion of *sunna* is still somewhat enigmatic. For a discussion and an attempt to demonstrate the authority of the caliphs as the earliest representatives of the *sunna*, see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986), 58–96. But see also Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: an Introduction to Sunnī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Cambridge, 1997), 10–15.

¹⁷ Cf. Joel L. Kraemer, “Apostates, Rebels and Brigands”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 10 (1980), 50.

¹⁸ *Kanz*, XI, no. 31614 (from Ibn Abi Zamanin).

¹⁹ *Lālikāʾi*, I, no. 203.

are more knowledgeable about the Book of God”.²⁰ By “the masters of the *sunan*”, the Companions of the Prophet are meant, or more specifically, the first caliphs whose law was regarded as a primary source for the *sunna* and as the most authoritative implementation of the Qurʾān. This is confirmed by descriptions of another confrontation with the Khawārij, which this time takes place between them and the Meccan anti-caliph ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, who relates that some people from Iraq reasoned with him using the Qurʾān and that he could not answer them back. He consulted his father, who told him that the Qurʾān was read by all parties, each interpreting it (*taʾawwalūhu*) according to its own deviations (*ahwāʾihim*). If they return to him, he should dispute with them by means of the *sunan* of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, because no one denied that these two were great experts on the Qurʾān. In other words, the *sunna* of these two Companions, who were also caliphs, represents the most reliable interpretation of the Book of God. Ibn al-Zubayr recounts that he followed the advice his father gave him, thus silencing the Iraqis.²¹ The identity of Ibn al-Zubayr’s Iraqi adversaries is revealed in a parallel version of the same report in which they are designated as people who were disparaging ʿUthmān and held Khārijī views. In this particular version, al-Zubayr advises his son to adduce both the *sunna* and the *sīra* of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, which means that *sīra* denotes much the same thing as *sunna*.²² In one more tradition, al-Zubayr (printed: Ibn al-Zubayr) teaches his son how to argue with Mālik al-Ashtar, who is a member of the *qurrāʾ*.²³ He tells him: “Do not argue with him by means of the Qurʾān; argue with him by means of the *sunna*”.²⁴ This means that Ibn

²⁰ Dārimī, I, no. 119 (*Muqaddima*, 17). See also Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 145; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, nos. 83, 84, 229; II, no. 790; Lālikāʾi, I, no. 202; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 8.

²¹ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, no. 811.

²² Muṣʿab al-Zubayri, *Nasab Quraysh*, 103. Quoted in Hawting, “The Significance of the Slogan *lā ḥukma illā lillāh*”, 461, and repeated in Cook, “Anān and Islam”, 170–71. The term *sīra* is used in an abridged version of the same report as recorded in Balādhuri, *Ashraf*, VI, 110–11.

²³ He was among the *musayyarūn*, i.e. the *qurrāʾ* expelled from Kūfa by ʿUthmān. See Balādhuri, *Ashraf*, VI, 152, 155–59.

²⁴ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, no. 312.

al-Zubayr should refrain from dealing with the Qurʾān directly and independently, but rather represent it using his predecessors' *sunna*.

The urge to replace the independent Khārijī interpretation of the Qurʾān by the tradition of the founders of Islam is also reflected in a tradition of the Companion Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān (Medinan/Kūfan, d. AH 36), in which he asks the *qurrāʾ* to adhere to the textual tradition of "those who were before you", who in this case are Companions from the first Islamic generation.²⁵

Khawārij and Taʾwīl

The Khārijī scripturalistic rejection of the *sunna* indicates that when implementing the Qurʾān, they relied on their own interpretation of the scripture. Indeed, the available traditions attack the Khawārij for their arbitrary *taʾwīl*.

To begin with, some versions of the standard description of the Khawārij accuse them of misinterpreting the word of God. Such a version of the Prophet's statement is said to have been quoted by ʿAlī on his way to fight the Khawārij in Nahrawān. The relevant clause reads: "They (i.e. the Khawārij) think that the Qurʾān is with them, but it is against them" (*yaḥsibūn annahu lahum wa-huwa ʿalayhim*).²⁶ This means that the Khawārij try in vain to read into the Qurʾān interpretations supporting their views.

The Khārijī manipulation of the Qurʾān was condemned by various scholars. For example, al-Ājurri (d. AH 360) writes that the Khawārij are persons who interpret (*yataʾawwalūna*) the Qurʾān according to their own inclination and explain it wrongly to the Muslims.²⁷ This grudge

²⁵ Marwazi, *Sunna*, nos. 86, 87; Aḥmad, *Masʾalat al-Qurʾān*, 58; ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 102 (printed: *fuqarāʾ*); Lālikāʾi, I, no. 119; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 97. On the relationship between this tradition and the first Muslim generation see *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, XIII, 217 (on Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 96:2). Cf. also Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Imān*, I, nos. 196, 197.

²⁶ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Musannaf*, X, no. 18650; Muslim, III, 115 (12, *Bāb dhikr al-khawārij*); ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 1420; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 916, 917; Nasāʾi, *Khaṣāʾiṣ ʿAlī*, no. 186.

²⁷ Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, p. 23.

against the Khawārij also attained the form of a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet reported on the authority of Ḥudhayfa ibn al-ʿYamān:

There will be in my community (*ummatī*) people reading the Qurʾān, scattering it around like dates (*daqal*), and they will interpret it in the wrong way (*yataʿawwalūnahu ʿalā ghayri taʿwīlihi*).²⁸

This statement seems to refer to the Khawārij, because the same accusation of performing erroneous *taʿwīl* on the Qurʾān, as well as of relying on an independent opinion (*raʿy*), was voiced against the *qurrāʾ* who had opposed ʿUthmān and later became Khawārij at Ṣiffin.²⁹

The Khārijī-distorted *taʿwīl* of the Qurʾān is also condemned in a tradition associating their improper *taʿwīl* with milk, which is a common symbol of Bedouin life³⁰ and points to the nomadic nature of the social milieu of the first Khawārij.³¹ The tradition is of the Companion ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir al-Juhānī, on whose authority traditions condemning the *qurrāʾ* as *munāfiqūn* (“hypocrites”) were circulated.³² The present tradition of ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir is quoted from him by Abū Qabīl (Egyptian, d. AH 128), and in it the following exchange takes place between the Prophet and his Companions. The Prophet: “My community will be destroyed by the Book and by milk.” The audience: “What are the Book and milk?” The Prophet: “[People] who will be well-versed in the Qurʾān and will interpret it not as God revealed it (*yataʿawwalūnahu ʿalā ghayri mā anzala llāhu*), and will have a taste for milk, and will abandon the communities (*al-jamāʿāt*) and the Friday prayers (*al-jumʿa*), and will go to the desert (*yabdūna*).”³³ Other versions of ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir do not

²⁸ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, I, 346 (on 3:7; from Abū Yaʿlā).

²⁹ *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, XII, 250 (on Bukhārī 88:6) ...*illā annahum kānū yataʿawwalūna l-Qurʾāna ʿalā ghayri l-murādi minhu wa-yastabiddūna bi-raʿyihim*....

³⁰ Cf. M.J. Kister, “Land Property and *Jihād*”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 34 (1991), 288. And cf. already Goldziher, “Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Šīʿa”, 447.

³¹ For the nomadic culture of the first Khawārij see Watt, *Formative Period*, 20. But cf. Cook, *Dogma*, 96.

³² E.g. Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 155.

³³ *Loc. cit.* See also Abū Yaʿlā, III, no. 1746; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 193.

mention improper *taʾwīl*, saying instead that these people will dispute (*yujādilūna*) with the Muslims about the Qurʾān.³⁴

The name Khawārij is not explicitly mentioned in these versions, but they are the people meant here. This is confirmed in another version of ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir which draws a connection between false love for the Qurʾān and milk. The Prophet here says: “There will come out (*sayakhruju*) people who will drink the Qurʾān as they drink milk”.³⁵ The root *kh.r.j.* points to the Khawārij, and indeed, the utterance is recorded among many others in which the Prophet predicts the emergence of the Khawārij.³⁶ In this specific context, the term “Khawārij” would signify people who leave the cultivated land and go out to the desert.

The Khārijī *taʾwīl* was mainly designed to justify their violence towards other Muslims, whom they considered People of Hell.³⁷ Thus, Ibn ʿUmar reportedly stated that the Khawārij were the worst of all the people created by God; they relied on verses which had been revealed concerning the infidels (*kuffār*), and applied them to the believers.³⁸

On the other hand, the fact that the Khawārij waged war on other Muslims, whom they regarded as *kuffār* according to their own (wrong) Qurʾānic *taʾwīl*, was taken to their credit by some jurists discussing the legal status of the Khawārij. Since they did not resist other Muslims out of disbelief but rather on the basis of *taʾwīl*, these tolerant jurists exempted the Khawārij from punishment. This was the attitude of al-Zuhri, who, in referring to the Ḥarūriyya, claimed that the Companions of the Prophet who had witnessed the First Civil War had agreed that punishment should not be meted out to those who during that war had killed [other Muslims] according to Qurʾānic interpretation (*ʿalā taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*).³⁹ This was also the view of Mālik ibn Anas.⁴⁰

³⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 146; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XVII, nos. 815–18; *Mustadrak*, II, 374; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 193.

³⁵ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XVII, no. 821.

³⁶ *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VI, 232.

³⁷ Cf. Watt, *Formative Period*, 31.

³⁸ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 20–21 (88:6); Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XXIII, 335.

³⁹ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, X, no. 18584; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 175; Ṣaḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, I, 410. Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma*, II, 863.

⁴⁰ Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XXIII, 337; Ṣaḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, I, 407–408.

Whether tolerated or not, the fact remains that the earliest stages of the Khārijī movement—as presented in the traditions before us—revolve around Qurʾānic *taʾwīl*, as also does the counter-campaign of ʿAlī against them, which culminated at Nahrawān. ʿAlī’s struggle against the Khawārij is praised as designed to protect the authentic interpretation of the Qurʾān against those who distort it. This message is conveyed in a widely current prophecy of Muḥammad to the effect that ʿAlī will fight for the *taʾwīl* of the Qurʾān just as Muḥammad fought for its *tanzīl* (“revelation”).⁴¹ Contrary to Goldziher’s observation (based on later Shīʿī versions),⁴² the *ḥadīth* does not seem to have originally been designed to support the Shīʿī interpretation of the Qurʾān, but rather to praise ʿAlī as an anti-heretical warrior. It is significant that even Sunnī critics of *ḥadīth* regarded this tradition as a sound one (*ṣaḥīḥ*).⁴³

Raʾy and Qiyās

The disagreement over the manner in which the Book of God should be interpreted and its laws implemented led to the dissemination of traditions condemning individual explanations of the Qurʾān, especially when based on *raʾy*, that is, “independent opinion”.⁴⁴ As seen above, the early *qurrāʾ* were accused of relying on their own *raʾy* when interpreting the Qurʾān. This grudge against them is also indicated in traditions of the Prophet stating that he who discusses the Qurʾān (*man qāla/takallama fī l-Qurʾān*) according to his own *raʾy* must take his seat in Hell. The statements are available with *isnāds* leading back to the Companions

⁴¹ E.g. Ibn Abi Shayba, XII, no. 12131; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 31, 33, 82; Nasāʾī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ ʿAlī*, no. 156; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6937; *Mustadrak*, III, 122–23; Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, I, 67. For more references see Avraham Hakim, *The Status of the Exegesis of the Quran in the Old Muslim Tradition* (M.A. Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1995 [in Hebrew]), 67–68.

⁴² Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 110.

⁴³ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, p. 385, editor’s note 1. See also editor’s note in Nasāʾī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ ʿAlī*, 166 (n. 391).

⁴⁴ On *raʾy* see Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)*, ed. and trans. by S.M. Stern and C.R. Barber (London, 1967–71), II, 78–82; Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (repr. Oxford, 1979), 98–132.

ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbbās and Jundab ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Bajalī.⁴⁵ Although these statements are usually considered to reflect a Sunni reaction against the Shīʿa and the Muʿtazila,⁴⁶ it seems that the Khārijī dissension served as their first catalyst. The punishment of Hell awaiting those discussing the Qurʾān according to their own *raʿy* alludes to the Khawārij, who regarded themselves as people of Paradise and saw in the rest of the Muslims people of Hell. It is significant that in al-Nasāʾī the statements against discussing the Qurʾān according to one’s own *raʿy* are recorded alongside traditions deploring the Khārijī false love for the Qurʾān.⁴⁷

Attacks on people relying on *raʿy* were also launched by means of the apocalyptic part of the *fīraq* tradition. The relevant version is that of the Syrian Companion ʿAwf ibn Mālik. Here an attack is made on *raʿy* as well as *qiyās* (“analogous deduction”⁴⁸), and the Prophet says:

My community will be divided into 70-odd parties, and the one causing the greatest dissension (*fitna*) will comprise those who analogise matters according to their own opinion (*yaqīsūna l-umūra bi-raʿyihim*). They will permit the unlawful, and prohibit the lawful.⁴⁹

It may well be that the groups which this version is aimed at are again the Khawārij. It may also be added that *raʿy* is probably of Jewish origin,⁵⁰

⁴⁵ ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbbās: Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 27; Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VIII, 278 (no. 4023); Nasāʾī, *Kubrā*, V, no. 8085 (75:59). For more references see Hakim, *The Status of the Exegesis of the Quran*, 25–31. Jundab ibn ʿAbdallāh: Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 27; Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VIII, 279 (no. 4024); Nasāʾī, *Kubrā*, V, no. 8086 (75:59).

⁴⁶ Marston R. Speight, “The Function of Ḥadīth as Commentary on the Qurʾān, as Seen in the Six Authoritative Collections”, in Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, 65. The early history of the status of Qurʾānic exegesis is discussed in Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition*. A more recent study is Leemhuis, “Origins and Early Development of the *Tafsīr* Tradition”. On *taʿwīl* see also Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 136–45.

⁴⁷ Nasāʾī, *Kubrā*, V, 30–32.

⁴⁸ See Schacht, *Origins*, 99; M. Bernand, s.v. “Ḳiyās”, *EI*², V, 238. On *raʿy* and *qiyās* see Hallaq, *Islamic Legal Theories*, 15, 19–21, 32, 104–107.

⁴⁹ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 813; Ṭabarāni, *Kabīr*, XVIII, no. 90; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 133–34. Cf. Goldziher, “Le dénombrement des sectes mohamétanes”, 136.

⁵⁰ The Jewish origin of *raʿy* is suggested in Patricia Crone, *Roman, Provincial and*

which once more highlights the main function of the *firaq* tradition, namely, to diminish the impact of Israelite modes of dissension.

Khawārij, Israelites and the *Firaq* Tradition

Since the Khārijī dissension was focused on scripturalist rejection of the *sunna*, one cannot but think about groups among Jews who rejected the Oral Torah. In Islamic (early ʿAbbāsīd) times they were the Karaites, and some modern scholars have even suggested a possible parallelism between them and the Khawārij.⁵¹ However, the Khārijī schism apparently developed prior to the Karaite movement.⁵² Whatever the case may be, the parallelism between the rejection of the Oral Torah among Jews and the Khārijī rejection of the *sunna* may explain the Israelite connection of the Khawārij, as revealed in the exegesis of Qurʾān 3:7, as well as in the employment of the *firaq* tradition against them. In its anti-Khārijī context, this tradition no doubt points to the Israelite precedent of the Khārijī rejection of the *sunna*. We have seen that the historical part of the *firaq* tradition apparently reflects the Jewish idea about the Torah being handed over to the 70 elders of Israel, whose descendants are presented in Islamic tradition as being divided among themselves and as fighting each other. It therefore seems that the *firaq* tradition is based on the assumption that the Israelite segmentation into some 70 parties is the outcome of conflicts concerning the Torah, and this is adduced to deplore the Khārijī schism. It is significant that some versions of the *firaq* tradition, as reviewed in the previous chapter, identify as the saved party among the Muslims that which adheres to the model of Muḥammad's Companions, that is, to the *sunna*.

On a wider scale, a noteworthy parallelism between the Bible and the Qurʾān was just discussed: both scriptures function as origins of dissension among their respective communities.

Islamic Law (Cambridge, 1987), 104.

⁵¹ Cf. Hawting, "The Significance of the Slogan *lā ḥukma illā lillāh*", 460–61; Yoram Erder, "The Karaites' Sadducee Dilemma", *Israel Oriental Studies* 14 (1994), 199–200.

⁵² On the priority of Islamic scripturalism to that of the Karaites, see Cook, "Anān and Islam", especially 179–81.

Other Qurʾānic Verses in Abū Umāma's Statement

Abū Umāma's statement in front of the beheaded Khawārij contains further Qurʾānic verses, which appear along with 3:7. Their exegesis similarly exposes the Israelite link of the Khawārij. Apart from 3:7, Abū Umāma recites verse 3:105, in which the believers are warned against becoming similar to those who became divided. The versions containing 3:105 also allude to the subsequent two verses (3:106–107), which describe the eschatological fate of sinners in Hell. Their faces are "blackened", while the faces of the righteous are "whitened". Many exegetes explain that "those who became divided", mentioned in 3:105, are the People of the Book, or the Jews and the Christians,⁵³ which means that 3:106 also refers to them. These verses appear at the end of Abū Umāma's statement, which means that they too have acquired here an anti-Khārijī significance. He recites all or some of them to Abū Ghālib to justify the curses against the Khawārij.

These versions also gained wide circulation and were transmitted from Abū Ghālib by numerous traditionists.⁵⁴ The version of al-Rabīʿ ibn Šabiḥ and Ḥammād ibn Salama from Abū Ghālib gained entrance into the canonical compilation of al-Tirmidhī.⁵⁵ Some versions also appear in *tafsīr* compilations, in the commentary on the relevant Qurʾānic passages, and mainly on 3:106 (the "blackened faces").⁵⁶

There are also versions of the story of Abū Umāma and the beheaded Khawārij, including the Qurʾānic allusions, in which the person accom-

⁵³ E.g. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IV, 26.

⁵⁴ The traditionists quoting Abū Ghālib are: Ḥammād ibn Salama (Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8034. Cf. Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 256; ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 1469; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 188); Maʿmar ibn Rāshid (ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, no. 18663; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8033; ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 1470. Cf. Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 253); ʿAbdallāh ibn Shawdhab (Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8049); Khulayd ibn Daʿlaj (Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8056); al-Mubārak ibn Faḍāla (Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 58. Cf. Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8050); Qaṭan ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥarrānī Abū Mirā (Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 59. Cf. Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8042).

⁵⁵ Tirmidhī/*Tuhfa*, VIII, 351 (44, Sūrat Āl ʿImrān). See also Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 8037.

⁵⁶ Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 454; Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, IV, 167–68; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, I, 390; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 63.

panying Abū Umāma is not Abū Ghālib but rather Shaddād ibn ʿAbdallāh (Abū ʿAmmār, Syrian)⁵⁷ or Ṣafwān ibn Sulaym al-Zuhri (Medinan, d. AH 132).⁵⁸ In the version of the latter, the Qurʾānic allusion is not to Sūrat Āl ʿImrān, but rather to a Qurʾānic passage (6:159; cf. 30:32) saying that the Qurʾānic prophet should have nothing to do with those who divided (*farraqū*) their religion into parties (*shiyaʿ*). This verse, which excludes dissidents from the community of believers, was interpreted as referring to the history of inner divisions among Jews and Christians,⁵⁹ and therefore its appearance in an anti-Khārijī context provides another manifestation of the idea that the Khārijī dissension represents an Israelite mode of schism. The anti-heretical re-adaptation of this verse is also demonstrated in a tradition of the Prophet, as quoted through the Companion Abū Hurayra. It says that the verse is directed against “persons of this *umma* who are of evil innovations and of dubious characters, and who deviate from the right way.”⁶⁰ In a similar tradition of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the Prophet says to his wife ʿĀʾisha that “those who divided their religion into parties” are the heretics (*aṣḥāb al-bidʿa wa-l-ahwāʿ*) of this community. They will be given no chance to repent.⁶¹ Thus, by reading into the verse an allusion to Muslim heretics, the latter have once more been equated with the Jews and the Christians.

Anti-Heretical Qurʾān Exegesis

Outside the immediate context of Abū Umāma’s statement, further instances of exegetical anti-heretical resetting of Qurʾānic verses may be

⁵⁷ ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 1472; *Mustadrak*, II, 149. See also Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Tel Aviv), 141; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, I, 527–28 (in *tafsīr* of 3:105). Here the traditionist is ʿAbdallāh ibn Shaddād (Medinan, d. AH 81/2), who is probably mistaken for Shaddād ibn ʿAbdallāh.

⁵⁸ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 269; ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 1473.

⁵⁹ E.g. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VIII, 77.

⁶⁰ *Ahlu l-bidʿa wa-ahlu l-shubuhāt wa-ahlu l-dalāla min hādhihi l-umma*. See Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VIII, 78. The *isnād*: Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān (Yemeni, d. AH 101) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet. And see also the same interpretation in an address by the Prophet to ʿĀʾisha as reported by ʿUmar: Ṭabarānī, *Ṣaghīr*, I, 203; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, no. 140; Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, IV, 138.

⁶¹ Ibn Abi ʿĀsim, *Sunna*, no. 4.

demonstrated. The verses are again such which convey an anti-Jewish–Christian message, and by means of exegesis also became anti-heretical. This unveils additional aspects of the notion that the heretics preserve among the Muslims an Israelite model of sin.

The Sin of the Calf: Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (7):152

To begin with, a major Israelite sin, the making of the calf, was readapted and applied to the heretics. The verse that underwent the necessary exegetical diversion is Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (7):152, which states that those who made the calf (that is, the Children of Israel) shall be overtaken by “abasement” (*dhulla*). The Baṣran Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī (d. AH 131) reportedly saw a person of “deviations”, and said: “I recognise abasement in his face”. Then he recited this Qurʾānic verse and said that this was the punishment for every “forger” (*muftarin*).⁶² It follows that the heretics among the Muslims were perceived as repeating the Israelite sin of the calf, and their dissension thus became an extension of an Israelite model of sin.

Sūrat al-Ṣaff (61):5

In Sūrat al-Ṣaff (61):5, two evil traits are attributed to the people of Moses: “transgression” (*fisq*), and “deviation” (*zaygh*). It is said about them that “when they deviated (*zāghū*), God made their hearts deviate; God does not guide the transgressors (*al-qawm al-fāsiqīn*).” This passage, which obviously alludes to the Children of Israel, was reinterpreted as referring to the Khawārij. The interpretation is attributed to Abū Umāma again,⁶³ and provides further evidence that the Khawārij were regarded as repeating an Israelite model of transgression.

Sūrat al-Kahf (18):103–106

Eschatological passages were also applied to the Khawārij through exegesis. One such passage is found in Sūrat al-Kahf (18):103–106. This passage speaks about unbelievers who are “the greatest losers in their

⁶² Lālikāʿi, I, no. 289. Cf. no. 288.

⁶³ Ṭabari, *Tafsir*, XXVIII, 57.

works”, and whose “striving goes astray in the present life while they think that they are doing good deeds”. Their fate will be Hell (*jahannam*). The exegetic manipulation of this verse is attributed to ʿAlī. In one tradition ʿAlī is reported to have said that the passage refers to (Christian) hermits (*ruhbān*) who confined themselves to their cells of recluse (*ṣawāmiʿ*),⁶⁴ but in other traditions the same ʿAlī appears as resetting the verses to the Khawārij. The latter traditions describe a discourse between ʿAlī and Ibn al-Kawwāʿ (= ʿAbdallāh ibn Awfā al-Yashkurī), a leader of the early Khawārij⁶⁵ who belonged to the *qurrāʿ*.⁶⁶ Ibn al-Kawwāʿ appears in the sources as teasing ʿAlī with questions about the meaning of various Qurʾānic verses.⁶⁷ In this conversation, Ibn al-Kawwāʿ asks ʿAlī who “the greatest losers in their works” are, and ʿAlī says: “The People of Ḥarūrāʿ [= the early Khawārij] belong to them”.⁶⁸ In other versions he says: “[They are] you and your friends”, or: “They are you, people of Ḥarūrāʿ”.⁶⁹ In yet another version of the exchange, ʿAlī says that those who are “the greatest losers in their works” are the unbelievers (*kafara*) of the People of the Book who introduced innovations into their religion. He then raises his voice and declares: “The people of the canal (of Nahrawān, i.e. the Khawārij) are not far from them.”⁷⁰ The parallelism between Khawārij and Jews and Christians is clearly stated here.

The discourse was also recorded in Shiʿi Qurʾān commentaries,⁷¹ and in view of these traditions the Shiʿi commentator ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummi states that our Qurʾānic passage was revealed concerning the Jews, but eventually became applicable to the Khawārij (*nazalat fī l-Yahūd wa-jarat fī l-Khawārij*).⁷²

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, XVI, 26.

⁶⁵ See e.g. Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, V, 63, 65 (I, 3349, 3352).

⁶⁶ He is mentioned among the Kūfan *musayyarūn*. See Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, IV, 318 (I, 2908).

⁶⁷ E.g. on Qurʾān 17:12. See Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 145; Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, I, 75–76 (I, 74–75). See also Ibn Hilāl al-Thaqafī, *Ghārāt*, 103–10.

⁶⁸ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 413; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, XVI, 27–28.

⁶⁹ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, XVI, 27.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* See also Ibn Hilāl al-Thaqafī, *Ghārāt*, 104–105.

⁷¹ ʿAyyāshī, II, 377–78; Ṭūsī, *Tabyān*, VII, 97; Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, XV, 213.

⁷² Qummi, *Tafsīr*, II, 20.

Scholars on Heretics and Israelites

The view that the heretics represent Jewish and Christian models of schism is reflected not only in Qurʾānic exegesis, but also in explicit statements of religious leaders. For example, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī reportedly said that the “people of deviation” are comparable to the Jews and the Christians (*ahlu l-hawā bi-manzilat al-Yahūd wa-l-Naṣārā*).⁷³

Some statements focus on the *Khawārij* in particular. One of these is about a certain Ibn ʿĀmir, who is probably the above-mentioned Companion ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir. A person bearing this name is mentioned among ʿAlī’s supporters who fell at Nahrawān while fighting the *Khawārij*.⁷⁴ Ibn ʿĀmir is said to have been told about the piety and religious exertion (*ijtihād*) of the *Khawārij*, on which he comments: “Their exertion is not greater than that of the Jews and the Christians, who nevertheless are astray (*yaḍillūn*)”.⁷⁵ In other words, the *Khawārij* preserve the Jewish and the Christian types of religious error. The same response to the description of *Khārijī* devotion is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās.⁷⁶

To some Muslims, the *Khawārij* seemed even worse than the Jews and Christians. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī reportedly stated that the *Khawārij* were perplexed and intoxicated; they had no excuse, because they were not even Jews, nor were they Christians or Magians.⁷⁷

Legally speaking, the *Khawārij* were regarded as equal to Jews and Christians, and transactions with them were prohibited. It is related that someone once asked Muḥammad ibn Sirīn (Baṣran, d. AH 110) whether he could sell his slave to the *Khawārij*, who had offered a good price for him. Ibn Sirīn asked him: “Would you sell him to a Jew or to a Chris-

⁷³ *Lālikāʿi*, I, no. 233. Al-Ḥasan is quoted here by Yaḥyā al-Bakkāʿ (Baṣran, d. AH 130).

⁷⁴ See Khalifa ibn Khayyāt, 181.

⁷⁵ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, no. 18581 (printed: *yuqṭalūn* instead of the correct *yaḍillūn*). The *isnād*: Ibn Ṭāwūs, ʿAbdallāh (Yemenī, d. AH 132) ← Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān (Yemenī, d. AH 101) ← [ʿUqba?] ibn ʿĀmir.

⁷⁶ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, nos. 18665–66 (printed: *yuṣallūn*); Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, no. 19747 (printed: *yuṣallūn*). For the correct text (*yaḍillūn*) see Ṣaḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, I, 408; Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 44; *Lālikāʿi*, IV, no. 2315; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhid*, XXIII, 323; *Fath al-bārī*, XII, 256.

⁷⁷ Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 45.

tian?” The man said: “No”, and Ibn Sirin concluded: “In that case, do not sell him to the Khawārij either”.⁷⁸

In conclusion, significant evidence has been reviewed in this chapter to underline the extent to which the heretics of early Islamic society were identified with Jewish–Christian forms of schism. This means that schism in particular was marked in Islamic society as a sign of assimilation with others, and as a major threat to the superior status of the Islamic community in world history.

The Qurʾānic Text and Islamic Schism

The affinity between Islamic and Israelite schism revolves around the Qurʾān, which reveals a parallelism between the Bible and the Qurʾān as the origins of division within their respective societies. The Islamic awareness of this parallelism appears in further traditions attacking controversy focused on scripture. These traditions are not particularly anti-Khārijī because disputes over the Qurʾān broke out among various factions within Islamic society and did not necessarily stem from scripturalism. Nevertheless, these traditions are also relevant because they further illuminate the efforts of Muslim religious leaders to deal with dangers originating in divisions focused on scripture.

To begin with, there is a tradition about the Companion Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān in which he takes part in holy war on the Armenian front, and is shocked to discover that Syrian and Iraqi Arab believers are engaged in disputations over the Qurʾān, or, according to some versions, over the correct reading (*qirāʾa*) of the Qurʾān. He later on approaches ʿUthmān saying that unless something is done, the community will become divided (*yakhtalifū*) because of the sacred Book, as happened to the Jews and the Christians. This gives ʿUthmān the idea to produce one canonical Qurʾān copy to replace the various existing ones. The story was circulated by al-Zuhri on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik,⁷⁹ and there is also a version in which, instead of Jews and Christians, Ḥudhayfa uses the

⁷⁸ Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, no. 19787.

⁷⁹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, VI, 226 (66:3); Ibn Abi Dāwūd, *Maṣāḥif*, 26, 27, 28; Ibn Shabba, III, 992; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, VIII, 279.

alternative indication of “those who were before you” (*man qablakum*).⁸⁰ The same historical lesson is drawn in another version by ʿUthmān himself. He sends a letter to the provinces saying that the Muslims have different readings of the Qurʾānic text, each on the authority of a different Companion; he fears that when all the Companions are dead, there will be dissension amongst the Muslims because of the Qurʾān, as happened to the Christians because of the Injīl after the departure of Jesus.⁸¹

It follows that Muslim tradition is fully aware of the danger of assimilation with others caused by disagreement over the text as well as over the interpretation of the Qurʾān. It is therefore not surprising to find traditions labelling such disputations as *kufṛ*, that is, disbelief, which is another way of saying that they eliminate the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. A prophetic statement to the effect that controversy (*mirāʾ*) over the Qurʾān is *kufṛ* is found in a widely current tradition of Abū Hurayra.⁸² The tradition is also available in an expanded form, in which it is combined with the famous traditions about the seven legitimate forms (*aḥruf*) of the Qurʾān:

The Qurʾān was revealed in seven forms; disputation over the Qurʾān is disbelief (repeated three times); act according to what you know of the book, and as for what you do not know [of it], ask those who do know.⁸³

A combined version of the Qurashī Companion ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ (d. ca. AH 43) is also available, and in it the Prophet’s statement is made in response to an argument between ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and another Muslim over a Qurʾānic verse, each claiming prophetic authority for his own way

⁸⁰ Ibn Abi Dāwūd, *Maṣāḥif*, 18. This version is of Iyād ibn Laqīṭ ← Yazīd ibn Mu-ʿāwiya.

⁸¹ Ibn Shabba, III, 997.

⁸² Abū Dāwūd, II, 505 (39:4); Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, nos. 133, 134; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 286, 424, 475, 478, 494, 503, 528; ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, no. 86; Ibn Abi Shayba, X, no. 10218; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, nos. 791, 792, 1042; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XIV, no. 1464; *Mustadrak*, II, 223; Lālikāʿi, I, no. 182. The utterance is discussed in Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 92.

⁸³ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 300; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 9; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, no. 74.

of reading. As they appeal to the Prophet for his opinion, he says that both of them are right, and adds:

The Qurʾān was revealed in seven forms; any form according to which you read is correct; do not argue about [the Qurʾān], because disputation over it is disbelief.⁸⁴

A similar episode is also related by the Companion Abū Juhaym [Jahm] ibn al-Ḥārith ibn al-Ṣimma.⁸⁵

The Qurʾān then emerges as a major focus of disagreement in early Islamic society, and this is taken as signalling the assimilation of Muslims with Jews and Christians. Paradoxically enough, the Qurʾān, which was supposed to be the main vehicle by which the Muslims could assert their own distinctive identity, thus became the major axis of their assimilation with others.

⁸⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 205. Cf. *ibid.*, 204.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 169–70; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, I, 15; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 801.

CHAPTER 8

THE WAYS OF SIN: THE *SUNNA* STATEMENT

The notion of a common fate of sin shared by Muslims and others is most explicitly expressed in a fatalistic saying attributed to the Prophet, which will here be referred to as the “*sunna* statement”. This statement asserts that the Muslims are destined to follow the evil *sunna* of other communities. The various occurrences of the statement again reveal the role of the Qurʾān as a source for literary models of Israelite sins, as well as its function as a basis for schism, and hence of assimilation of Arabs with others.

The term *sunna* as used in the *sunna* statement does not represent the virtuous model of the Prophet and his Companions, but rather the evil one of past communities, and the statement itself predicts the deviation of the Muslim believers from the former to the latter. This deviation in turn signals the assimilation of the Muslims with the other sinful communities.

The historical perspective of the *sunna* statement is embedded in Qurʾānic concepts. The Qurʾān uses the term *sunna* in the sense of the evil model of previous communities. In this sense the term functions in passages warning the believers of *sunnat al-awwalīn*, “the way of the first [generations]”. Not only do these verses warn the believers of the sins of the ancients (*al-awwalūn*), but also of their punishment; they thus imply that the same punitive fate awaits the Arabs unless they repent.¹ The Qurʾān also uses the plural form *sunan* to issue the same warning.²

¹ Qurʾān 8:38; 15:13; 18:55; 35:43.

² Qurʾān 3:137.

When signifying punishment inflicted on previous generations, the word *sunna* is often appended to God's name: *sunnat Allāh*.³

Modern scholars referred only briefly to the *sunna* statement. S.D. Goitein adduced one version in his *Jews and Arabs* at the beginning of a chapter placing the origins of Islam in a Jewish context,⁴ which seems to indicate that to Goitein the *sunna* statement merely meant that Muslims were aware of Jewish influence on Islamic conduct. Goitein's romantic belief in what he called Jewish-Arab "symbiosis" prevented him from grasping the bitterness of the statement. M.J. Kister also briefly mentioned some versions and noted that they convey the idea of an identical fate shared by Jews and Muslims alike. He rightly observed that "these points of resemblance refer, of course, to pejorative aspects of Jewish history. They are used to point out dangers which the Muslim community is facing."⁵

The following study will analyse the various available versions of the *sunna* statement, and will cast light on as yet unexplored aspects of its function.

The Chair of 'Alī

Unlike the *firaq* tradition, which first appears in an anti-Khārijī context, the *sunna* statement emerges in the context of the Shī'ī conflict. It occurs in a text describing events which took place in the year AH 66, a few years after the massacre at Karbalā', during the anti-Umayyad revolt which broke out in Kūfa under the leadership of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd. Al-Mukhtār proclaimed 'Alī's son, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīya, as the messianic *mahdī*.⁶ Abū Mikhnaḥ (Kūfan, d. AH 157) relates that among al-Mukhtār's companions there was a group of people who used to venerate a chair (*kursiyy*) which they carried on a mule, believing that its presence in battle could ensure them victory.⁷ Some, including al-Mu-

³ Qur'ān 33:62; 40:85; 48:23.

⁴ S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages* (New York, 1974), 56 (Michael Lecker drew my attention to this passage in Goitein's book).

⁵ Kister, "Haddithū", 232. And cf. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 98.

⁶ Cf. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate*, 95-97.

⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārikh*, VI, 81 (II, 701).

khtār himself, seem to have believed that the blessed chair was the one on which ʿAlī used to sit.⁸

However, others among al-Mukhtār’s people rejected the veneration of the chair as mere idolatry, and the *sunna* statement emerges in the report about them. Abū Mikhnaf relates that Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ashtar, who fought for al-Mukhtār, walked by the chair and saw people gathered in devotion (ʿakafū) around it, raising their hands in prayer for victory. Thereupon he said:

Oh God, do not punish us for what these fools have been doing, following the way (*sunna*) of the Children of Israel, by God, when they worshipped their calf.⁹

The evil *sunna* shared by Israelites and Muslims in this case is the worship of the calf, which in its Islamic guise has become ʿAlī’s chair. Thus, the worship of the calf, which Islam used for demonstrating the inferiority of the Israelites to the Muslims (Chapter 5), emerges here as marking a similarity in sin between Muslims and others. The people who used to worship the chair are said to have belonged to the Sabaʿiyya, a term usually applied to describe Shiʿī *ghulāt* (“extremists”) who believed in the supernatural character of ʿAlī.¹⁰ The calf here symbolises their deviation to idolatry, and as seen above,¹¹ it also functions in other contexts as a common symbol of heretics.

The Worship of the Calf

The function of the calf as symbolising the deviation of Muslims to an evil Israelite *sunna* accords with its role in the Qurʾān, where it signals the inclination of the Israelites to the idolatry of the gentiles. The report about the people of the chair conveys this Qurʾānic link through the verb ʿakafū, which has been chosen to describe their veneration of the chair. The same verb is also used in the Qurʾān in connection with the deviation

⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, 82–85 (II, 702–706).

⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, 82 (II, 702). See also Balādhuri, *Ashraf*, VI, 423.

¹⁰ Husain M. Jafri, *Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam* (London and New York, 1979), 300–301.

¹¹ Above, 162.

of the Children of Israel and occurs in Sūrat al-A^ḥrāf (7):138, which precedes the description of the making of the calf. Here the Children of Israel pass by people worshipping (*ya^ḥkufūna*) some of their idols, and they say to Moses: “Oh Moses, make for us a god, as they have gods”. The recurrence of the same verb in the report about ʿAlī’s chair confirms its link to the Qurʾānic calf.

Moreover, the same Qurʾānic verse appears verbatim in a further version of a *sunna* statement, this time uttered by the Prophet himself in an event that takes place in Arabia in his own time. The version once more reveals the parallels between Israelite and Islamic idolatrous deviation. The story is recorded by Ibn Ishāq,¹² and is contained in a tradition with an *isnād* of al-Zuhri,¹³ who relates that during a military campaign (to Ḥunayn), the Muslims asked the Prophet to set up for them a place of worship at a nearby lote-tree (*sidra*). They want this place to resemble a sanctuary that the polytheists established close to a giant tree called Dhāt Anwāt, namely, “[a tree] with objects hanging from it.” The polytheists thus named it because they used to hang their weapons on it. The Prophet refuses, saying that the Muslims are asking for the same thing the people of Moses asked for (Qurʾān 7:138), and then goes on to declare:

Such are the evil ways (*sanān/sunan*¹⁴); you will surely follow the way of those who were before you (*man kāna qablakum*).

This tradition has gained a fairly wide circulation and reappears in other *sīra* and *ḥadīth* compilations,¹⁵ as well as in the *tafsīr* compilations in the exegesis of Qurʾān 7:138.¹⁶ It also gained entrance to *muṣannaf* collec-

¹² Ibn Hishām, IV, 84–85.

¹³ The *isnād*: Zuhri ← Sinān ibn Abi Sinān al-Dilī (Medinan, d. AH 105) ← Abū Wāqid al-Laythī (al-Ḥārith ibn Mālik, Companion, d. AH 68) ← Prophet.

¹⁴ For the interchange of *sunan* and *sanān* in our traditions see *Faḥ al-bārī*, XIII, 255.

¹⁵ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, III, 890–91 (reference from M. Lecker). And see also Azraqī, 82–83; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil*, V, 124–25; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 218; Ḥumaydi, *Musnad*, II, no. 848; Abū Yaʿlā, III, no. 1441; Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 1346; Marwazī, *Sunna*, nos. 37–40; Ibn Abi ʿĀšim, *Sunna*, no. 76; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, no. 710; Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, III, nos. 3290–94; Lālikāʿī, I, no. 205; Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb*, I, 460.

¹⁶ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 235; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IX, 31–32; Wāhidī, *Wasīṭ*, II,

tions, including some canonical ones.¹⁷ The prevalence of this tradition originates in its anti-polytheistic message, and the compilers of *ḥadīth* probably understood it as illustrating the unsteady conditions in Muḥammad's time, when monotheism had not yet acquired a firm hold on the hearts of the believers. However, the *sunna* statement as embedded in Muḥammad's words actually predicts the survival of paganism in future generations, and it seems that the generation of Muḥammad is only a model here for certain later Muslims, i.e. those Shi'ī extremists who aspired to base the *sunna* on a revived Israelite heritage. In later periods, the tradition continued to be associated with remnants of paganism among newly converted Muslims. An anonymous writer of the Mamlūk period¹⁸ commented on the tradition saying that such pagan practices, i.e. the veneration of giant trees, survived in the land of the Circassians (*al-jarākisa*).¹⁹

There are many more versions of the *sunna* statement in which it is uttered by Companions of the Prophet, as well as by the Prophet himself. These versions are not embedded in any specific context and seem to refer to a wider range of assimilation beyond sins symbolised by the making of the calf. Some of the versions are formulated in the most sweeping terms. For example, a Medinan tradition of the Qurashi Companion °Abdallāh ibn °Amr ibn al-°Āṣ (d. AH 63) contains the following prediction:

You will surely follow the way (*sunna*) of those before you—the sweet of it as well as the bitter of it.²⁰

403–404; Baghawī, *Ma°ālim al-tanzīl*, II, 534; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 243; Suyūṭi, *Durr*, III, 114.

¹⁷ °Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, no. 20763; Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, no. 19222; Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VI, no. 2271 (31:18); Nasā'ī, *Kubrā*, VI, no. 11185 (82, *Tafsīr* 7:138); Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6702. See also Ibn Qāni°, *Ṣaḥāba*, I, no. 185; *Kanz*, XI, no. 31081.

¹⁸ About whom see editor's note in Tha°ālibi, *Thimār al-qulūb*, II, 985.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1005.

²⁰ Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, 102 (no. 19224); Marwazi, *Sunna*, no. 66. The *isnād*: Yaḥyā ibn Sa°id ibn Qays al-Anṣārī (Medinan, d. AH 144) ← °Umar ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Thawbān (Medinan, d. AH 117) ← °Abdallāh ibn °Amr ibn al-°Āṣ.

A similar statement is contained in an Iraqi version recorded by Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād in his *Kitāb al-fitān*. Here the Companion Ibn ^cAbbās declares: “Whatever happened among the Children of Israel is bound to happen among you as well (i.e. among the Muslims)”.²¹

The same prediction is repeated in an Egyptian version, quoted this time from the Prophet himself on the authority of the Qurashī Companion al-Mustawrid ibn Shaddād (d. AH 45):

This community will surely follow every way of the ancients (*sunan al-awwalin*).²²

Similes of Symmetry

The *sunna* statement is available in further versions in which the parallels between the conduct of the Muslims and the *sunna* of past generations are illustrated by means of similes of symmetry, expressed in terms of objects that come in pairs: two soles (*na^cl*), and two feathers (*qudh^cdhā*) of an arrow. These similes appear in numerous versions. For example, in an Egyptian version of the Companion Sahl ibn Sa^cd al-Anṣārī (Medinan, d. AH 88), the Prophet declares:

By Him in Whose hand is my soul, you will follow the ways (*sunan*) of those before you, as one sole of a shoe matches another (*ḥadhwa l-na^cli bi-l-na^cli*).²³

In another Egyptian version reported on the authority of ^cAbdallāh ibn ^cAmr ibn al-^cĀṣ, the evil aspect of the symmetrical *sunna* is explicitly stated. The Prophet says:

²¹ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 18; Marwazi, *Sunna*, no. 67; *Kanz*, XI, no. 31396. Quoted in Kister, “Ḥaddithū”, 232. The *isnād*: Jarir ibn ^cAbd al-Ḥamid al-Ḍabbī (Kūfan, d. AH 188) ← al-Ash^cath ibn Iṣḥāq ibn Sa^cd al-Qummi ← Ja^cfar ibn Abī l-Mughira al-Qummi ← Sa^cid ibn Jubayr (Kūfan, d. AH 95) ← Ibn ^cAbbās.

²² Ṭabarāni, *Awsaṭ*, I, no. 315; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā’is*, III, 15; *Kanz*, XI, no. 30919. The *isnād*: Ibn Lahī^ca, ^cAbdallāh (Egyptian, d. AH 174) ← Yazīd ibn ^cAmr al-Ma^cāfirī (Egyptian, d. AH 100) ← Abū ^cAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ma^cāfirī al-Ḥubulī (Egyptian, d. AH 100) ← al-Mustawrid ibn Shaddād ← Prophet.

²³ Ṭabarāni, *Kabīr*, VI, no. 6017. Cf. Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 340; *Kanz*, XI, no. 31083. The *isnād*: Ibn Lahī^ca, ^cAbdallāh (Egyptian, d. AH 174) ← B:^ckr ibn Sawāda (Egyptian, d. AH 128) ← Sahl ibn Sa^cd ← Prophet.

Whatever happened to the Children of Israel will also happen to my community, as one sole of a shoe matches another; if someone among them had intercourse with his own mother in public, someone of my community will surely do the same.²⁴

The emergence of the sin of incest to illustrate the symmetrical *sunna* means that signs of assimilation with other communities were detected not only in phenomena analogous to the sin of the calf, but also in different aspects of moral corruption. However, some milder versions of this tradition do not contain the clause about the act of incest²⁵ and most of them conclude with the *firaq* tradition, which widens the scope of the *sunna* statement to the Islamic schism at large.²⁶

The Iraqi Versions

Most of the versions using the similes of symmetrical forms are of Iraqi provenance and bear Kūfan *isnāds*. In one of them, circulated on the authority of °Abdallāh ibn Mas°ūd and recorded by Ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn Mas°ūd declares:²⁷

You are more similar than any other people to the Children of Israel, in behaviour (*samt*) and in conduct (*hady*). You will follow their way (in precise symmetry), as one feather of an arrow matches another, and as one sole of a shoe matches another.

²⁴ Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VII, no. 2779 (38:18); *Mustadrak*, I, 128–29; *Lālikā°i*, I, no. 147. Cf. Suyūti, *Khaṣā°iṣ*, III, 14. The *isnād*: °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ziyād ibn An°am al-Ifriqī (Egyptian, d. AH 156) ← °Abdallāh ibn Yazīd al-Ma°āfirī (Egyptian, d. AH 100) ← °Abdallāh ibn °Amr ← Prophet.

²⁵ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 59; Ājurri, *Sharī°a*, nos. 21, 22; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, nos. 1, 265; II, no. 714.

²⁶ Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VII, no. 2779 (38:18). See also Ājurri, *Sharī°a*, nos. 21, 22; Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 59; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, nos. 1, 265; *Mustadrak*, I, 128–29. Cf. Abū Nu°aym, *Hilya*, IX, 242. Shi°i sources: Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 144. In *Tafsīr*: Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, IV, 159–60 (on 3:103).

²⁷ Ibn Abī Shayba, XV, 102 (no. 19225). See also Marwazī, *Sunna*, nos. 64, 108; *Kaṣḥf al-astār*, III, no. 2846; *Kanz*, XI, no. 31426. The *isnād*: Abū Qays °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Tharwān (Kūfan, d. AH 120) ← Huzayl ibn Shuraḥbil (Kūfan) ← °Abdallāh ibn Mas°ūd.

In another version of the same statement of Ibn Mas^ʿūd, the Israelite calf reappears. After announcing the *sunna* statement, Ibn Mas^ʿūd goes on to say: “But I am not sure whether you too will worship the calf”.²⁸ This means that it is highly probable that they will.

The same statement by Ibn Mas^ʿūd is also traced back to the Prophet himself, and here the evil aspect of the symmetrical *sunna* is again sexual immorality. Having made the *sunna* statement, the Prophet goes on to describe the following scene: a woman passes by a group of men, one of them assaults her and then returns cheerfully to his mates, and they all laugh together.²⁹ This scene is also described in other traditions dealing with moral corruption preceding the Hour.³⁰

More prevalent, however, are the Kūfan versions attributed to the Companion Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān. One of them is transmitted by Rib^ʿi ibn Ḥirāsh (Kūfan, d. AH 100), and in it Ḥudhayfa repeats the fear that the Muslims might worship the calf.³¹

Apart from the calf, other Qur^ʿānic sins committed by previous communities became the subject of the *sunna* statement. One of these sins is homosexuality, which the Qur^ʿān associates with the people of Lot.³² In some versions of the *sunna* statement this sin illustrates the symmetrical *sunna*. In a tradition quoted by Abū l-Bakhtari Sa^ʿid ibn Fayrūz (Kūfan, d. AH 83), Ḥudhayfa declares: “Nothing happened among the Children of Israel that will not take place among you as well.” Thereupon a man asks Ḥudhayfa: “Will there be among us people of Lot?” Ḥudhayfa says: “Yes, things have already come to that.”³³ The people of Lot are considered here as belonging to the Children of Israel, which means that the latter term has gained an expanded connotation not confined to the people of Moses and Jesus in particular.

²⁸ This version is recorded in the commentaries on Qur^ʿān 9:69. See Baghawī, *Ma-ʿālim al-tanzil*, III, 79; Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, X, 97.

²⁹ Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, X, no. 9882. See also Suyūṭī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, III, 14; *Kanz*, XI, no. 31080.

³⁰ Ibn Abi l-Dunyā, *Uqūbāt*, no. 318.

³¹ Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, 106 (no. 19234). See also *Kanz*, XI, no. 31335. The *isnād*: Shādhān ← Rib^ʿi ibn Ḥirāsh (Kūfan, d. AH 100) ← Ḥudhayfa.

³² Qur^ʿān 7:81; 26:165; 27:55; 29:29.

³³ Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, 102–103 (no. 19226); *Kanz*, XI, no. 31334.

A similar discourse has been attached to the above version of Ibn Mas'ūd. On hearing Ibn Mas'ūd's *sunna* statement, which again alludes to the Children of Israel, someone asks him: "Will there be amongst us people of Lot"? Ibn Mas'ūd says: "Yes, they will be converts to Islam of well-known descent" (*mimman aslama wa-urifa nasabuhu*).³⁴

Sins Against the Qur'ān

In more versions, the Qur'ān emerges not only as a literary source of Israelite modes of sin, but also as a focus of the sin itself which is shared by Muslims and Israelites.

To begin with, a *sunna* statement is used in the following tradition to equate the evil ways of the Israelites with the misbehaviour of Muslim judges bending the rulings of the Qur'ān. The tradition deals with Sūrat al-Mā'ida (5):44, which condemns as unbelievers those who do not judge according to God's revealed law.³⁵ The version of the *sunna* statement that was linked to this verse is again Ḥudhayfa's. The Kūfan Hammām ibn al-Ḥārith al-Nakha'ī (d. AH 65) describes a session with Ḥudhayfa in which the participants discuss this Qur'ānic passage. Someone comments that only the Children of Israel do not judge according to God's revealed law, but Ḥudhayfa disagrees and says in irony:

The Children of Israel could be such good brothers to you, if only your share was sweet and their share was bitter. No, by God. The way (*sunna*) [of the Muslims] will eventually correspond to the way [of the Children of Israel], as one feather of an arrow matches another (*ḥadhwa l-qudhhati bi-l-quhdha*).³⁶

Several others quote the same statement of Ḥudhayfa, one of them being the Kūfan Abū l-Bakhtarī, Sa'id ibn Fayrūz (d. AH 83), whose version is the one recorded in the commentaries on Qur'ān 5:44.³⁷ Jābir ibn 'Ab-

³⁴ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 63. The *isnād*: A'c mash (Sulaymān ibn Mihrān, Kūfan, d. AH 148) ← Yaḥyā ibn 'Ubayd al-Bahrānī, Abū 'Umar (Kūfan) ← a man of the tribe of Ashja' ← 'Abdallāh ibn Mas'ūd.

³⁵ ...*wa-man lam yaḥkum bi-mā anzala llāhu fa-ulā'ika humu l-kāfirūn*.

³⁶ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 65.

³⁷ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 191; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VI, 163–64; Samarqandī, I, 439; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 286. The *isnād*: Sufyān al-Thawrī (Kūfan, d. AH 161) ← Ḥabīb ibn Abi

dallāh (Medinan Companion, d. AH 77) quotes another similar version,³⁸ and so does Ribʿī ibn Ḥirāsh. The latter quotes Ḥudhayfa only in an abridged version, without referring to the Qurʾānic verse.³⁹ Unfortunately, the source in which this version appears contains a distorted form of the tradition,⁴⁰ which led Goitein to observe that “the Muslims regarded those *Banū Isrāʾīl* as their brothers.”⁴¹ Our sources certainly say nothing of the sort. Rather, they lament the similarity of Israelite and Islamic sin, which vitiates the distinguished status of the Islamic community among the nations.

Qadaris

A major case of dissension revolving around the Qurʾān is represented by those discussing *qadar*. This is a Qurʾānic term that means “destiny” or “decree”, and those who questioned it are usually known as Qadaris.⁴² Their sceptical discussions of the notion of predestination were perceived by their opponents as questioning the most essential foundations of the Qurʾān, and this negative attitude towards them comes out clearly in a statement attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. In a tradition recorded by ʿAbd al-Razzāq, al-Ḥasan says that he who denies *qadar* denies the Qurʾān (*man kadhdhaba bi-l-qadari fa-qad kadhdhaba bi-l-Qurʾān*).⁴³

Qadarism was prevalent among the Khawārij in Baṣra,⁴⁴ and the spread of such views there is explained as the result of Christian influence. Thus, Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind (Baṣran, d. AH 139) declares that Qadarism only spread in Baṣra when Christian converts to Islam became

Thābit (Kūfan, d. AH 119) ← Abū I-Bakhtarī ← Ḥudhayfa.

³⁸ Huwwāri, I, 473–74.

³⁹ Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, III, 50.

⁴⁰ Printed: *kānat fihim al-murra* (“the bitter share was theirs”) instead of: *law kānat fihim al-murra* (“if only the bitter share was theirs”).

⁴¹ S.D. Goitein, “*Banū Isrāʾīl*”, *EI*² (page 1021b).

⁴² See on them, J. Van Ess, “Qadariyya”, *EI*², and the bibliography therein. Also Cook, *Dogma*, 117–58. On the term see also Watt, *Formative Period*, 116–18.

⁴³ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, XI, no. 20085. See also Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Qadar*, II, no. 1666.

⁴⁴ On this see Watt, *Formative Period*, 88. On the Qadariyya and Baṣra see also Van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīth und Theologie*, 61–64; *idem*, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, I, 23.

numerous there.⁴⁵ The same was stated by Ziyād ibn Yahyā al-Ḥassānī al-Nukrī (d. AH 254).⁴⁶

The Christian stigma of Qadarism, together with the obsessive Qadari discussions of Qurʾānic dogmas, led to the circulation of traditions accusing them of introducing Christian and Jewish heretical norms into Islam. Some such accusations are attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who in one such argument states that the Qadarīs are part (*ṭaraf*) of Christianity.⁴⁷ In another, he says that neither nights nor days are more similar to one another than Qadarīs to Christians and Murjiʿis to Jews.⁴⁸ Ibn ʿAbbās too was credited with an anti-Qadari statement in which he says that the Qadarīs are part and parcel (*shiqqa*) of Christianity.⁴⁹ The Syrian Makḥūl (d. AH 112) also reportedly stated that the Qadarīs are the Christians and the Magians (Majūs) of this *umma*,⁵⁰ and there is a statement of the Kūfan Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (d. AH 95) to the effect that the Qadarīs are Jews.⁵¹ To Mujāhid ibn Jabr (Meccan, d. AH 104) is attributed the statement that the Qadarīs are the Magians and Jews of this community.⁵² The Murjiʿa too are again denounced as Jews,⁵³ and similar statements are attributed to the Prophet. One of them is by Ibn ʿAbbās, who is quoted by his *mawlā* ʿIkrima (Medinan, d. AH 105). Here the Prophet warns the Muslims against holding debates on *qadar*, because this kind of deliberation is a branch (*shuʿba*) of Christianity.⁵⁴ The same is said about the Murjiʿa.⁵⁵ In another Meccan tradition, the Prophet predicts the emer-

⁴⁵ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Qadar*, II, no. 1959.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II, no. 1793.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, II, no. 1577.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II, no. 1578.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, II, no. 1546.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, II, no. 1780.

⁵¹ Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1267.

⁵² Firyābī, *Qadar*, no. 240.

⁵³ Rabiʿ ibn Ḥabīb, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 944; Ibn Shādhān, *Īdāh*, 21; Ibn Shāhīn, *Madhāhib ahl al-sunna*, no. 12; Lālikāʿi, III, nos. 1809, 1815.

⁵⁴ Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 332; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XI, no. 11680; Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1128; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VII, 205. See also Van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīṭ und Theologie*, 129.

⁵⁵ Lālikāʿi, III, no. 1801. Cf. Goldziher, “Le dénombrement des sectes mohamétanes”, 136–37. On a possible Christian (Syrian) influence on the Murjiʿa see Cook,

gence of people who will deny that God decreed the sins of man, and declares that they will have borrowed their views from the Christians.⁵⁶

Due to the presumed Israelite nature of their orientation, the Qadaris became a target at which the *sunna* statement was eventually aimed. This is the case in some Syrian versions. For instance, the Syrian al-Ṣunābiḥī (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUsayla) mentions the Qadaris in a *sunna* statement he quotes from Ḥudhayfa, which predicts that the Muslims will undo the bonds of Islam one by one, in precise symmetry to “those before you”. The process will start with the disappearance of humility and will culminate in the emergence of a group of people claiming that there are no *munāfiqūn* (“hypocrites”) in the Islamic *umma*, and that the Islamic manner of praying five times a day (instead of two—U.R.) is not the one ordered by the Prophet (i.e. the Qurʾān). The people holding this opinion are those who deny *qadar*, and they are the accomplices of the Dajjāl (Antichrist).⁵⁷ There is one more similar version of this statement by Ḥudhayfa, with a different *isnād* and without an explicit mention of the Qadaris.⁵⁸ In fact, there are further traditions predicting that the Muslims will undo the bonds of Islam one by one without blaming it on any specific Islamic group.⁵⁹

Another Medinan/Syrian anti-Qadari version of the *sunna* statement was put into circulation, and it too refers to “those before you”, who are this time identified as the People of the Book. The Prophet is here quoted by the Medinan Companion Shaddād ibn Aws (d. AH 58):⁶⁰

Dogma, 157.

⁵⁶ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XI, no. 11179; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VII, 208. The *isnād*: ʿAmr ibn Dinār (Meccan, d. AH 126) ← ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Sābiṭ (Meccan Successor) ← Prophet.

⁵⁷ Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, 22–23 (no. 33). The *isnād*: Yūnus ibn Yazīd (Egyptian, d. AH 159) ← al-Zuhri (Medinan, d. AH 124) ← al-Ṣunābiḥī ← Ḥudhayfa. Cf. Dānī, *Fitan*, III, nos. 225, 273, 274.

⁵⁸ *Mustadrak*, IV, 469; Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 271; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 8; II, nos. 716, 1260.

⁵⁹ E.g. Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *ʿUqūbāt*, nos. 34, 294; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6715, (with further references provided by the editor); Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab*, VI, no. 7524.

⁶⁰ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 49; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 125; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VII, no. 7140. And see also *Kanz*, XI, no. 31082. Cf. Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, 22 (no. 32); Ibn Qānī, *Ṣaḥāba*, I, no. 414; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 709, without the words “people of the

The evil ones (*shirār*) of this community will be induced to follow the ways of the People of the Book who were before them, as one feather of an arrow matches another.

The title “evil ones” (*shirār*) is usually attached to heretical groups, such as the Khawārij⁶¹ or the Qadarīs. As for the latter, the Prophet declares in a Medinan tradition that debating *qadar* has been postponed till the end of days, being reserved for the “evil ones” (*shirār*) of the Islamic community. The Prophet adds that disputes over the Qur^ʿān are disbelief (*kufr*).⁶² In the present tradition of Shaddād ibn Aws too this title seems to stand for the Qadarīs.⁶³ However, in another Medinan version of the same Companion there is no explicit reference to the evil ones; the Prophet merely states that the Muslims will follow the ways of the People of the Book.⁶⁴

Imitated Movements

There are also versions in which the deviation of the Muslims to the *sunna* of the previous communities is described with similes of imitation. Most of the latter versions are of Medinan provenance, and they seem to preserve Arabian pre-Islamic anti-Jewish biases. The similes of imitation are derived from moving parts of the body, which function also as names of measurements, each of them signifying a certain part of the hand. They are *shibr* (“span”), *dhirāʿ* (“cubit”), and *bāʿ* (“fathom”). These similes are often coupled with a specific instance of blind imitation of a foolish and hazardous act, namely, entering (one’s hand into) the den of a

book”. The *isnād*: Shahr ibn Ḥawshab (Syrian, d. AH 100) ← ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm (Syrian, d. AH 78) ← Shaddād ibn Aws ← Prophet.

⁶¹ E.g. Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 20 (88:6); Ibn Māja, I, no. 170 (*Muqaddima*, 12); *Mustadrak*, II, 147; *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1857.

⁶² Ibn Abī ʿĀsim, *Sunna*, no. 350; Ṭabarāni, *Awsaṭ*, VI, no. 5905; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VII, 202. The *isnād*: al-Zuhri (Medinan, d. AH 124) ← Saʿid ibn al-Musayyab (Medinan, d. AH 94) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet. For another tradition see Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1117.

⁶³ For other contexts of *shirār* cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XXIV, 262–63.

⁶⁴ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Imān*, I, no. 2. The *isnād*: Maḥmūd ibn al-Rabiʿ (Anṣārī Medinan, d. AH 99) ← Shaddād ibn Aws ← Prophet.

lizard (*dabb*). The reference to the lizard seems to echo the ancient Arabian belief that this animal is a metamorphosed Israelite.⁶⁵

The appearance of the lizard in the *sunna* statement provides this statement with an explicit negative significance, unlike the above similes of symmetry which are initially neutral and could also signify a symmetrical positive *sunna*.

Imitation + Symmetry

In most of the Medinan versions, the previous communities are referred to as “those before you”. In one such account, the pattern of imitated movement is combined with the similes of symmetrical forms. This version was circulated through the Companion °Amr ibn °Awf al-Muzanī, and in it the Prophet declares:⁶⁶

... You will follow the ways of those before you as one sole matches another, and you will behave as they did (*wa-la-ta'khudhunna mithla ma'khadhihim*), be it a *shibr* by *shibr*, or a *dhirā°* by *dhirā°* or a *bā°* by *bā°*. If they enter the hole of a lizard, you will surely follow them into it.

The tradition of °Amr ibn °Awf is also available in an expanded version that includes the *firaq* tradition.⁶⁷

Abū Hurayra

Most prevalent are the Medinan versions, all of them prophetic, which were circulated on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurayra. In one of these, Abū Hurayra is quoted by Abū Asid al-Barrād. Here the Prophet declares:

By Him in Whose hand is my soul, you will follow the ways (*sunan/sanan*) of those before you, a *shibr* by *shibr* and a *dhirā°* by *dhirā°*, and if they enter the hole of a lizard, you will surely follow them into it.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ See below, Excursus A.

⁶⁶ Marwazi, *Sunna*, no. 42; Ājurri, *Sharī°a*, 22 (no. 31).

⁶⁷ Ibn Abi °Āšim, *Sunna*, no. 45; Ṭabarāni, *Kabīr*, XVII, no. 3; *Mustadrak*, I, 129; *Majma° al-zawā'id*, VII, 262–63 (Ṭabarāni); Suyūti, *Khašā'is*, III, 14.

⁶⁸ Marwazi, *Sunna*, no. 47; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 511. The *isnād*: Sulaymān ibn Bilāl

A similar version is quoted from Abū Hurayra by the Medinan Abū Saʿid al-Maqburī (Kaysān, d. AH 100).⁶⁹

A version traced back to the Prophet through the Companion Abū Saʿid al-Khudrī uses the designation “Children of Israel”.⁷⁰ This particular version is quoted from Abū Saʿid by Zayd ibn Aslam (Medinan, d. AH 136), but in some sources an unnamed traditionist (*rajul*) appears between Abū Saʿid and Zayd.⁷¹

Qurʾānic Sins

Some of the versions of the type of imitation refer to specific kinds of Qurʾānic sins. Sūrat al-Tawba (9):69 states that “those before you” (*al-ladhīna min qablikum*) were mightier and wealthier than the contemporaries of the Qurʾānic prophet, and took pleasure in their share, like the contemporaries have done (i.e. indulged in disbelief), yet “their works have failed in this world and in the world to come.” The exegetes perceived this passage as a warning to the believers of the fate of “those before you” who indulged in sinful deeds. To confirm this meaning, they adduced a *sunna* statement. Al-Ṭabarī recorded in his commentary on this verse a Medinan tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās, who is quoted by ʿIkrima. In it Ibn ʿAbbās explains that “those before you” are the Children of Israel; he then adds: “We are like them”, and declares:

I swear by Him Who holds my soul in His hand—you will follow them (i.e. the Children of Israel), and if one of them enters the hole of a lizard, you will surely follow him into it.⁷²

al-Taymī (Medinan, d. AH 172) ← Ibrāhīm ibn Abi Asīd al-Barrād ← his father ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

⁶⁹ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 712. The *isnād*: Muḥammad ibn Zayd (printed: Ziyād) ibn al-Muhājir al-Qurashī (Medinan) ← Abū Saʿid ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

⁷⁰ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 235.

⁷¹ *Idem*, *Muṣannaḥ*, XI, no. 20764; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 94; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 711. Cf. Ibn Abi ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 75.

⁷² Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, X, 121–22 (9:69). The *isnād*: Ibn Jurayj (ʿAbdalmalik ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAziz) (Meccan, d. AH 150) ← ʿUmar ibn ʿAṭāʾ ibn Warāz (Ḥijāzī) ← ʿIkrima ← Ibn ʿAbbās. See also Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, II, 368. Shiʿi *Tafsīr*: Ṭūsī, *Tabyān*, V, 255; Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, X, 97.

A version of Abū Hurayra also links the *sunna* statement to the same Qurʾānic passage. In this particular version, the lizard motif shifts to that of a mouse, which is another metamorphosed Israelite.⁷³ In this version, recorded by Sayf ibn ʿUmar (d. AH 180), Abū Hurayra not only quotes the *sunna* statement of the Prophet, but also recites our Qurʾānic verse. Abū Hurayra is again quoted by Abū Saʿīd al-Maqburī.⁷⁴

Some versions pertain to a wider scope of sins which are not mentioned in the Qurʾān. The sins are of sexual immorality, as they are also in the above Iraqi versions of the symmetry type. Such a sin is mentioned in a version that was circulated on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, again through ʿIkrima. Ibn ʿAbbās makes his statement on the authority of the Prophet:⁷⁵

You will follow the ways of those before you, a *shibr* by *shibr* and a *dhirāʿ* by *dhirāʿ* and a *hāʿ* by *bāʿ*, and if one of them enters the hole of a lizard, you will surely follow him into it; and if one of them has intercourse with his own mother in the street, you will surely do the same.

Actualisation: Jews and Christians

In the majority of the Medinan versions, the designation “those before you” is followed by a further definition that points to the contemporary nations as the origin of the *sunna* imitated by the Muslims. This definition expands the scope of the *sunna* statement to everything that was regarded as coming from a non-Islamic milieu.

Such a contemporary redefinition of the evil *sunna* is provided, to begin with, in an expanded version of the above tradition of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, which this time deals with “those before you”. The *sunna* statement about them is now followed by an additional passage containing a dialogue between the Prophet and the audience concerning the identity of

⁷³ See below, Excursus A.

⁷⁴ Sayf ibn ʿUmar, 131 (no. 131). The *isnād*: ʿAbdallāh ibn Saʿīd al-Maqburī (Medinan) ← Abū Saʿīd al-Maqburī ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

⁷⁵ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 43; *Kashf al-astār*, IV, 98 (no. 3285); *Mustadrak*, IV, 455 (printed: *imraʿatahu*). The *isnād*: Thawr ibn Yazīd (Ḥimsī, d. AH 153) and Mūsā ibn Maysara al-Dīlī (Medinan) ← ʿIkrima ← Ibn ʿAbbās ← Prophet. See also Suyūṭī, *Khaṣāʾis*, III, 14; *Kanz*, XI, no. 30924; Albānī, *Silsila, Ṣaḥīḥa*, III, no. 1348.

“those before you”. This version is circulated with a more specific *isnād*, in which the *rajul* is replaced by ʿAṭāʾ ibn Yasār (Medinan storyteller, d. AH 103). The tradition starts with the declaration of the Prophet about the precise imitation of the evil *sunna* of “those before you”, and then the people pose this question to the Prophet: “Are they the Jews and the Christians?” The Prophet answers immediately: “Who else could they be (*fa-man*)!”

This version, in which “those before you” are redefined as Jews and Christians, was recorded in several *ḥadīth* compilations,⁷⁶ including some of the canonical ones.⁷⁷ The explicit anti-Jewish/Christian message of the statement gained for it the necessary authority in the eyes of the compilers. It also appears in commentaries on Qurʾān 3:105, which prohibits the believers to become like those who became divided;⁷⁸ in this case, the assimilation with the Jews and the Christians as implied by the *sunna* statement again pertains to inner division. Similar accounts were circulated on the authority of the Companions ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ⁷⁹ and Abū Hurayra.⁸⁰ The version of the latter was circulated by several Successors, and in the one circulated by Saʿīd ibn Abī Saʿīd al-Maqburi (Medinan, d. AH 123), “those before you” are identified as “People of the Book”.⁸¹ There is also an identical version (again, with

⁷⁶ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 41; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 74; Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 2178; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 84, 89; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6703; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, III, 79 (on Qurʾān 9:69).

⁷⁷ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 206 (60:50); IX, 126–27 (96:14); Muslim, VIII, 57 (47, *Bāb ittibāʿ sanan al-Yahūd*).

⁷⁸ Huwwārī, I, 306.

⁷⁹ Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 48; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 73. The *isnād*: ʿAmr ibn Shuʿayb (Medinan, d. AH 118) ← his father Shuʿayb ibn ʿAbdallāh ← his father ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ ← Prophet.

⁸⁰ Marwazī, *Sunna*, nos. 44, 45; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 72; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 450, 527; Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 226; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, III, 16. *Muṣannaḥ* compilations: Ibn Abī Shayba, XV, 102 (no. 19223); Ibn Māja, II, no. 3994 (36:17); *Mustadrak*, I, 37. The *isnād*: Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿAlqama (Medinan, d. AH 144) ← Abū Salama ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf (Medinan, d. AH 94) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

⁸¹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 327. Cf. Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, 22 (no. 30); Lālikāʾī, I, no. 206; Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 224. In *Tafsīr* of Qurʾān 9:69: Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, X, 122; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 368.

Jews and Christians) of the Medinan Companion Sahl ibn Sa'ad al-Anṣārī (d. AH 88).⁸²

Persia and Byzantium

In other Medinan versions, “those before you” are identified as *Fāris wa-Rūm*: “Persia and Byzantium”. Such a definition evidently shifts the imitated *sunna* from a religious and a moral context to a secular one. This definition occurs in the version of Abū Hurayra, who is once more quoted by Sa'ad ibn Abī Sa'ad al-Maqburi. This version was recorded by al-Ṭabari, again in the commentary on Qur'ān 9:69.⁸³ Thus, the *sunna* statement has been employed against the influence of the mighty empires whose administrative and cultural systems continued to function even under Islamic domination. Such versions are a clear indication of a Ḥijāzī anti-provincial reaction.

The same reaction, however, is also detectable in some Iraqī versions, primarily in the one about Ibn 'Abbās in which this scholar accuses the Umayyads of subjecting Islamic society to Byzantine and Persian influences. This is a Baṣran tradition attributing to Ibn 'Abbās a statement that predicts the nomination of Mu'āwiya as (the first Umayyad) caliph. He goes on to say that Quraysh (i.e. the Umayyads) will introduce the *sunna* of the Persians and the Byzantines, and will appoint Christians, Jews and Persians to run the affairs of the Muslims. The Muslims will not be able to defy this, and will perish like the generations (*qurūn*) which perished before them.⁸⁴

The following version of the *sunna* statement is again quoted from Abū Hurayra by Sa'ad ibn Abī Sa'ad al-Maqburi; in it the spread of Roman and Persian practices has become part of the ominous portents of the Hour (*ashrāt al-sā'a*). The Prophet states:

⁸² Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VI, no. 5943.

⁸³ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, X, 121. See also Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 227; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 713. But see Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, VIII, 200–201, where they are again the Jews and the Christians.

⁸⁴ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10613; *Majma' al-zawā'id*, VII, 239. The *isnād*: 'Abd-allāh ibn Shawdhab (Baṣran/Syrian, d. ca. AH 150) ← Maṭar al-Warrāq (Baṣran, d. AH 125) ← Zahdam al-Jaramī (Baṣran) ← Ibn 'Abbās.

The Hour shall not come until my community imitates the communities and the generations that were before them, a *shibr* by *shibr* and a *dhirā* by *dhirā*°.

A man now asks the Prophet: “Will they behave like the Persians and the Romans?” The Prophet says: “Is there anyone else, but them?”⁸⁵

This version, which was accepted by al-Bukhārī into his *Ṣaḥīḥ*,⁸⁶ turns the deviation towards the *sunna* of other nations into an awesome apocalyptic event.

The Sunna Statement and the Shī°a

The *sunna* statement is a crucial tool which Shī°is have used for their own anti-Sunnī propaganda, mainly for adapting to their enemies Qur°ānic models of Israelite sin. A first glimpse of this was seen in the affair of the spies,⁸⁷ in which a *sunna* statement is employed to equate °Alī’s rivals with the insubordinate Israelites. The *sunna* statement is used for the same purpose in a tradition in which Salmān al-Fārisī accuses Abū Bakr, who prevented °Alī from becoming a caliph after Muḥammad’s death, of having followed the *sunna* of the previous communities who were engaged in inner conflicts and disputes.⁸⁸

However, the *sunna* statement was directed even against groupings among the Shī°is themselves. This is the case in a tradition of the Kūfan Qays ibn al-Sakan, who relates that °Alī recited to his soldiers the Qur°ānic verse in which Moses commands the Children of Israel to enter the Holy Land (5:21). The verse formed part of °Alī’s command to his men to set out for Syria and fight the Umayyads there. He issued this command when they were in Maskin, Iraq, after they had fought the Khawārij at Nahrawān. The fatigued men refused, claiming that it was too cold to go, to which °Alī responded: “Ugh! This is the common way (*sunna*) that continues with you.”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Nu°aym ibn Hammād, 432; Marwazī, *Sunna*, no. 46; Ājurri, *Shari°a*, 22 (no. 29); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 325, 336, 367.

⁸⁶ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 126 (96:14).

⁸⁷ Above, 81.

⁸⁸ Sulaym ibn Qays, 90.

⁸⁹ Karājiki, *Kanz al-fawā°id*, I, 144; Ibn Hilāl al-Thaqafī, *Ghārāt*, 17–18. See also Ibn °Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), I, 68.

Many more versions of the *sunna* statement are found in Twelver Shi^ci sources, where they are adduced to illustrate the fact that the Muslims are bound to follow the evil ways of the Children of Israel, as well as of the Persians and the Byzantines.⁹⁰ In the Shi^ci context, the tradition obviously only pertains to the Sunnis among the Muslims, whose *sunna*, according to the Shi^ca, is of the evil Israelite type.

However, the Shi^ca used the *sunna* statement not only to denounce the evil *sunna* of its rivals, but also to praise its own *sunna*; in this case, the Qur³anic Israelite *sunna*, which is equated with the Shi^ci one, is a good *sunna*. Thus, the glorious image of the Children of Israel as evinced in the context of Jewish–Arab messianism (Chapter 1) is retained for a specific Shi^ci aim. It follows that in the Shi^ci context the function of the *sunna* statement is twofold: to apply the evil *sunna* of the Qur³anic Israelites to its enemies, and the good Israelite *sunna* to itself.

This double function is demonstrated in a tradition in which ^cAli uses the *sunna* statement for both purposes. He says that after the death of the Prophet people were divided into two groups, one resembling Aaron, Moses' brother, and the other resembling the worshippers of the calf. ^cAli himself belongs to the former group, while Abū Bakr belongs to the latter. ^cAli equates him with an *'ijl* ("calf"), which is evidently a derogatory pun on *bakr* ("young camel"). ^cUmar, ^cAli says, resembles the Sāmīrī (= the Samaritan who incited the Israelites to make the calf, Qur³an 20:85). At this point, ^cAli goes on to quote a tradition from the Prophet which contains a *sunna* statement of a combined symmetry and imitation type. In the present context, this confirms the noble symmetry between ^cAli and Aaron and the despicable symmetry between Abū Bakr, ^cUmar and the worshippers of the calf.⁹¹

Apart from the calf, with which Shi^cis and Sunnis used to degrade each other's *sunna*, the Shi^ca adopted the Qur³anic symbol of the Israelite Ark of the Covenant (*tābūt*), and used the *sunna* statement to link it to its own good *sunna*. The first to do it for the Shi^cis was reportedly al-Mukhtār, who, as seen above, believed in the blessed qualities of the supposed chair of ^cAli. Unlike Ibn al-Ashtar, who reportedly saw in the chair

⁹⁰ E.g. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 118, 146.

⁹¹ Sulaym ibn Qays, 92–93.

a reflection of the Israelite calf, al-Mukhtār appears in the sources as linking the same chair to the Israelite *tābūt*. The report about al-Mukhtār's attitude again contains a simple form of a *sunna* statement. Ma^cbad ibn Khālid (Kūfan d. AH 118) reports that al-Mukhtār linked ^cAli's chair to the Israelite Ark as described in Sūrat al-Baqara (2):248. Here a prophet of the Children of Israel says to them that the sign of the kingship of Ṭālūt (= Saul) is the Ark (*tābūt*) that will come to the Children of Israel, and in it will be the "Shechina from your Lord, and a remnant of what the folk of Moses and Aaron's folk left behind...." Standing before ^cAli's chair, al-Mukhtār is said to have stated:

Whatever happened to past communities (*al-umam al-khāliya*) will happen to you in a similar way. The Children of Israel had the Ark, in which there was a remnant of what the folk of Moses and Aaron's folk had left behind, and this [chair] among us is like the Ark.

Thereupon, people of the Saba³iyya raised their hands and cried out: "God is great".⁹² Al-Mukhtār's speech comprises a hidden form of a *sunna* statement in which the word *sunna* is not explicitly mentioned.

The Shi^ci have extensively used the symbol of the Ark to establish the authority of their own *imāms*. A widely current Shi^ci tradition has it that the armour (*silāh*) of the Prophet is passed on in succession from one *imām* to another, and that this armour is equivalent to the Israelite Ark—wherever it goes, knowledge and authority go with it.⁹³

Other elements of the Qur³ānic history of Israel also became a Shi^ci model by means of the *sunna* statement. The statement was used to produce an analogy between the *imāms* and the twelve Israelite leaders appointed by Moses. They are mentioned in Sūrat al-Mā³ida (5):12, where they are called *nuqabā³*. A link between them and the Shi^ci *imāms* is established in the following *sunna* statement, as recorded in a Twelver Shi^ci source. The Prophet says:⁹⁴

⁹² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, VI, 83 (II, 703). Cf. Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors", 62–63. And see also Tha^cālībī, *Thimār al-Qulūb*, I, 180.

⁹³ Ps.-Mas^cūdi, *Ithbāt*, 221; Kulīni, I, 233, 238, 284; Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors", 47.

⁹⁴ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 258. See also Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors", 54.

Things will happen in my community which are similar to what happened among the Children of Israel, as one sole of a shoe matches another, and as one feather of an arrow matches another. They (i.e. the Children of Israel) had twelve chieftains (*nuqabā'*), as God said: "And We raised up from them twelve chieftains".

A *sunna* statement was also used for al-Ḥusayn in his capacity as ʿAlī's successor in the line of the *imāms*. The statement was designed to link him to the model of Aaron.⁹⁵ Al-Rabīʿ ibn ʿAbdallāh (perhaps ibn Khut-tāf, Baṣran) is reported to have stated:

Moses and Aaron were two prophets sent by God, and Moses was the eldest (*sic*)⁹⁶ and more distinguished than Aaron, yet God invested Aaron's descendants with prophethood, to the exclusion of Moses' children. In the same way, God produced the *imāms* from the offspring of al-Ḥusayn (and not from al-Ḥasan's—U.R.), so that the ways [of the Islamic *umma*] would be identical to the ways of the communities before them, as one sole of a shoe matches another.

When Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (Abū ʿAbdallāh, the sixth *imām*, d. AH 148) heard this, he said to al-Rabīʿ: "You have spoken well".

This Shiʿī context of the *sunna* statement accords with the view underlying the commentaries on Sūrat al-Nisā' (4):26, in which God wishes to guide the believers to the *sunan* of "those before you". Muslim exegetes usually explain that the believers are here requested to restore the ways of the prophets and of the believers who remained loyal to these prophets,⁹⁷ or to return to the religion of Abraham and Ishmael, i.e. the *ḥanīfiyya*.⁹⁸ This is also the message of the *sunna* statement in its Shiʿī context: to return to the old Israelite heritage of divine guidance and mercy, which only the *imāms* and their followers preserve unblemished.

⁹⁵ Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 207. For more references see Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors", 54 n. 84.

⁹⁶ This is, of course, erroneous. In the Bible Moses is the youngest.

⁹⁷ Muqātil, I, 368; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, V, 18; Zajjāj, II, 43; Naḥḥās, I, 448; Zamakhshari, *Kashshāf*, I, 521.

⁹⁸ Wāḥidi, *Wasīf*, II, 37; Baghawi, *Maʿālim al-tanzil*, II, 48.

CHAPTER 9

WARNING FROM THE PAST: THE HALAKA STATEMENT

The identical historical fate uniting the Muslims and the other communities comprises not only sin, but punishment as well. Just as the *sunna* statement says that the Muslims are bound to commit the same sins known from the history of other communities, other traditions say that they are also liable to suffer the same punishments which others have already endured. The traditions drawing this historical analogy belong to the same brand of statements designed to eliminate from Islamic society phenomena of assimilation to other communities, and to ensure for the Muslims a distinctive Islamic identity.

That the history of previous communities includes a punitive worldly calamity is a well-known Qur^ʿānic idea. For example, in Sūrat al-Mā^ʿida (5):26 the Children of Israel are barred entrance to the Promised Land after refusing to go to war, and wander in the wilderness for 40 years (till they perish);¹ in Sūrat al-A^ʿrāf (7):162, they are destroyed in a disaster (*rijz*) from heaven after refusing to say *ḥiṭṭa*.² In Sūrat Banī Isrā^ʿil (17):4–7 they are twice punished by men of great strength, who destroy their Temple.³ Destruction in this world is also suffered by the pre-Israelite communities whose fate is described in the Qur^ʿānic “punishment stories”.⁴

¹ Above, 60.

² Above, Chapter 4.

³ See Heribert Busse, “The Destruction of the Temple and its Reconstruction in the Light of Muslim Exegesis of Sūra 17:2–8”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), 1–17.

⁴ On the Qur^ʿānic punishment stories see e.g. W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Intro-*

The link between the historical calamity that has already befallen the ancient communities and the worldly punishment awaiting Muslims for following the evil ways of the ancients is provided in a special group of traditions, the *halaka* statements. The Arabic verb *halaka* means “to perish”, and these traditions assert that certain practices pursued by the Muslims have already brought perdition on the previous communities. The allusion to the history of the non-Arab communities is only made to derive from it an apocalyptic lesson for the Muslims: by repeating these deeds, the Muslims have condemned themselves to the same punishment as that suffered by their predecessors.

A scrutiny of various kinds of such *halaka* statements will further illuminate the efforts to retain for the Islamic *umma* a distinctive non-Jewish and non-Christian identity. The various versions will again show that the core of the sin shared by Muslims and others is inner division, mainly that which revolves around the Qur^ʿān.

Civil Wars

In some Syrian versions, the *halaka* statement alludes to armed discord among the Muslims. A major event of this kind is the battle of Şiffin between ʿAli and Mu^ʿāwiya (37/657–58). The affair of Şiffin became the subject of a Ḥimṣī apocalypse attributed to Ka^ʿb al-Aḥbār. We have already met him in the Syrian sphere in Chapter 1, where he turns the Islamic take-over of Syria into a messianic scheme predicted in the Torah. In the present apocalypse, his role is shifted from the Islamic conquests to the Islamic schism, which he also turns into a divine scheme. However, this is now done not to glorify the events, but rather to show that they represent a common fate of sin and punishment shared by Jews and Arabs alike.

In the present tradition, Ka^ʿb is said to have come to Şiffin, where he discovers some stones on the road. He says to his companion that he saw the description of these stones in the old scriptures, and then goes on to relate that the Children of Israel fought each other here with these stones nine times till they perished; the Arabs will use them in battle for the

duction to the Qur^ʿān (Edinburgh, 1970), 127–35.

tenth time. They will throw them at each other till they too perish.⁵ In another version, Ka^cb states that 70,000 men of the Children of Israel were killed at Şiffin, and that the same will happen to the Muslims.⁶ Thus, the clash of Şiffin has become a renewed version of an ancient calamity.

A more specific aspect of the affair of Şiffin, i.e. the arbitration agreement, also became a reflection of a disastrous Israelite fate. There is a tradition of ^cAlī in which the Prophet says that the Children of Israel were in discord till they sent out two arbitrators, but both were lost (*faḍallā*) and caused others to be lost. This *umma* too will be in discord until they send out two arbitrators, but they will be lost, and whoever follows them will be lost as well.⁷ This tradition does not use the root *h.l.k.*, only *ḍ.l.l.* (“err”, “stray”, “be lost”), but it too implies the same as the *halaka* statements.

Some *halaka* statements pertaining to division on the battlefield are linked to events that already took place in Muḥammad’s Arabia, and in this case they are uttered by the Prophet himself. He makes one such statement during a well-known raid that was carried out in the sacred month of Rajab.⁸ Our particular version is related by the Companion Sa^cd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (d. AH 55), whom Muḥammad sends together with other Muslims to attack a tribe of Kināna. As the number of the Muslims proves to be too small, they retreat and find refuge with the nearby tribe of Juhayna, which has recently embraced Islam. At this stage they plan their next move. Some consider going back to Medina to report to the Prophet, whilst some prefer to remain where they are. Sa^cd himself and several other Muslims decide to carry out the raid after all, and to keep

⁵ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 31 (reference from Michael Lecker). The *isnād*: Ṣafwān ibn ^cAmr (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 100) ← Abū l-Muthannā ḌamḌam al-Umlūki (Ḥimṣī) ← Ka^cb.

⁶ This version is quoted in Kister, “*Haddithū*”, 223. For more abridged versions of the story see Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, XVIII, no. 878; *Majma^c al-zawā²id*, VII, 267; Suyūṭī, *Nuzūl ‘Isā*, 36.

⁷ Bayhaqī, *Dalā²il*, VI, 423; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VII, 284–85 (Bayhaqī). The *isnād*: ^cAbdallāh ibn Yazīd and Ḥabīb ibn Yasār ← Suwayd ibn Ghafala (Kūfan, d. AH 81) ← ^cAlī ← Prophet. For further traditions against the arbitration of Şiffin see *Majma^c al-zawā²id*, VII, 248–49.

⁸ Cf. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956), 5–9.

all the booty for themselves, as was then the custom. The rest return to Medina, and as soon as the Prophet hears their report, he says angrily:

You left me united and returned divided. Division (*furqa*) is the only reason why those before you perished (*halaka*).

The Prophet then decides to send them out again under the command of ʿAbdallāh ibn Jaḥsh, who was the first person appointed as a commander in Islam.⁹

With the application of the *halaka* statement to this event, the *sīra* of Muḥammad became a setting for deriving from the past a warning against division.

Disputes over the Qurʾān

However, most situations of inner division in which *halaka* statements are pronounced revolve around the Qurʾān, which again brings out the parallelism between the Bible and the Qurʾān as bases for schism. The results of such schism—of which the *halaka* statement warns—remain implicit, which seems to mean that they form part of the apocalyptic future.

Readings

To begin with, a *halaka* statement was applied to disputes over the readings (*qirāʾāt*) of the Qurʾān. The traditions linking these disputes to past disasters are designed to defend the status of the canonical readings of the Qurʾān, which in themselves were established to diminish dissension and disagreement. A *halaka* statement is uttered in this context in a story about the Companion ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and the Prophet; it is told by ʿAbdallāh ibn Rabāḥ al-Anṣārī (Medinan/Başran, d. ca. AH 90) in a letter to Abū ʿImrān al-Jawnī (Başran, d. AH 128). ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr is said to have come to the Prophet one day while two Muslims were quarrelling nearby concerning a Qurʾānic verse (*fī āya*). The nature of their disagreement is not specified, but seems to have been about the

⁹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 178. The *isnād* is not complete: Ziyād ibn ʿIlāqa (Kūfan, d. AH 153) ← Saʿd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ.

manner in which the verse was to be read. The Prophet hears them shout, becomes angry, goes out to them, and utters a *halaka* statement: “Those who were before you perished because of their disagreement (*bi-ikhtilāfihim*) over the Book”.¹⁰ The statement is also available in another tradition of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr, which does not contain the story of the dispute. Here the Prophet declares:¹¹

Give up disputes (*mirāʿ*) over the Book, because the communities (*umam*) that were before you had not been cursed (*lam yulʿanū*) until they disagreed over the Qurʾān (*sic*). Disputes over the Qurʾān are disbelief (*kufr*).

This statement clearly reveals the parallelism between the Bible and the Qurʾān as origins of schisms, as the name of the Jewish–Christian scripture interchanges in it with that of the Muslims.

A *halaka* statement condemning *mirāʿ* (“disputes”) is also available in a tradition in which the Muslims are divided on an unspecified religious matter. This version has a combined *isnād* of the Syrians Abū Umāma and Wāthila ibn al-Asqaʿ (d. AH 83), the Baṣran Anas ibn Mālik, and the Anṣārī Abū I-Dardāʿ (d. AH 32).¹² In this tradition, the Prophet hears the Muslims quarrel about a certain religious issue, becomes very angry and starts delivering a lengthy sermon against controversy. It begins with the statement that disputations are why the ancients perished (*halaka*). The ensuing parts of the sermon are linked to each other through a recurring refrain: “Give up disputations (*mirāʿ*)!” When the refrain is stated for the last time, it is appended by a *firaq* tradition which provides the historical background to the sin of *mirāʿ*: “Give up *mirāʿ*, because the Children of Israel became divided into 71 parties..., etc.”

In another story, the central figure is the Companion ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd (d. AH 32), whose name was applied to the Qurʾānic *qirāʿa* that

¹⁰ Muslim, VIII, 57 (47, *Bāb al-nahy ʿan ittibāʿ mutashābihi l-qurʾān*); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 192; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, no. 135; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 795.

¹¹ Ibn Abī Shayba, X, no. 10215; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, no. 137; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 793. The *isnād*: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Thawbān (probably mistaken for Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Thawbān, a Medinan) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ← Prophet.

¹² Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, no. 106; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 532; Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, VIII, no. 7659.

was prevalent in his town, Kūfa. The story about him, which takes place already during Muḥammad's lifetime, is quoted by the Kūfan al-Nazzāl ibn Sabra. °Abdallāh hears a man reciting the Qur'ān according to a *qirā'a* different from his own, and he appeals to the Prophet to decide whose *qirā'a* is the correct one. Muḥammad says: "Both of you have done well." This is glossed by the following statement of the Prophet: "Do not disagree with one another, because those who were before you disagreed (*ikhtalafū*) and therefore perished (*fa-halakū*)."13

In the version of the same scene transmitted by the Kūfan Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh (d. AH 83) from Ibn Mas'ūd, the Prophet remains silent with anger, and the statement about the fate of old divided communities is delivered by an unnamed person who stands beside the Prophet.¹⁴ He is identified in further versions of Zirr as °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.¹⁵ In yet another version of the story, quoted this time from Ibn Mas'ūd by the Kūfan Abū Wā'il (Shaqīq ibn Salama, d. AH 82), °Alī disappears and the Prophet, while mentioning the disastrous fate suffered by the old communities due to disagreement, also recommends the believers to look for the person most expert on the reading of the Qur'ān, and to follow his reading.¹⁶

These versions seem to betray a Shī'ī touch, as they promote °Alī's image as defender of the Qur'ān. This accords with his image as an anti-heretical warrior, which is also presented in Sunnī *ḥadīth*.¹⁷

Qadarism

Controversies concerning the Qur'ān were often focused on the issue of *qadar*, which, as seen above,¹⁸ were denounced as originating in Jewish-Christian modes of schism. The *halaka* statement could therefore

¹³ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, III, 158 (44:1); IV, 213 (60:54); VI, 245 (66:37); Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 387; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 393, 411–12. Cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, X, no. 10219.

¹⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 421, 452.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 419; Ājurri, *Sharī'a*, no. 140; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 802; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, III, no. 747. Cf. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 10; *Mustadrak*, II, 223–24; Ibn °Abd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, VIII, 289.

¹⁶ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 401.

¹⁷ Above, 157.

¹⁸ Above, 177–79.

also be employed to denounce Qadarism. In the relevant versions, the labels “Children of Israel” and “those before you” are interchanged. Some are traced back to the Prophet himself, and this is the scene in them: the Prophet meets a few Companions who are engaged in a debate about *qadar*, he becomes furious, and in his anger he utters a *halaka* statement asserting that this is not what they are meant to do, and that the previous communities perished because they held debates about *qadar*.¹⁹ Other versions are non-prophetic. One of the latter is a Medinan statement attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, who asserts that the Children of Israel were victorious as long as they adhered to the right legal system (*shariʿa*); when they started debating the issue of *qadar* and became divided, their enemies defeated and destroyed them.²⁰ The caliph ʿUmar is credited with a similar statement to the effect that “those before you” perished because of their views about *qadar*.²¹ The Companion Abū Umāma declares that the first error of every community after the death of its prophet was the denial of *qadar*.²²

In the following tradition, the Prophet declares that 70 different prophets have already cursed the Qadaris (as well as the Murjiʿis) who were corrupting their respective peoples.²³ The Qadari tenets were also built into the biography of a specific Israelite prophet, ʿUzayr, whose name is associated in the Qurʾān (9:30) with Jewish polytheistic tenets.

¹⁹ E.g. Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VI, 334–35 (30:1); Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, no. 539. The tradition is of Hishām ibn Ḥassān al-Qurdūsi (Baṣran, d. AH 147) ← Muḥammad ibn Sirīn (Baṣran, d. AH 110) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet. See also Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 322, 327; Firiyābi, *Qadar*, no. 241; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Qadar*, I, no. 1275; II, no. 1982 (the traditions of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr, Ibn ʿUmar and Abū Dharr). Cf. Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, p. 128; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, no. 526.

²⁰ Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1133. The *isnād*: Iṣḥāq ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Nawfal (Medinan) ← his father ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Nawfal ibn al-Ḥārith (Medinan, d. AH 84) ← Ibn ʿAbbās.

²¹ Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1208. The *isnād*: Yaʿqūb ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Qummi (d. AH 174) ← Jaʿfar ibn Abī l-Mughira al-Qummi ← Saʿīd ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abzā (Kūfan) ← ʿUmar.

²² Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, no. 526.

²³ E.g. Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 366; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 325, 952; Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, XX, no. 232; Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1159; III, no. 1802. Cf. Rabiʿ ibn Ḥabīb, nos. 768, 806. And see Van Ess, *Zwischen Hadīṭ und Theologie*, 131–32.

Muslim tradition says that God expunged ‘Uzayr’s name from the list of prophets because he refused to believe in *qadar* and inquired into it.²⁴ Implicit in all of these traditions is the notion that the Muslims are bound to perish unless they abandon Qadarism.

“Beating” Parts of Scripture

The parallelism between the Bible and the Qur^ʿān as bases for dissension and division is particularly evident in some versions of the *halaka* statement which denounce certain rational methods of handling the Qur^ʿānic text. These are believed to be the outcome of Jewish and Christian influence, and stand in sharp contrast to the value of *sunna*.

One such method is described in our sources as *darbu l-kitābi ba‘dihī bi-ba‘dīn*: “beating parts of scripture against other parts of it”. This reminds one of the Hebrew term *heqqesh*: “beating together”. In the Talmud, *heqqesh* is one of the “measures” (*middoth*) by which the Torah is interpreted, and is used with reference to the juxtaposition of two subjects in the Torah, demonstrating that they should be treated in the same manner. The Hebrew *heqqesh* is the origin of the Arabic *qiyās* (“analogous deduction”), which has already been seen above as a target of the *firaq* tradition.²⁵ However, in the present context, *darb al-kitāb* does not stand for *qiyās* proper, but rather for exegetical and dogmatic discussions in which the debating parties adduce different parts of scripture to rebut each other’s arguments. Nevertheless, the *halaka* statement, which was employed to denounce this kind of deliberation, confirms the presumed Israelite origin of *darb al-kitāb*.

One of the relevant versions is again attributed to Abū Umāma. This time he describes a scene in which the Prophet observes people arguing with each other about the Qur^ʿān. Muḥammad becomes very angry; his face changes as though vinegar has been poured on it, and he says: “Do not beat parts of the Qur^ʿān against other parts of it, because no community was lost (*dalla*) unless it took to disputation (*jadal*).” The Pro-

²⁴ Firyābī, *Qadar*, nos. 333–34; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10606; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Qadar*, II, no. 1990; Lālikā‘ī, II, nos. 1342–43. For other references see Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 53 n. 10.

²⁵ Above, 157–58.

phet then adduces Sūrat al-Zukhruf (43):58: ...*mā ɗarabūhu laka illā jadalān*: “they only beat it for you for disputation”.²⁶

More prevalent are the versions which are again circulated on the authority of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. In one of his traditions, the Prophet is said to have heard people trying to rebut (*yatadāraʿūna*) each other’s arguments by quoting Qurʾānic verses at each other. Thereupon the Prophet says:²⁷

Those who were before you perished because of this; they beat parts of God’s Book against other parts of it; but all revealed parts of the Book confirm each other. Do not refute parts of it by other parts of it. Say only what you know [for sure] about it, and consult experts on what you do not know of it.

In yet another version of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr’s tradition, the sin of beating parts of scripture against other parts of it is identified as Qadarism. In this version, ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr relates that the Prophet once heard people arguing about *qadar* and said angrily: “Is this what you have been created for—to beat parts of the Qurʾān against other parts of it? The communities before you were destroyed because of this.”²⁸

Raʿy and Qiyās

Closely associated with *ɗarb al-kitāb* is *raʿy*, which was also discussed above as a target of the *firaq* tradition.²⁹ As with *ɗarb al-kitāb*, it too represents the manipulation of scripture independently of legitimate measures such as the *sunna*. A *halaka* statement (with *d.l.l.*) was also employed to condemn it, which turned this practice into an origin of worldly cataclysm. The relevant tradition is of ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr, who

²⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXV, 53. See also Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, 61 (no. 138); Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, nos. 527–30, 534, 796.

²⁷ The *isnād*: ʿAmr ibn Shuʿayb (Medinan, d. AH 118) ← his father ← his grandfather, ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ ← Prophet. See ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, no. 20367; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 181, 185, 196; *idem*, *Masʾalat al-Qurʾān*, 49; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, 61 (no. 136); Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, II, no. 794; Suyūṭi, *Durr*, II, 8. And see a similar version with a different *isnād* in Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1120.

²⁸ Ibn Māja, I, no. 85 (*Muqaddima*, 10). Also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 178.

²⁹ Above, 157–58.

relates that the affair (*amr*) of the Children of Israel was straight until the *muwalladūn*—children of captured women taken as prisoners by the Israelites from foreign communities—grew up. They spread the system of *raʿy* among them and led them astray (*fa-adallūhum*).³⁰ ʿUrwa’s tradition is traced back to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb,³¹ and a similar statement is attributed to the Prophet himself through ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr.³² In yet another version of the same statement, quoted from the Prophet by the Syrian Companion Wāhila ibn al-Asqaʿ (Syrian, d. AH 83), *raʿy* is replaced by *qiyās*.³³

These traditions imply that *raʿy* penetrated Islamic society from the foreign communities who came under the control of Islam,³⁴ and they see in *raʿy* a fatal manifestation of assimilation.

In more *halaka* statements, *qiyās* has become a cause for Israelite disaster, and it is stated that the Children of Israel perished (*halaka*) because they practised *qiyās*. This statement, made by Muḥammad’s Medinan secretary Zayd ibn Thābit (d. ca. AH 50), implies that the same fate awaits Muslims practising *qiyās*.³⁵

Exaggerated Inquiries

The *halaka* statement was also directed at specific manifestations of individual thinking, such as raising questions and investigating into religious duties. A widely current Baṣran tradition about the Prophet, as related by the Companion Abū Hurayra, says that when the Prophet announced the duty of pilgrimage, someone asked him: “Each year?” The Prophet refused to answer, and later on explained that had he said “Yes”, pilgrimage would have become a yearly obligation, and hence unbearable. He then went on to say:

³⁰ Dārimī, I, no. 120 (*Muqaddima*, 17); Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 136.

³¹ Sayf ibn ʿUmar, 18 (no. 21).

³² Ibn Māja, I, no. 56 (*Muqaddima*, 8); *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, I, 185 (from al-Bazzār).

³³ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, no. 814.

³⁴ On this tradition see Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 80. Cf. Kister, “*Haddithū*”, 232.

³⁵ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, no. 318.

Leave me alone as long as I leave you alone (i.e. do not ask questions about matters not mentioned by me). Those who were before you perished because they asked their prophets too many questions and disagreed with them. When I command you to do something, just do your best to comply, and when I prohibit you from doing something, just stop doing it.

The version of Abū Hurayra gained wide circulation in *ḥadīth* compilations,³⁶ and there are also short versions which do not refer to pilgrimage in particular; these are reported by Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān (Yemeni, d. AH 101)³⁷ as well as by Abū Hurayra.³⁸

The same statement of the Prophet against queries concerning prescribed duties was built into the exegesis of Sūrat al-Māʿida (5):101–102. Here the Qurʾān states that “people before you” asked certain questions and afterwards they disbelieved [in the answers]; the Qurʾān forbids the Muslim believers to ask questions that might vex them if they were answered. The commentators explain that the passage refers to the Children of Israel, who asked of Jesus the son of Mary to perform the miracle of the Table for them, but disbelieved in it later on.³⁹ Some Qurʾān commentators recorded for this verse the above *halaka* statement of Abū Hurayra,⁴⁰ as well as similar versions of Abū Umāma⁴¹ and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.⁴²

A non-prophetic *halaka* statement to the same effect is also available. The Shiʿi Sālim ibn Abī Ḥafṣa al-ʿIjlī (Kūfan, d. ca. AH 140) states:

³⁶ Muslim, IV, 102 (15, *Bāb farq al-ḥajj marratan fī l-ʿumri*); Nasāʿi, *Kubrā*, II, no. 3598 (28:1); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 508. For other situations see Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 503; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XIV, no. 6245.

³⁷ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, no. 20373.

³⁸ Hammām ibn Munabbih, *al-Ṣaḥīfa ʿan Abī Hurayra*, no. 32; ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, nos. 20372, 20374; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 117 (96:2); Muslim, VII, 91–92 (43, *Bāb tawqīrihi (s) wa-tark ikthār suʿālihi*); Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VII, no. 2819 (39:17); Ibn Māja, I, no. 2 (*Muqaddima*, 1); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 247, 258, 313, 428, 447–48, 457 (*ahl al-kitāb*), 467, 482, 495, 517; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, I, nos. 284–86; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, nos. 18, 19, 21; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 141.

³⁹ Muqātil, I, 509; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VII, 54, 56.

⁴⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VII, 53.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, VII, 53.

⁴² Huwwārī, I, 502.

“Those who were before you investigated and inquired (*bahathū wa-naqqarū*), till they were lost in the wilderness (*tāhū*).”⁴³

The same *halaka* statement was adduced by °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī l-Zinād (Medinan, d. AH 174) against the ways of “the people of evil inclinations” (*ahl al-ahwāʾ*), meaning heretics; he defines them as those who delve in debates, investigations and *raʾy*, and falsify the Qurʾānic *taʾwīl* and the *sunan* of the Prophet. The traditionist says that the best Muslims of the first generations warned against such inquisitive persons. He argues further that since the Prophet already prohibited queries at a time when people knew only one per cent of what they know today, the heretics of today are all the more astray, because they dabble in individual thinking instead of adhering to the *sunan*. To support his arguments, he adduces the above Prophetic utterance demanding unquestioned obedience to Muḥammad, with the *halaka* statement that was linked to it.⁴⁴

Ghuluww

Worthless and impertinent inquiries are sometimes labelled *al-ghuluww fi l-dīn*: “excessive observance of religion”. This is already condemned in Qurʾānic anti-Christian passages,⁴⁵ and is usually explained as pertaining to investigations into matters of religion and applying oneself to the discovery of their causes, especially regarding the practical rites and ceremonies.⁴⁶ A *halaka* statement against *ghuluww* is again built into a story about the pilgrimage, as related by Abū l-°Āliya, Rufay° ibn Mihrān (Baṣran, d. AH 90). This time it deals with the rite known as *ramy*, that is, throwing small pebbles at the three stone-heaps (*jamarāt*) in Minā. Ibn °Abbās accompanies the Prophet, who asks him to fetch such pebbles, and the Prophet exhibits them to the believers, stating: “Throw pebbles like these [and not bigger ones—U.R.]”. He then goes on to announce a *halaka* statement: “Beware of *ghuluww* in religion, because it brought perdition upon those who were before you.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 308.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, II, no. 658.

⁴⁵ 5:77; 4:171.

⁴⁶ Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. *gh.l.w.*

⁴⁷ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 215, 347; Ibn Māja, II, no. 3029 (25:63); Nasāʾi, *Kubrā*, II, no.

Storytelling and Monasticism

There are other phenomena showing deviation from the correct way to implement the Qurʾān, which involve the adoption of alternative origins of guidance other than the *sunna*. These too became targets for *halaka* statements. Such alternative origins are ex-Qurʾānic texts that were created under clear Jewish–Christian influence, including stories (*qiṣaṣ*) disseminated by storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*)⁴⁸ who derived their material from the Jews. The *halaka* statement was levelled at them, thus turning their art into an origin of cataclysm. The relevant tradition is related on the authority of the Companion Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt (d. AH 37), as quoted by the Kūfan ʿAbdallāh ibn Abi l-Hudhayl. In it the Prophet says that when the Children of Israel perished, they were practising storytelling.⁴⁹

Searching for guidance in non-Arab sources could lead the believers to persons of religious and moral authority, such as Christian hermits (*ruhbān*, sing. *rāhib*). The *halaka* statement was employed to diminish their influence with Muslims practising asceticism (*zuhd*).⁵⁰ The Prophet is said to have stated: “When transgressors (*fussāq*) take up storytelling and my community follows the way of the hermits, it is time for you to escape from this world!” Someone asked: “What is the way of the hermits?” The Prophet: “They (i.e. the Muslims) will imitate their outer appearance and their zealous devotion.”⁵¹ This is not an explicit *halaka* statement but the idea is the same, namely, that imitating hermits as well as storytelling portend the end of the world.

Apocrypha

More versions of the *halaka* statement are aimed at apocryphal writings of Jewish origin which Muslims used as alternative sources for guidance.

4063 (28:221).

⁴⁸ Cf. Khalil Athamina, “Al-Qaṣaṣ: Its Development, Religious Origin and Its Socio–Political Impact on Early Muslim Society”, *Studia Islamica* 76 (1992), 53–74.

⁴⁹ *Lammā halakū qaṣṣū*. See Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, IV, no. 3705; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, IV, 362; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, I, 194 (Ṭabarānī).

⁵⁰ On the relationship between Islamic asceticism and Christian monasticism see Livne-Kafri, “Early Muslim Ascetics”, 105–129.

⁵¹ Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 228.

Reliance on these kinds of texts is condemned by the Qurʾān. Sūrat al-Baqara (2):79 bemoans those “who write the book with their own hands claiming that it is of God, in order to sell it at a small price....”⁵² The Kūfan al-Suddī (d. AH 128) says that the verse refers to Jews who composed a book and sold it to the Arabs at a low price, telling them that it was a book of God.⁵³

The *halaka* statement condemning these writings appears in traditions of Kūfan provenance which are again attributed to ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd.⁵⁴ The Kūfan Abū l-Shaʿthāʾ relates that Ibn Masʿūd was shown a book in which Qurʾānic phrases were used, such as *subhāna llāh*, *al-ḥamdu li-llāh*, *lā ilāha illā llāh*, *allāhu akbar*, and so on. He said: “What this book contains is nothing but innovation (*bidʿa*), dissension (*fitna*) and error. Such books brought perdition (*ahlaka*) upon those before you.”⁵⁵ In another version by Murra ibn Sharāḥīl al-Hamdānī (Kūfan, d. AH 76), Ibn Masʿūd inspects a book which has been brought from Syria. He then plunges it into water and erases what is written in it, saying: “Those before you perished because they followed such books and abandoned their sacred Book”. The narrator adds a remark of his own, to the effect that Ibn Masʿūd did so because the book was of the People of the Book and not a Qurʾān or a *sunna* (i.e. *ḥadīth* text).⁵⁶ In the version related by Ibrāhīm al-Taymī (Kūfan, d. AH 92), the *halaka* statement indeed refers to the People of the Book; Ibn Masʿūd says about them that they perished because they took interest in the books of their scholars and abandoned the Book of God.⁵⁷ A similar statement is attributed to the caliph ʿUmar, who is said to have been shown a book found in al-Ma-

⁵² On the interpretation of this verse see Andrew Rippin, “The Function of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* in Qurʾānic Exegesis”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51 (1988), 15–16.

⁵³ Ibn Abi Ḥātim, I, 154 (no. 806). Cf. Kister, “*Ḥaddithū*”, 238.

⁵⁴ For the present traditions about him cf. Cook, “‘Anān and Islam”, 174; *idem*, “The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam”, *Arabica* 44 (1997), 482, 506 (similar scenes in Jewish sources).

⁵⁵ Dārimī, I, no. 479 (*Muqaddima*, 42). The *isnād*: al-Ashʿath ibn Abi l-Shaʿthāʾ (Kūfan, d. AH 125) ← his father ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd.

⁵⁶ Dārimī, I, no. 477 (*Muqaddima*, 42).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I, no. 469 (*Muqaddima*, 42).

dā³in.⁵⁸ In a Meccan tradition of Yahyā ibn Ja^cda (Qurashī Successor), the Prophet himself is said to have seen such an apocryphal text inscribed on a wide shoulder-blade. It contained passages copied by Muslims from Jewish sources, and the Prophet says that some people (i.e. the Jews) already erred enough when they abandoned the revelations of their prophets and turned to other texts instead.⁵⁹

Writing Down of the *Ḥadīth*

The *halaka* statement was employed not only against apocryphal writings, but also against written *ḥadīth*. At first sight this seems confusing because the *ḥadīth* is the documentation of Muḥammad's *sunna*, but the objection here is not to the *ḥadīth* as such, only to the technique of its preservation in writing. That Muslims were opposed at a certain stage to committing *ḥadīth* to writing is a fact noticed long ago by Islamists,⁶⁰ and they have suggested various plausible reasons why Muslims objected to written *ḥadīth*.⁶¹ However, the point that concerns us here is only the employment of the *halaka* statement to express this objection. This seems to indicate that the written *ḥadīth* seemed like a Jewish product to Muslims, because it resembled the Jewish Mishnah.⁶² The occurrence of the *halaka* statement in this context seems to indicate an Islamic awareness of the campaign of Talmudic scholars against the writing down of the Oral Torah, as well as an Islamic wish to retain the exclusive status of the Qur^ʿān as a written book of God.⁶³

⁵⁸ *Kanz*, I, no. 1631. Quoted in Kister, "*Ḥaddithū*", 235.

⁵⁹ Dārimī, I, no. 478 (*Muqaddima*, 42); Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXI, 6 (on 29:51); Zajjāj, IV, 172; Samarqandī, II, 541; Māwardī, *Nukat*, IV, 288–89. See also Kister, "*Ḥaddithū*", 235. Cf. Ṭabarānī, *Awsaṭ*, VI, no. 5544.

⁶⁰ E.g. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 181–88; Gregor Schoeler, "Die Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im früheren Islam", *Der Islam* 62 (1985), 201–30; *idem*, "Mündliche Thorah und Ḥadīṭ: Überlieferung, Schreibverbot, Redaktion", *Der Islam* 66 (1989), 213–51; Cook, "Opponents".

⁶¹ See a summary of the views in Cook, "Opponents", 491–98.

⁶² The parallelism between Oral Torah and *ḥadīth* has been recently re-examined in Schoeler, "Mündliche Thorah", 213–27. For references about the Mishnah in Islamic sources see Cook, "Opponents", 502–503.

⁶³ For the Talmudic references concerning the reaction against writing down the Oral

The relevant *halaka* statements concerning written *ḥadīth* are numerous.⁶⁴ In one of them, circulated on the authority of Abū Hurayra, the Prophet says: “The communities before you were led astray (*ḍalla*) only because of the books they wrote down apart from the Book of God”. The Prophet is said to have uttered this statement after he saw people writing down his own *ḥadīths*.⁶⁵ Similarly, Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr (Kūfan, d. AH 95) reports that Ibn ‘Abbās prohibited the writing down of traditions (*al-‘ilm*), saying that “those before you” were led astray (*ḍalla*) because of their books.⁶⁶ The caliph ‘Umar too reportedly did not write down traditional knowledge (*al-sunan*), because he remembered the past communities that had written it, and thus abandoned the book of God.⁶⁷ Jābir ibn ‘Abdallāh (Medinan Companion, d. AH 77) relates that ‘Alī ordered erasure of the written text in all the extant books, saying that other peoples (*al-nās*) perished because they followed the [written] *ḥadīths* of their scholars and abandoned the book of their Lord.⁶⁸ Muḥammad ibn Sirīn (Baṣran, d. AH 110) likewise declared that the Children of Israel had perished because of books they inherited from their ancestors.⁶⁹ In another version he states that “those before you” were lost (*tāha*, var. *ḍalla*) because of books.⁷⁰ The same message was also read into the story about Ibn Mas‘ūd and the apocryphal books. In a further version transmitted by al-Aswad ibn Hilāl al-Muḥāribī (Kūfan, d. AH 84), Ibn Mas‘ūd erases and burns a scroll (*ṣaḥīfa*) containing *ḥadīth*, and says that the People of the

Torah, see Cook, “Opponents”, 498–500.

⁶⁴ They are quoted in detail *ibid.*, 501.

⁶⁵ The tradition is quoted in Kister, “*Haddithū*”, 218–19, from al-Khaṭīb al-Bagh-dādī’s *Taqyīd al-‘ilm*. And see also Schoeler, “Mündliche Thorah”, 221.

⁶⁶ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi‘ bayān al-‘ilm*, I, 65.

⁶⁷ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, no. 20484. The *isnād*: Ma‘mar ← al-Zuhri ← ‘Urwā ← ‘Umar. See also Ibn Sa‘d, III, 286–87; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi‘ bayān al-‘ilm*, I, 64. And see Cook, “Opponents”, 502.

⁶⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi‘ bayān al-‘ilm*, I, 63–64. The *isnād*: Abū Usāma Ḥammād ibn Usāma (Kūfan, d. AH 201) ← Shu‘ba ibn al-Ḥajjāj (Baṣran, d. AH 160) ← Jābir ← ‘Alī.

⁶⁹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi‘ bayān al-‘ilm*, I, 65. Quoted in Cook, “Opponents”, 501.

⁷⁰ Ibn Sa‘d, VII, 194. Quoted in Cook, “Opponents”, 445 n. 58.

Book perished because of such books, for the sake of which they had abandoned the Book of God.⁷¹

In short, written *ḥadīth* too was pinpointed as a sign of assimilation. But this could not remain an evil phenomenon, and the technique of writing soon acquired the necessary legitimation in the field of religious guidance, as indicated by the present written and printed form of *ḥadīth*.

Moral and Social Disintegration

The scope of the *halaka* statement was eventually expanded to include aspects of assimilation in various fields of social life. In one tradition, the Prophet addresses the inspectors of weights and measurements, saying: “You have been appointed to take care of two things for which the communities that were before you perished”.⁷² Cheating in weights and measures is an offence attributed in the Qurʾān to the ancients. For example, the prophet Shuʿayb appears in the Qurʾān as warning his people not to cheat in measures (*kayl*) and weights (*mizān*),⁷³ and this seems to be the origin of the idea that the ancients perished because of this sin.

However, other *halaka* statements expand the scope of sin to cases not explicitly mentioned in the Qurʾānic history of the previous communities. Thus, in a tradition of Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh the Prophet says:

Beware of oppression (*zulm*), because it is the darkness (*zulumāt*) of the Day of Resurrection; beware of stinginess (*shuḥḥ*), because it has brought perdition (*ahlaka*) upon those who were before you; it drove them into bloodshed and felony.⁷⁴

Similar statements of the Prophet were circulated on the authority of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr⁷⁵ and Abū Hurayra.⁷⁶

Some *halaka* statements dealing with social injustice were built into scenes of specific events in the Prophet’s life. In a widely current tradi-

⁷¹ Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, I, 65.

⁷² Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, IV, no. 1235 (12:9).

⁷³ 7:85; 11:84–85; 26:181–82.

⁷⁴ Muslim, VIII, 18 (45, *Bāb taḥrīm al-zulm*); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 323.

⁷⁵ Abū Dāwūd, I, 395 (9:46); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 159–160, 191, 195.

⁷⁶ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 431.

tion of ʿĀʾisha, as quoted by ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr, it is related that upon the conquest of Mecca (8/630), a noble woman of Quraysh (of the Banū Makhzūm) who used to steal was sentenced to having her hand cut off. Her relatives appealed to the Prophet, but he insisted on the penalty, saying: “Those before you only perished because they exempted noble thieves from punishment, but punishment was meted out whenever a common person was caught stealing.”⁷⁷ In some versions, the previous generations are referred to as “Children of Israel”.⁷⁸

Luxury

Not only sins, but various modes of extravagant behaviour became the subject of *halaka* statements, such as doing women’s hair in a particular fashion, or wearing wigs, or using high heels, all of which were regarded as Jewish customs.⁷⁹ The *halaka* statement was eventually applied to the various aspects of corruption caused by prosperity and luxurious life led by conceited conquerors imitating the cultural traditions and moral standards of the non-Arab provinces. This is the case in a widely current Medinan tradition of the Anṣārī Companion ʿAmr ibn ʿAwf, in which the Prophet predicts that the Muslims will possess a large amount of wealth coming from the conquered countries, but warns them that this richness will lead them to compete and envy each other, and it will cause them to perish,⁸⁰ as it brought perdition on those before them.⁸¹ A similar idea is expressed in a tradition of the Companion al-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām (d. AH 36) in which the Prophet tells the Muslims that they are about to be

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, 162; Dārimī, II, no. 2302 (13:5); Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 213 (60:54); V, 192 (64:53); VIII, 199 (86:11, 12); Muslim, V, 114 (29, *Bāb qaṭʿi l-sāriqi l-sharif*); Abū Dāwūd, II, 445 (37:4); Ibn Māja, II, no. 2547 (20:6); Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, IV, no. 1452 (15:6); Nasāʾi, *Kubrā*, IV, nos. 7385–86, 7388–89 (69:11).

⁷⁸ Nasāʾi, *Kubrā*, IV, nos. 7382, 7384, 7387 (69:11).

⁷⁹ S.D. Goitein, “Banū Isrāʾīl”, *ET*², I, 1021.

⁸⁰ *Wa-tuḥlikukum*. A milder variant: *wa-tuḥlikum*: “will distract you”.

⁸¹ Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 117–18 (58:1); V, 108 (64:12); VIII, 112 (81:7); Muslim, VIII, 212 (53, tr. no. 6); Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VII, no. 2580 (35:28); Ibn Māja, II, no. 3997 (36:18); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 137. The *isnād*: ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr ← al-Miswar ibn Makhrama (Medinan Companion, d. AH 64) ← ʿAmr ibn ʿAwf ← Prophet.

infected with the “disease” (*dāʿ*) of the communities who were before them. This is envy and hatred (*al-ḥasad wa-l-baghdāʿ*).⁸²

In short, almost every sign of religious and social disintegration arising from contacts between Arabs and non-Arabs could be condemned by a *halaka* statement, which again reflects the fear of assimilation and the quest for a distinctive Islamic identity.

The *Halaka* Statement in Qurʾān Exegesis

Muslim tradition has read the *halaka* statement into the Qurʾān itself, and thus the apocalyptic warning of the fate of previous communities gained divine authority. The punishment of which the *halaka* statement warns here is the result of schisms and deviation from the *jamāʿa*. Hence, schisms again emerge as the major sin that represents assimilation of Muslims with others.

The verses into which the message of the *halaka* statement was built are specified in a tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās as quoted by the Syrian ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭalḥa (d. AH 143) and recorded by al-Ājurri.⁸³ Ibn ʿAbbās says:

God commanded the believers to adhere to the *jamāʿa* and forbade them to disagree and to divide. He told them that the only reasons why those who were before them perished were controversy (*mirāʿ*) and disputes over God’s religion.

Ibn ʿAbbās’ statement is made as a commentary on a group of Qurʾānic verses listed at the beginning of his statement. The verses warn the believers against conditions of division, which are interpreted as gleaned from the history of the Jews and the Christians. The reading of the *halaka* statement into their exegesis again demonstrates the notion that phenomena of schism in Islamic society represent Israelite modes of sin which have already led them to a cataclysmic disaster. These phenomena are again such as revolve around scriptures, which brings out once more the parallelism between the Bible and the Qurʾān as bases for schism.

The version recorded by al-Ājurri contains the longest list, with a shorter one appearing in a parallel version of the same interpretation as

⁸² Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 164–65, 167.

⁸³ Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, 13. See Lālikāʿi, I, no. 212.

recorded by al-Ṭabarī.⁸⁴ The verses appearing on the list of al-Ājurri are the following:

1. *Sūrat al-Rūm (30):32*

This verse warns the believers against being like the *mushrikūn* (“polytheists”) who divided (*farraqū*) their religion and became “parties” (*shiyaʿ*). The verse was explained by Qatāda ibn Diʿāma as referring to the Jews and the Christians,⁸⁵ and the *halaka* statement which Ibn ʿAbbās has linked to it turns the sin of schism into the reason for their perdition.

2. *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3):105*

This verse states: “Do not be like those who split (*tafarraqū*) and disagreed (*ikhtalafū*)...” Here too an explicit allusion is made to the sin of schism committed by the ancients, and they are again said to stand for the Jews and the Christians.⁸⁶ The Qurʾānic warning against following their example is a good excuse to adduce a *halaka* statement, which is indeed attached to this verse not only in the version of al-Ājurri, but also in that recorded by al-Ṭabarī.⁸⁷

In later *tafsīr* works, explicit statements may be found stressing the anti-heretic implication of this verse. Al-Zamakhsharī declares that the verse refers to the innovators of this community, such as al-Mushabbihā, al-Mujabbira and al-Ḥashwiyya.⁸⁸

3. *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (3):7*

This is the *muḥkamāt/mutashābihāt* passage which deals with dissent based on scripture. It is directed against those who try to use the Qurʾānic *mutashābihāt* to spread dissension (*fitna*). As seen above,⁸⁹ the earliest commentaries identified them with the Jews or the Christians, and later

⁸⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, V, 212 (on Qurʾān 4:140).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, XXI, 28.

⁸⁶ E.g. Muqātil, I, 293–94; Huwwārī, I, 306; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IV, 26; Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (MS Tel Aviv), 141; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzil*, I, 527.

⁸⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IV, 26.

⁸⁸ Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 453.

⁸⁹ Above, 147–50.

on readapted the verse to refer to the Khawārij. The link between the *halaka* statement and this verse, as established in the tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās, turns the reliance on *mutashābihāt*—of which the Khawārij were blamed—into a fatal pursuance which already brought perdition to previous communities.

In fact, the *halaka* statement is linked to this verse not only in the list preceding the tradition of Ibn ʿAbbās, but also in a tradition of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ which again deals with the sin of “beating” different parts of scripture against each other. In the present version, the Prophet hears the Muslims quarrel about the Qurʾān, and says:

This is the very reason why the communities who were before you perished; they disagreed with their prophets and beat parts of scripture against other parts of it. The Qurʾān was not revealed for that purpose, because all its parts support one another. Act according to the parts that are clear to you, and believe in the parts that are not clear to you (*mā tashābaha ʿalaykum*).⁹⁰

The clause *mā tashābaha ʿalaykum* evidently draws on the Qurʾānic *muḥkamāt/mutashābihāt* passage, and thus improper use of the *mutashābihāt* has become a sin which the *halaka* statement turned into a fatal aspect of assimilation.

4. *Sūrat al-Muʾminūn* (23):53

This verse accuses certain people of dividing “their affair” (*amrahum*) among themselves into *zūbur* (“scriptures”). The exegetes understand it as an allusion to sectarian scriptures of the People of the Book.⁹¹ The association of this verse with the *halaka* statement, as established in the above interpretation of Ibn ʿAbbās, repeats the warning to the Muslims not to have recourse to apocryphal scriptures.

5. *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* (4):140

In this verse, the believers are requested to part company with those who deny and ridicule the “signs” (*āyāt*) of God. The verse was taken as

⁹⁰ Ibn Saʿd, IV, 192; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 6 (from Ibn Saʿd).

⁹¹ E.g. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XVIII, 23.

referring to heretics deviating from the Qurʾānic rulings,⁹² and has been included in the list preceding the interpretation of Ibn ʿAbbās, as recorded both by al-Ājurri and al-Ṭabari.⁹³ Its association with the *halaka* statement has turned this verse into another divine warning against the fatal results of following heretical trends preserving Jewish–Christian modes of schism.

6. *Sūrat al-Shūrā* (42):13

Here it is stated that the religion that has been prescribed to the believers is the same as that prescribed to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. To all the same request was made: “Follow the religion and do not be divided.” In both al-Ājurri and al-Ṭabari,⁹⁴ the verse is included in the list to which the above statement of Ibn ʿAbbās is attached, thus providing the believers with another Qurʾānic warning of the fate of the ancients for committing the sin of schism.

7. *Sūrat al-Anʿām* (6):153

This verse reads:

This is My way (*ṣirāṭī*), upright, so follow it. Do not follow [other] paths (*subul*), lest they separate you from His way.

The verse is attached to the *halaka* statement of Ibn ʿAbbās only in al-Ṭabari.⁹⁵ It lacks any explicit reference to past communities, but its association with the *halaka* statement has read into it the same warning of the fate of the ancients that awaits the Muslims, unless they adhere to the upright way. The upright way (*ṣirāṭ*) is perceived as the *sunna* and the *jamāʿa*, because according to Mujāhid, the other “paths” (*subul*) represent innovations and suspicious dogmas (*al-bidaʿ wa-l-shubuhāt*).⁹⁶

⁹² E.g. Samarqandi, *Tafsīr*, I, 398.

⁹³ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, V, 212.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 212.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, 65. See also V, 212.

⁹⁶ Mujāhid, I, 227; Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, VIII, 65; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Īmān*, I, no. 134 (Mujāhid).

Hence, the various contexts in which the *halaka* statement appears demonstrate crucial aspects of assimilation with others which the statement was designed to diminish, thus ensuring for the believers a distinctive Islamic identity. As is the case with the *firaq* tradition and the *sunna* statement, here too schism and dissension revolving around the Qur^ʿān emerge as the main sign of assimilation. The *halaka* statement brings the fear of assimilation to its utmost extreme. However, fear of assimilation was not the only reason why Islamic tradition reminded the believers of the calamities suffered by previous communities, and in the case of the plague, for instance, other theological and ethical considerations gave rise to traditions describing the fate of the ancients. These remain beyond the scope of the present study.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ See Lawrence I. Conrad, "Epidemic and Disease in Formal and Popular Thought in Early Islamic Society", in Terence Ranger and Paul Slack, eds., *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence* (Cambridge, 1992), 91.

CHAPTER 10

QUR'ĀNIC METAMORPHOSIS: THE APES AND THE PIGS

The *halaka* statement is vague in that it usually does not specify the nature of the apocalyptic calamity shared by the Muslims and the previous communities. However, there is another set of traditions in which this calamity is described in the most specific terms and is specified as transformation into apes and pigs.¹ This kind of punishment is explicitly Qur'ānic, and the traditions which threaten the Muslims with this fate again exemplify the ever-growing role of the Qur'ān as a source for historical models and moral lessons. The traditions using the Qur'ānic model of the punitive transformation into apes and pigs were also designed to denounce the assimilation of the Muslims to other communities.

The Qur'ānic Setting

In the Qur'ān, transformation into apes and pigs occurs as punishment for violating the Sabbath² and signals the wrath of God.³ The Qur'ān itself does not specify to whom this punishment was meted out, but Muslim exegetes agree that they were the Children of Israel, or more specifically, the Jews (*Yahūd*).⁴

¹ Ilse Lichtenstaedter, "And Become Ye Accursed Apes", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991), 153–75; Michael Cook, "Early Muslim Dietary Law", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), 222–23.

² Qur'ān 2:65; 7:166.

³ Qur'ān 5:60.

⁴ E.g. Mujāhid, I, 199 (*Yahūd*); Muqātil, I, 488 (*Yahūd*); Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, VI, 190 (*Banū Isrā'īl*). And see also Ibn Abi l-Dunyā, 'Uqūbāt, nos. 226–30.

Verses that do not explicitly mention apes and pigs were also linked by Qurʾān exegetes to the same punitive transformation. For example, in *Sūrat al-Māʾida* (5):78–79, it is stated that the unbelievers among the Children of Israel were “cursed” by the tongue of David and Jesus, because they “forbade not one another any evil act (*munkar*) that they committed”. A few verses earlier (v. 60), the Qurʾān addresses the People of the Book, saying that God cursed some people by turning them into apes and pigs. This led the exegetes to explain the curse of v. 78 in the same manner. They say that in David’s time the sinners became apes (Jews), and in Jesus’ time they were transformed into pigs (Christians).⁵ A Shiʿi tradition says that the Jews killed 120 prophets of the house of David, and God therefore turned them into apes, pigs and other species.⁶ This happened in the time of Asaph son of Berechiah, who according to the Old Testament was a seer in the time of David.⁷ The event in the time of Jesus is believed to have been connected with the miracle of the Table mentioned in the same *sūra*.⁸ The exegetes say that the Children of Israel were transformed into pigs, or into apes and pigs, because they denied the miracle of the Table,⁹ or denied the poor the food of the Table,¹⁰ or because they kept the remains of the food for the next day.¹¹ The latter sin is identical with the Biblical sin committed by the sceptic Children of Israel with the remains of the manna.¹²

⁵ E.g. Muqātil, I, 496; Ṭabari, *Tafsir*, VI, 205; Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VIII, 412; Huwwāri, I, 511, 456; Qummi, I, 183; Kulini, VIII, no. 240.

⁶ Ps.-Masʿūdī, *Ithbāt*, 80.

⁷ E.g. 1 Chronicles 6:24, 25:2; 2 Chronicles 29:30.

⁸ Qurʾān 5:112–15.

⁹ Muqātil, I, 519; Samarqandī, *Tafsir*, I, 468; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzil*, II, 326, 327, 328; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masir*, II, 462; Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, VI, 369, 371–72; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 348.

¹⁰ Qummi, I, 197; Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, VI, 243.

¹¹ Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VIII, 433 (44, *Sūra* 5); Huwwāri, I, 511; Ṭabari, *Tafsir*, VII, 87; Wāḥidī, *Wasīf*, II, 247; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masir*, II, 462; Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, VI, 372; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, II, 117; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 348.

¹² Exodus 12:10, 16:20. Cf. Leviticus 22:30.

Contemporary Jews as Apes and Pigs

The notion that the Children of Israel were punished by being transformed into apes and pigs has persisted outside the realm of the Qur^ʿān and *tafsīr*. Jews in particular have always been associated with apes and pigs in traditions aimed at disparaging them as enemies of Islam. In some of these traditions, the Prophet himself is involved. Most prevalent in the earliest compilations of Muḥammad’s biography is the story that in response to insults against Muḥammad by the Medinan Jews of the Banū Qurayza, the Prophet addressed them as “brothers of apes and pigs”. The tradition carefully goes on to say that the astonished Jews said that the Prophet had never before said such rude things.¹³ In another similar tradition, the Jews insult the Prophet (by distorting the greeting *al-salāmu* ‘*alayka*: “Peace be upon you”, saying instead *al-sāmu* ‘*alayka*: “Death be upon you”), and this time it is ‘Ā’isha, Muḥammad’s young wife, who responds by calling them “brothers of apes and pigs”. The Prophet is displeased with her rudeness (but does not deny the truth of her words).¹⁴

The association of Jews and Christians with apes and pigs is well known, but it is less known that the same fate of punitive transformation into these species awaits Muslims as well. The following discussion will trace the process by which this Qur^ʿānic type of Israelite punishment became an Islamic one. It will become clear that this Israelite punishment was not shifted to Muslim sinners at random, but rather to sinners whose deeds have a Jewish or a Christian connotation, which therefore signals assimilation deserving punishment.

Eschatological *Maskh*

As a Qur^ʿānic punishment inflicted on Jews and Christians, transformation into apes and pigs is an event of the historical past. With the adapta-

¹³ Ibn Hishām, III, 245; Wāqidi, II, 499–500; Ibn Sa’d, II, 77; Ibn Abi l-Sinān, fol. 58a.

¹⁴ The tradition is attributed to several authorities. Anas ibn Mālik (Baṣran Companion, d. AH 91–95): Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 241; Muḥammad ibn al-Ash’ath ibn Qays (Kūfan, d. AH 66): Aḥmad, *Musnad*, VI, 134–35; Abū Ṣāliḥ (Dhakwān, *mawlā* of Juwayriyya, Medinan, d. AH 101): Ibn Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, no. 574.

tion of the theme to the Muslims, it changed from historical into apocalyptic; in this new form, it became associated with the idea of *maskh*—the usual Arabic term for metamorphosis. However, the association of the idea of transformation into apes and pigs with the term *maskh* is secondary. In the Qurʾānic sphere, this punishment is not yet described as *maskh* at all.

The root *m.s.kh.* is employed in the Qurʾān once, but not in the context of apes and pigs. It occurs in an eschatological passage (36:63–67) describing the day on which the [non-Muslim] sinners will be shown the Hell (*jahannam*) that was promised to them. On that day, God will set a seal on their mouths, and if God wills, he will obliterate their eyes, so that they cannot find their way on the path (*ṣirāt*); or, He may change them (*la-masakhnāhum*) where they are, so that they will be unable to push on or pull back.

The earliest Qurʾān exegetes differ as to the exact significance of the eschatological *maskh* awaiting the sinners and suggest different possibilities: changing them into stones,¹⁵ making them lame, or crippled in the legs and the arms (*kush*),¹⁶ or changing their outer appearance (*khalq*),¹⁷ or destroying (*ahlaka*) them where they stand.¹⁸ Two basic meanings can be detected here—transformation (including deformation),

¹⁵ Muqātil, III, 584; Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, III, 105; Wāḥidī, *Wasīf*, III, 518; Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, IV, 550; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, III, 329; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, VII, 33; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III, 578; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, V, 268. Shiʿī *tafsīr*: Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, XXIII, 37.

¹⁶ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, II, 145. The *isnād*: ʿAbd al-Razzāq ← Maʿmar ← Qatāda. See also Suyūṭī, *Durr*, V, 268. The same sense is also imparted in the interpretation of *masakhahu* as *aqʿadahu*. See Huwwārī, III, 439; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXIII, 18 (al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatāda); Māwardī, *Nukat*, V, 29; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, III, 329; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, VII, 33; Qurtūbī, *Aḥkām*, XV, 50; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III, 578. Shiʿī *tafsīr*: Ṭūsī, *Tabyān*, VIII, 473.

¹⁷ Māwardī, *Nukat*, V, 29 (al-Suddī); Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III, 578.

¹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXIII, 18 (Ibn ʿAbbās); Māwardī, *Nukat*, V, 29; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, VII, 33; Qurtūbī, *Aḥkām*, XV, 50; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III, 578; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, V, 268. The best-known example of the changing of sinners into stones is the case of the Meccan idols Isāf and Nāʿila, who are said to have originally been a man and a woman who had intercourse inside the Kaʿba and were therefore turned into stones. See e.g. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, 9; Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *ʿUqūbāt*, nos. 304–305; Azraqī, 49, 74.

and destruction. They remind one of the Hebrew root *h.f.kh.*, which has the same range of connotations in the Bible. It signifies destruction (by overthrowing), as well as transformation.¹⁹ A variant form of the root is *a.f.k.*, which found its way into the Qurʾān in passages reflecting the Biblical story of the destruction of Sodom.²⁰

As for *m.s.kh.* in the sense of transformation, it is significant that the above exegetes offered various possibilities, but none with apes and pigs. Only relatively late Qurʾān commentaries interpreted *maskh* as metamorphosis into apes and pigs.²¹ This is a clear indication that the punishment of *maskh* awaiting the sinners in the eschatological future and the idea of transformation into apes and pigs became linked to each other at a secondary stage.

The Triple Calamity

The evidence of *ḥadīth* material seems to confirm the impression that the idea of the eschatological *maskh* was not always linked to the notion of the punitive transformation into apes and pigs. There are several traditions describing an apocalyptic *maskh* in which neither apes nor pigs are mentioned. Let us examine these traditions.

Most of the traditions about the apocalyptic *maskh* describe a triple calamity that portends the Hour, that is, the eschatological phase of world history. One of the three events of which the apocalyptic calamity consists is *maskh*, while the other two are usually *khasf* and *qadhf*. The latter two, like the event of *maskh*, have a Qurʾānic basis signifying divine retribution. The root *kh.s.f.* is used quite frequently in the Qurʾān,²² where it denotes the act of God in causing the earth to engulf the sinners, either in the historical past or in the apocalyptic future. An event of an army being swallowed up (*khasf*) on its way to Mecca is often described

¹⁹ Destruction: Genesis 19:29 (Sodom); Jonah 3:4 (Nineveh). Transformation: Exodus 7:15 (the rod of Moses).

²⁰ Qurʾān 9:70; 69:9; 53:53.

²¹ Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, III, 105 (al-Kalbī); Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, IV, 550; Zamaḥsharī, *Kashshāf*, III, 329 (Ibn ʿAbbās); Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, VII, 33 (Ibn al-Kalbī). Shiʿī *tafsīr*: Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ*, XXIII, 37. Cf. Ṭūsī, *Tabyān*, VIII, 473.

²² Qurʾān 16:45; 28:81; 29:40; 34:9; 67:16.

in apocalyptic visions alluding to civil wars, and more specifically, to the military clash in Arabia between ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr and the Umayyads.²³ The act of *qadhif* is less frequent in the Qurʾān, where it denotes the pelting of devils with shooting stars.²⁴ Sometimes another event replaces one of the three, or appears as a fourth, namely, that of *rajf*: “earthquake”. This too is a Qurʾānic apocalyptic calamity.²⁵

The earliest traditions in which the triple calamity is predicted were circulated in Syria, and mainly in Ḥimṣ. They are all recorded by Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād in his *Kitāb al-fitān*. The triple calamity is included in a series of events that are usually foreseen by the Prophet himself. They are about to happen at various stages of the history of the Islamic *umma*, and specific dates are provided, which serve to authenticate the apocalypse.

One of these traditions is quoted from three Ḥimṣī traditionists: Shariḥ ibn ʿUbayd, Abū ʿĀmir al-Hawzanī and Ḍamra ibn Ḥabīb (d. AH 130). In it the Prophet predicts disasters that the Muslims are about to incur between AH 210–300. The triple calamity (*qadhif-khasf-maskh*) will be the first.²⁶ In the tradition of Jubayr ibn Nufayr (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 75), the events predicted by the Prophet take place between AH 133 and 200. The triple calamity (pelting with stones, *khasf* and *maskh*) is scheduled to occur in AH 172.²⁷ In the Ḥimṣī tradition of the Meccan Companion ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar (d. AH 73), the Prophet does not provide dates, but merely surveys a series of anticipated earthquakes, which are accompanied in one instance by the triple calamity. This tradition also refers to the stubbornness of the Muslim sinners, who do not repent.²⁸ Finally, there is also a short non-prophetic apocalypse, transmitted by the Ḥimṣī

²³ For these traditions see Wilferd Madelung, “ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and the Mahdi”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40 (1981), 291–305; *idem*, s.v. “Mahdi”, *El*², V, 1232a. Cf. Michael Cook, “Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions”, *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1992), 32–33.

²⁴ Qurʾān 37:8.

²⁵ Qurʾān 73:14; 79:6.

²⁶ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 427. See an abridged version *ibid.*, 376.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 422.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 374. See also Suyūṭī, *Durr*, VI, 326. The *isnād*: Ḥudayr ibn Kurayb (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 129) ← Kathir ibn Murra Abū Shajara (Ḥimṣī) ← Ibn ʿUmar ← Prophet.

Artāt ibn al-Mundhir (d. AH 163), which only refers to the triple calamity. In it Artāt provides a somewhat obscure indication of the time of the event. He states that it will occur after the emergence of the *mahdī*, in the days of the Hāshimī who will behave insolently in Jerusalem.²⁹

In the apocalyptic visions that were circulated outside Syria, the triple calamity figures alone with no other disasters. Here too the *maskh* remains vague, and no mention of apes and pigs is made. These traditions are usually based on a short uniform pattern. They open with the word *yakūn*: “there will be”, and go on to specify the triple calamity. The utterance is by the Prophet in the first person, and he specifically declares that the triple calamity will occur in “my community”. Some versions of the utterance appear in certain canonical *ḥadīth* compilations. Thus, Ibn Māja (d. AH 275) has recorded in *Kitāb al-fitan* of his *Sunan* some prophetic utterances of this kind. One is quoted from the Prophet by the Companion ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ,³⁰ and the other by the Medinan Companion Sahl ibn Saʿd al-Anṣārī (d. AH 88).³¹ A third version, of ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd, provides a specific apocalyptic designation of the time of the triple calamity: “just before the Hour” (*bayna yadayi l-sāʿa*).³² There are further such versions outside the canonical compilations quoted from the Prophet by the Companions Anas ibn Mālīk³³ and Saʿid ibn Abi Rāshid.³⁴ A version of the Companion Abū Hurayra opens

²⁹ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 378. The *isnād*: al-Jarrāḥ ibn Mulayḥ (Ḥimṣi) ← Artāt ibn al-Mundhir (Ḥimṣi, d. AH 163).

³⁰ Ibn Māja, II, no. 4062 (36:29). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 163. The *isnād*: Abū l-Zubayr (Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn Tadrus, Meccan, d. AH 126) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ← Prophet.

³¹ Ibn Māja, II, no. 4060 (36:29). The *isnād*: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn Aslam (Medinan, d. AH 182) ← Abū Ḥāzīm al-Aʿraj (Salama ibn Dinār, Medinan, d. AH 140) ← Sahl ibn Saʿd ← Prophet.

³² Ibn Māja, II, no. 4059 (36:29). See also Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, VII, 121. The *isnād*: Sayyār Abū l-Ḥakam al-Wāsiṭi ← Ṭāriq ibn Shihāb (Kūfan, d. AH 82) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd ← Prophet.

³³ Abū Yaʿlā, VII, no. 3945; Dāni, *Fitan*, III, no. 338; *Kashf al-astār*, IV, no. 3404. The *isnād*: Mubārak ibn Suḥaym (Baṣran) ← ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Ṣuhayb (Baṣran, d. AH 130) ← Anas ← Prophet.

³⁴ *Kashf al-astār*, IV, no. 3402; Ibn Qāniʿ, *Ṣaḥāba*, I, nos. 305, 310; Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, VI, no. 5537. The *isnād*: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Sābiṭ (Meccan Successor) ← Saʿid ibn

with the standard formula of the traditions about the eschatological Hour: “The Hour shall not come until there is in my community *khasf* and *maskh* and *qadhf*”.³⁵

Apes and Pigs and Eschatological Maskh

The meaning of *maskh* is not any clearer in the above traditions than it is in the Qurʾān, but the range of possible interpretations is narrowed down considerably in further versions in which this term has been glossed by an explicit mention of apes and pigs. Sometimes the term is simply replaced by the statement about the apes and the pigs. This is the case in the following Syrian version of ʿAṭāʾ al-Khurasānī (d. AH 135), in which the Prophet declares: “There will be in my community *khasf* and *rajf* and apes and pigs”.³⁶ With the appearance of the apes and the pigs on the apocalyptic scene, the Israelite punishment of transformation into these species became Islamic.

Heretics

Punitive transformation into apes and pigs in the apocalyptic future has been reserved to heretics in particular who, as demonstrated in previous chapters, represented in Islamic society the major signs of assimilation to Jews and Christians. Therefore, this Israelite type of punishment suited them perfectly. Some traditions specify the exact group among the heretics which will incur the eschatological punishment of metamorphosis into apes and pigs. These are the Qadaris, and according to some traditions, this fate awaits them even before the actual resurrection. Thus, in a Ḥijāzī tradition of the Anṣārī Companion Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī,³⁷ the Prophet says that at the end of time a bride will come into her canopy (*ḥa-*

Abi Rāshid ← Prophet.

³⁵ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6759. The *isnād*: Kathir ibn Zayd (Medinan, d. AH 158) ← al-Walid ibn Rabāḥ (Medinan, d. AH 117) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

³⁶ Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 295 (from Ibn Abi l-Dunyā’s *Dhamm al-malāhī*). The *isnād*: ʿUthmān ibn ʿAṭāʾ al-Khurasānī (d. AH 155) ← his father ʿAṭāʾ al-Khurasānī ← Prophet.

³⁷ Ṭabarānī, *Awsaṭ*, VIII, no. 7146. See also Damirī, *Ḥayawān*, II, 203; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VII, 209 (from Ṭabarānī, *Awsaṭ*).

jala), where she will find her groom metamorphosed (*musikha*) into an ape because he denied *qadar*.

There is another tradition describing a similar event, but the sin for which the person has become an ape is not explicitly stated. Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān says: “What will you do if one of you goes out of his canopy to his garden (*hishsh*) and comes back metamorphosed (*wa-qad musikha*) into an ape; he will look for his family, but they will run away from him.”³⁸

As sinners doomed to metamorphosis (*maskh*) into apes and pigs, the Qadaris also became a natural target for the triple calamity in which *maskh* figures as one of the events. The triple calamity awaits the Qadaris in a lengthy Ḥijāzī tradition transmitted on the authority of the Anṣārī Companion Rāfiʿ ibn Khadij (d. ca. AH 59–74). The Prophet describes the basic tenets of the Qadaris, and emphasises that they are like the Jews and the Christians who prior to them denied the sacredness of their own scriptures and discredited whole parts of them. He then predicts the triple calamity which will strike the Qadaris, and this time it consists of *tāʿūn* (plague), *khasf* and *maskh*. The latter event is glossed by an explanation to the effect that God will metamorphose (*yamsakhu*) them into apes and pigs. In the second part of his statement, the Prophet utters a *halaka* statement saying that the main reason why the Children of Israel perished was that they denied *qadar*, the dogmatic meaning of which he proceeds to explain.³⁹

There is one more tradition in which the triple calamity is reserved for the Qadaris, but this time without an explicit mention of apes and pigs being made. This is a Medinan prophetic version of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar (d. AH 73) in which the Prophet declares: “There will be in my community (or in this community) *maskh* and *khasf* and *qadhf*”. This is glossed by the words: “and this will happen among the people of *qadar*”.⁴⁰ The

³⁸ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *ʿUqūbāt*, no. 284 (printed: *ḥabshihi*); Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 349.

³⁹ Ājurri, *Shariʿa*, no. 363; Firyābī, *Qadar*, nos. 223–25; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, IV, no. 4270; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, VII, 200–201. The *isnād*: ʿAmr ibn Shuʿayb (Medinan, d. AH 118) ← Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (Medinan, d. AH 94) ← Rāfiʿ ibn Khadij ← Prophet. For another version see Lālikāʿi, II, no. 1100.

⁴⁰ Ibn Māja, II, no. 4061 (36:29); Tirmidhi/*Tuhfa*, VI, 367–68 (30:16). The *isnād*: Abū Ṣakhr al-Kharrāṭ (Ḥumayd ibn Ziyād, Medinan, d. AH 189) ← Nāfiʿ the *mawlā* of

gloss is also available in an extended version which also includes the *zanādiqa*.⁴¹ With such a gloss, the term *maskh* has evidently come to mean transformation into apes and pigs.

Baṣra

The apocalyptic curse of becoming apes and pigs was applied not only to groups, but to places as well. As seen above,⁴² Baṣra was renowned for the prevalence of Qadarī thinking; it was therefore presented as an area in which people were particularly liable to become apes and pigs. The triple calamity was linked to this place too. Thus, the Prophet tells Anas ibn Mālīk that the Baṣrans will incur *khasf* and *qadhif* and *rajf*, and that some people will go to bed and wake up in the morning as apes and pigs.⁴³ Another version of the same warning does not mention apes and pigs, but the term *maskh* that emerges in their place evidently conveys the idea. The Prophet warns Anas not to enter the public places in Baṣra, telling him that at the end of days some of its inhabitants will suffer *khasf* and *maskh* and *qadhif*. This will occur when there is no more justice there, and when oppression, prostitution and false testimony prevail.⁴⁴ That the Baṣrans will incur such calamities for taking to Qadarism is stated explicitly in a tradition of ʿAlī in which he says that when Qadarīs become numerous in Baṣra, *maskh* will befall them.⁴⁵

Heretics are also associated with apes and pigs outside the apocalyptic context, in traditions in which they rank even lower than apes and pigs. The Baṣran Abū l-Jawzāʾ (Aws ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Rabaʿī, d. AH 83) states that to have apes and pigs as neighbours is more desirable to him than

Ibn ʿUmar (Medinan, d. AH 117) ← Ibn ʿUmar ← Prophet. Cf. Van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīṭ und Theologie*, 124.

⁴¹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 108 (*maskh* only), 137; Firyābi, *Qadar*, no. 217; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Qadar*, II, nos. 1518, 1607, 1885; Lālikāʾī, II, no. 1135. See also *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, VII, 206. Cf. Van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīṭ und Theologie*, 124.

⁴² Above, 177–78.

⁴³ Abū Dāwūd, II, 428 (36:10).

⁴⁴ Ṭabarāni, *Awsaṭ*, VII, no. 6091. The *isnād*: ʿAbd al-Khālīq Abū Hānīʾ ← Ziyād ibn al-Abraṣ ← Anas ibn Mālīk ← Prophet.

⁴⁵ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Qadar*, II, no. 1580.

being a neighbour to heretics (*ahl al-ahwāʾ*).⁴⁶ A similar statement is reported in a Kūfan tradition on the authority of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī; he says that he would prefer to have Jews and Christians and apes and pigs as neighbours, rather than to live next to a heretic.⁴⁷

Umayyads–Yemenis–Shīʿis

The theme of the apes and the pigs was used not only against heretics, but also against other sections of early Islamic society which did not share the interests of the ruling caliphs. Among them were mainly Arabs of Yemeni descent who hoped for the fall of the Umayyads and entertained messianic expectations for the rise of leaders and redeemers of their own.⁴⁸ Their reluctance to support the Umayyads is mainly reflected in traditions of the Prophet and a number of Companions urging the people, including the Yemenis, to move to al-Shām. This journey to al-Shām is equated with Abraham’s Biblical exodus (*hijra*) to the Promised Land. The traditions call this region *muhājar Ibrāhīm*: “Abraham’s place of *hijra*”, and in them the Prophet urges the Muslims to follow in Abraham’s footsteps.⁴⁹ The request to move to al-Shām was designed to strengthen the Islamic forces defending the land against the Byzantines. This is explicitly stated in a tradition placing the requested journey to Syria in the eschatological future. It states that the believers will come “at the end of times” (*ākhirā l-zamān*)” to *muhājar Ibrāhīm*, and will fight “the children of Esau” (= the Byzantines) in Jerusalem.⁵⁰

Traditions denouncing those who refuse to come to Syria have recourse to the theme of the apes and the pigs. These people are warned that they will be forced to come to al-Shām at the end of days, where they will be resurrected with the apes and the pigs. The most explicit version is that of the Syrian Shahr ibn Ḥawshab (d. AH 100), who quotes

⁴⁶ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, nos. 466–68; *Lālikāʿi*, I, no. 231.

⁴⁷ Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: ʾImān*, II, nos. 469, 471. The *isnād*: Layth ibn Abi Sulaym (Kūfan, d. AH 143) ← anonymous ← Abū Mūsā.

⁴⁸ Cf. Suliman Bashcar, “Yemen in Early Islam: an Examination of Non-Tribal Traditions”, *Arabica* 36 (1989), 341–43.

⁴⁹ E.g. Abū Dāwūd, II, 4 (15:3). See also Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 9.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Murajjā, no. 212. And see Livne-Kafri, “Early Muslim Ascetics”, 110.

an apocalypse heard from the Prophet by ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The Prophet states that those who refrained from coming to *muhājar Ibrāhim* are the most evil ones, and they will be resurrected by a cataclysmic fire with the apes and the pigs.⁵¹ Some versions say that the fire will burn from ʿAdan, which seems to allude to the provenance of those refusing to go to al-Shām.⁵² A more detailed Ḥimṣī apocalypse of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār says that the evil ones will be resurrected in al-Shām with the apes and the pigs; they will be those who have forgotten the Qur^ʿān and the *sunna*, abandoned the worship of God, and indulged in fornication.⁵³ These versions probably imply that the ones who refuse to fight the Byzantines, and those who do not strictly adhere to the Islamic origins of guidance will be resurrected as Israelites by way of poetic justice.

The theme of the apes and the pigs, however, was also used by anti-Umayyad groups, and in this case these species have no specific Israelite connotation as they merely symbolise beastliness and brutality. The theme emerges in a series of traditions describing a dream of the Prophet in which he sees the Umayyads use his own *minbar* (“pulpit”) for their public addresses and is deeply grieved by the sight. There are numerous versions of the dream,⁵⁴ and in a Medinan one, of Abū Hurayra, the Umayyads (the Marwānids) are seen jumping up and down on Muḥammad’s *minbar* like monkeys.⁵⁵ The monkeys here illustrate the desecration of the Prophet’s *minbar* by the Umayyads. In another very rare version of Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (Medinan, d. AH 94), the Umayyads climbing the *minbar* are seen by the Prophet in the form of “apes and pigs”.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Abū Dāwūd, II, 4 (15:3). See also Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 381, 382, 383; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 84 (Ibn ʿUmar), 198–99, 209; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 81.

⁵² Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 383–84.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 379–80.

⁵⁴ E.g. Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 167 (on Sūrat al-Qadar); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 385, 522; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, VI, 509–510 (with editor’s references); Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, I, no. 1425.

⁵⁵ Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, VI, 511; Jawraqānī, *Abāṭīl*, I, nos. 236, 237; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 243. The *isnād*: al-ʿAlāʾ ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥuraqī (Medinan, d. AH 132) ← his father ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

⁵⁶ *Tārīkh Baghdād*, IX, 44; Jawraqānī, *Abāṭīl*, I, no. 238. The *isnād*: Sufyān al-Thawrī (Kūfan, d. AH 161) ← ʿAlī ibn Zayd ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Judʿān (Baṣran, d. AH

While such traditions seem to betray a Shī'ī anti-Umayyad bias, there are also anti-Shī'ī traditions in which people vilifying the caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar are turned into apes, pigs, and dogs as well.⁵⁷

Apes and Pigs and *Sunna* Statements

As seen in Chapter 8, adhering to the evil ways of the Jews and Christians was criticised by means of *sunna* statements. There are further versions of such statements in which the theme of the apes and the pigs has been included to emphasise the common fate of sin and punishment shared by Muslims and Israelites.

To begin with, apes and pigs appear in the following tradition of Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, on whose authority many *sunna* statements have been transmitted (Chapter 8). This particular tradition was recorded by 'Abd al-Razzāq:⁵⁸

You (that is, the Muslims) will follow the ways (*sunan*) of the Children of Israel [in precise symmetry], as one feather of an arrow matches another, and as one strap of a sandal matches another—if a man of the Children of Israel did this or that, a man of this community would surely do it as well.

The tradition goes on to relate that on hearing this, someone reminded Ḥudhayfa that there had been apes and pigs among the Children of Israel, and Ḥudhayfa retorted that apes and pigs would also be among this community.

This version of the statement was transmitted on the authority of Ḥudhayfa by the Baṣran Qatāda, but there is also a slightly different version of the same Companion transmitted by Abū l-Bakhtarī Sa'īd ibn Fayrūz (Kūfan, d. AH 83). Here the statement is plain, with no similes. Ḥudhayfa

131) ← Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab ← Prophet. But in a parallel version of the same tradition no mention is made of apes and pigs. See *Tārīkh Baghdād*, IX, 44; Ibn Kathīr, *Bi-dāya*, VI, 243.

⁵⁷ See Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmi Shī'ī Views on the Ṣaḥāba", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), 171 (I am grateful to Etan Kohlberg for drawing my attention to this article).

⁵⁸ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, no. 20765; *idem*, *Tafsīr*, I, 235; Ibn Baṭṭa, *Ibāna: Imān*, II, no. 715.

merely confirms that each act of the Children of Israel will be repeated by the Muslims, and that apes and pigs will be among them as well.⁵⁹

There is also a Syrian *sunna* statement predicting that Muslims imitating the sins of their Jewish and Christian predecessors will suffer the fate of being transformed into apes and pigs. The tradition describes a dialogue between the Syrian Companion ʿUbāda ibn al-Ṣāmit (Anṣārī, d. AH 34–45) and another Muslim (Abū ʿAṭāʾ al-Yaḥbūrī). The former tells the latter that scholars and Qurʾān experts will be persecuted, and that they will seek refuge with the beasts on the mountains because Muslims will want to kill them. The latter does not believe it, claiming that such a sin could not be committed as long as the Qurʾān exists among the Muslims. ʿUbāda replies:

Had not the Jews been given the Torah, but they went astray and abandoned it later on, and had not the Christians been given the Gospel, but they went astray and abandoned it later on? These are the ways (*sunan*) that are followed everywhere, and by God, nothing happened among those who were before you, that will not take place among you as well.⁶⁰

In an extended version of the same dialogue, Abū ʿAṭāʾ al-Yaḥbūrī meets with the same ʿUbāda ibn al-Ṣāmit a few days later, and tells him that there were apes and pigs among “those before us”. ʿUbāda replies that he heard an unnamed person (*fulān*) relating a tradition to the effect that before long, a group of this community will be transformed (*tumsakh*).⁶¹ This tradition again demonstrates the parallelism between the Bible and the Qurʾān as bases for schism, and the occurrence of the apes and the pigs in this connection affirms the assimilation of Muslims with Jews and Christians.

Allowing *Munkar*

Islamic tradition has sometimes applied to Muslims not only the Qurʾānic punishment of becoming apes and pigs, but also the Qurʾānic Isra-

⁵⁹ Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, 103 (no. 19227).

⁶⁰ Marwazī, *Sunna*, nos. 62, 107.

⁶¹ Ibn Abi I-Dunyā, *ʿUqūbāt*, no. 347.

elite sin that brought it about. The Qurʾān says in Sūrat al-Māʾida (5):78–79 that the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, and that they did not forbid evil (*munkar*) from being committed among themselves. As seen above, Islamic exegesis says that the curse was their transformation into apes and pigs. Islamic tradition applied to Muslims the same sin of allowing *munkar*, along with the punitive transformation that goes with it. This was designed to stress the importance of the duty of *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar* (“bidding good and forbidding evil”), which in the Qurʾān (3:110), marks the basic feature by which the Islamic *umma* surpasses other communities.⁶² Neglecting this duty therefore means the elimination of the difference between Muslims and others, and hence the punitive Israelite transformation awaiting those Muslims who are guilty of allowing *munkar*. This punishment is promised them in a tradition of the Prophet that says that people of his community will be resurrected as apes and pigs because they conciliated (*dāhanū*) the transgressors and did not forbid them to do evil, although they could have done so. The tradition was recorded in the commentaries on Sūrat al-Māʾida (5):78–79.⁶³ More current is another tradition also recorded in some canonical compilations. This is one of Ibn Masʿūd, and in it the Prophet says that the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus for not forbidding evil, and goes on to warn the Muslims of the same curse if they too permit evil.⁶⁴ However, this statement does not explicitly mention the apes and the pigs.

Another tradition offers a specific definition of the Islamic group that is guilty of allowing *munkar*—the Khawārij. The tradition is of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār as quoted by the Baṣran ʿAbdallāh ibn Rabāḥ al-Anṣārī (d. ca. AH 90). Kaʿb says that a martyr (*shahīd*) will be rewarded with one light, and that he who fights the Ḥarūriyya (= early Khawārij) will be rewarded with ten lights, and that Hell has seven gates (Qurʾān 15:44), three of which are reserved for the Ḥarūriyya. He then goes on to say that the

⁶² On this duty see e.g. Athamina, “The Early Murjiʿa”, 122–29.

⁶³ Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 302 (on 5:78).

⁶⁴ Abū Dāwūd, II, 435–36 (36:16); Tirmidhī/*Tuhfa*, VIII, no. 5038 (44, Sūra 5); Ibn Māja, II, no. 4006 (36:20); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 391; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10268; Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab*, VI, 79–80 (nos. 7544–45).

Ḥarūriyya already appeared (*kharajū*) in the time of the prophet David.⁶⁵ This is probably an allusion to the Qurʾānic curse of the Israelites by the tongue of David, which means that the Khawārij are identified here with those Israelites who allowed *munkar* and became apes and pigs. This confirms the Israelite link of the Khawārij as demonstrated above (Chapter 7).

Slave-Girls, Wine, etc.

The notion of punitive transformation caused by allowing *munkar* means that this punishment could be applied to any sin that falls under the label of *munkar*, a word that can signify any offensive action disapproved by the Qurʾān and the *sunna*. There are indeed traditions that expand the scope of the punitive transformation to sins of a supposedly abominable and foul nature. The sins are of wine (*khamr*) drinking, as well as playing music in the company of singing slave-girls. Occasionally, the wearing of silk clothes (*ḥarīr*) is added to the list, as well as false testimony and usury. At least some of these types of sins were probably associated with Jews and Christians (usury,⁶⁶ wine, music), as well as with non-Arabs at large (silk⁶⁷).

A group of traditions linking the theme of apes and pigs to these sins was circulated by Farqad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Sabakhī (Baṣran, d. AH 131). His traditions are traced back to the Prophet through Syrian and Iraqi *isnāds* of Abū Umāma al-Bāhili, ʿUbāda ibn al-Šāmit (Syrian Anṣārī Companion, d. AH 34–45), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm al-Ashʿarī (Syrian, d. AH 78) and Ibn ʿAbbās. In all of these versions, the Prophet states in the first person that people of “my community” will spend the night rejoicing and exulting (*ʿalā aṣḥar wa-baṭar*) and enjoying themselves playfully, and will wake up in the morning as apes and pigs. This will happen because

⁶⁵ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, no. 18673; Ājurri, *Sharīʿa*, no. 39; Suyūṭi, *Durr*, IV, 100.

⁶⁶ Qurʾān 4:161.

⁶⁷ About silk clothes and the manners of the *Aʿajim* (non-Arabs), see Abū Dāwūd, II, 371 (31:8); Nasāʾi, *Kubrā*, V, no. 9366 (80:25); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 134. On the Islamic aversion to the attire of non-Muslims, see also Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, 35.

they desecrated forbidden women and slave-girls, drank wine (*khamr*), took usury, and wore silk clothes.⁶⁸

Another version of Farqad links the same statement of the Prophet to the triple calamity. Farqad quotes the statement in response to a question of whether the tradition about *khasf* and *qadhf* was uttered by the Prophet himself. In the version quoted by Farqad on this occasion, the sinners are not only turned into apes and pigs, but their families as well are carried away by wind.⁶⁹

Elements of the triple calamity are present more explicitly in the version of Qabiṣa ibn Dhu^ʿayb (Medinan Successor, d. AH 86), as recorded by Nu^ʿaym ibn Ḥammād. Here the Prophet describes transformation (conveyed here by the root *a.f.k.*) of people into apes and pigs, as well as their being engulfed by the earth (*khasf*). This is a punishment inflicted for drinking wine, putting on silk clothes and playing music.⁷⁰

A similar combination of disasters (transformation into apes and pigs and *khasf*) appears in a Syrian tradition in which the Prophet predicts that people will drink wine (*khamr*) while calling it otherwise, and will enjoy singing and music. God will cause the earth to engulf them and will turn them into apes and pigs. This tradition is of the Companion Abū Mālik al-Ash^ʿarī and was recorded in several *ḥadīth* compilations, including canonical ones.⁷¹

The above disapproved pleasures were also built into independent statements about the triple calamity in which no explicit mention of apes and pigs is made. Such versions appear in the canonical compilations. Al-Tirmidhī recorded a tradition of the Meccan Companion ^ʿImrān ibn Ḥu-

⁶⁸ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 329. See also Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 7997; *idem*, *Ṣaḡhīr*, I, 62. A similar statement is contained in a tradition of the Companion ^ʿAbdallāh ibn Bishr. See *Majma^ʿ al-zawāʿid*, VIII, 14 (Ṭabarānī).

⁶⁹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 259.

⁷⁰ Nu^ʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 371–72.

⁷¹ The *isnād*: ^ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm al-Ash^ʿarī (Syrian, d. AH 78) ← Abū Mālik al-Ash^ʿarī ← Prophet. See Ibn Abi Shayba, VII, no. 3810; Ibn Māja, II, no. 4020 (36:22); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḡhīh*, XV, no. 6758; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VIII, 295; X, 221. See also Bukhāri, *Tārīkh kabīr*, I, no. 967; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, III, no. 3419. And see a parallel version in Bukhāri, *Ṣaḡhīh*, VII, 138 (74:6); Abū Dāwūd, II, 369 (31:6); Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, X, 221; *Kanz*, XI, no. 30926.

ṣayn (d. AH 52) in which the Prophet states: “[There will be] in this community *khasf* and *qadhif* and *maskh*”. Someone asks the Prophet: “When will it be?” The Prophet: “When slave-girls and musical instruments appear, and when wine is consumed.”⁷² A very similar dialogue is described in traditions of the Companion Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī⁷³ and Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī.⁷⁴ The same discourse appears in an extended version of the triple calamity, of the above-mentioned Sahl ibn Saʿd al-Anṣārī.⁷⁵ A version of Abū Hurayra adds homosexuals and lesbians to the list, as well as the sin of false testimony.⁷⁶ Homosexuals and lesbians are also threatened with *maskh* and *khasf* in a tradition of Anas ibn Mālik, in which this fate will be inflicted on them with a blazing wind emerging from the East.⁷⁷

The range of sins entailing eschatological deformation—including transformation into apes and pigs—has been expanded in the following tradition to include a variety of social and moral misbehaviour. The tradition is of the Medinan Companion Muʿādh ibn Jabal (d. AH 18) which is recorded as a commentary on Sūrat al-Nabaʾ (78):18. Here God says that people are about to be resurrected “in troops” (*afwājan*). The Prophet is said to have told Muʿādh that the “troops” stand for ten groups among Muḥammad’s *umma*, all of whom will be deformed because of their sins. The first group will consist of those who will be turned into apes because they have been slanderers, and the second group will consist of those who will be turned into pigs because they enjoyed ill-gotten property (*suht*). The rest of the groups are of those who have taken usury, been oppressive in judgement, behaved arrogantly, and so on. They will be turned upside down so that they will crawl on their faces, will become blind, deaf, etc.⁷⁸

⁷² Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VI, no. 2309 (31:38). See also Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 340.

⁷³ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, III, no. 3410.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, *Awsat*, VII, no. 6901.

⁷⁵ *Idem*, *Kabīr*, VI, no. 5810.

⁷⁶ *Kashf al-astār*, IV, no. 3405.

⁷⁷ Daylamī, *Firdaws*, I, no. 1296; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 302 (on 5:78).

⁷⁸ Suyūṭī, *Durr*, VI, 307 (from Ibn Mardawayhi). See also Qurṭubī, *Tadhkira*, 203.

Confirming Versions

Some versions about the above kinds of disapproved pleasures contain additional remarks affirming that the punitive transformation into apes and pigs will indeed befall Muslims. Such expanded versions were needed because the notion that such a beastly type of punishment, which was once meted out to Jews and Christians, could also befall good obedient Muslims—just for not drinking the correct beverage or wearing the right cloth—seemed absurd to people still convinced of the unique virtues of the Muslims as God’s chosen community.

Thus, in a version of the Companion Abū Hurayra the Prophet declares that at the end of days people of his community will be metamorphosed into apes and pigs. Someone asks him whether this will be the fate of those who profess the *shahāda* and observe the duty of fasting, and the Prophet confirms it. He then goes on to explain that this will be their fate, because of the pleasure they used to take in music and in slave-girls, and because they drank wine. They will spend the night enjoying these things, and will become apes and pigs in the morning.⁷⁹

A similar confirmation was provided for the triple calamity. A version of the Meccan Successor ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Sābiṭ (d. AH 118) contains an additional remark of the Prophet to the effect that indulgence in the above acts will result in the triple calamity, even if the guilty Muslims adhere to the *shahāda*, that is, the initial tenet of the Islamic creed.⁸⁰

The same message is conveyed in ʿĀʿisha’s version of the dialogue appended to the announcement about the triple calamity. This version was recorded by al-Tirmidhī.⁸¹ The Prophet stresses that the calamity will not be prevented even if the Muslims have righteous individuals (*ṣāliḥūn*) among them. This means that Muslim sinners will not enjoy mercy emanating from the intercession of the righteous.

⁷⁹ Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, III, 119–20. The *isnād*: Sulaymān ibn Sālim ← Ḥassān ibn Abi Sinān (Başran) ← Abū Hurayra ← Prophet.

⁸⁰ Ibn Abi Shayba, XV, no. 19391; Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 375; Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 339.

⁸¹ Tirmidhī/*Tuhfa*, VI, no. 2280 (31:21). See also Dānī, *Fitan*, III, no. 341.

* * *

There are many more traditions warning the Muslims against repeating the sins of others, but they are not cast in any of the patterns surveyed in the foregoing chapters. They pertain to various ritual and cultural aspects of the life of the Muslims, such as the veneration of the dead, the construction of extravagant mosques, the usage of certain types of garments and shoes, and so on. Some of these phenomena of assimilation have already been discussed in scholarly works,⁸² but as far as the textual dynamics between the Bible and the Qur'ān are concerned, it is hoped that the features most essential to the study of the evolving Islamic self-image have been demonstrated in this book.

⁸² Especially Kister, "Do not Assimilate Yourselves...".

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the foregoing chapters may be summarised at three levels: the Children of Israel, the Arab believers, and Bible and Qur^ʿān.

The Children of Israel

The traditions about the Children of Israel reveal tension between two contrasting aspects of their image: righteousness and sin, the latter evidently being the predominant one. The righteous aspect is apparent mainly in traditions employing Jewish messianic ideas, and especially the hope for a renewed Israelite conquest of the Promised Land (Chapter 1). In their Islamic presentation, these ideas are embedded in a common Jewish-Arab messianism, which seems to be the historiographical outcome of an apologetic need to legitimise the Islamic conquest of Syria. This emerges in traditions that present the conquest as a renewed exodus fulfilling a predestined Biblical scheme aimed at providing the Jews with their deliverance through the Arabs. Such traditions were designed to form the retrospective memory of the Arab conquest of al-Shām as an act of Jewish deliverance supported by “Judeo-Muslim” Israelites like Kaʿb al-Aḥbār. The same messianic notions were also applied to the eschatological sphere of the clash with the Byzantines, and an active part was assigned here to the Israelite Lost Tribes, which were expected to return as valiant warriors helping the Arabs to confront the Byzantines and take Constantinople.

Jewish messianism has also been retained in traditions extending to Arabia the status of a sacred land, which was designed to counterbalance the status of al-Shām as the Promised Land (Chapter 2). These traditions present the Ḥijāz as a destination for Israelite pilgrimage and as the focus of the religious orientation of the Israelite Lost Tribes.

The sinful image of the Israelites, however, is more prevalent in our sources; this comes out in traditions focused more on the history of the

Israelites than on their messianic dreams. This history is marked by sins that caused the people of Israel to lose to the Arabs their status of a chosen community (Chapters 3–5). The sins are idolatry (mainly the worship of the calf), rebellion and inner division. These became the chief model of evil which was repeated within Islamic society, thus making the Israelites a symbol of deviation from the good *sunna* of the Prophet, and of assimilation with others (Chapters 6–10).

The collective role of the Children of Israel as representatives of evil, which means that they have violated the laws of their own prophets, is the central axis of the lesson that the traditions draw from world history. This means that Goitein's observation that the Muslims regarded the Children of Israel "as their brothers"¹—apart from being based on a poorly edited text—is supported by not a single substantial piece of evidence. Equally unjustified is his observation that "the most important aspect of the image of the *Banū Isrāʿīl* in Muslim literature is the piety attributed to them."² Piety is only attributed to individual Israelites, while Israel as a collective community is considered sinful and has always remained so, as far as Islamic tradition is concerned. Their only redeeming feature has been the fact that they had prophets and scriptures, and that a minority among them remained faithful to the word of God. Only the latter group became a model of piety, and mainly for Shīʿis.

The Arabs

The traditions selected for the present study establish a direct link between the Israelites and the Arab believers. The changing nature of the link indicates stages in the formation of the Islamic self-image.

Since the earliest stages of the formation of their historical perception, the Muslims saw themselves as God's new chosen community; but their link to God's previous chosen communities, i.e. the Jews and the Christians, underwent some significant changes. The initial event which brought Arab believers into direct contact with Jews and Christians in the context of world history was the conquest of Syria, the land of the prophets, the Promised Land. The link between Arabs and others as delineated

¹ Above, 177.

² Goitein, "*Banū Isrāʿīl*", *EI*², I, 1022a.

in traditions pertaining to this stage is one of equality. Arabs and Jews are equal members in a universal community of believers chosen by God to fulfil His predestined messianic plan. This plan is preordained to be carried out through a Jewish–Arab anti-Byzantine campaign (Chapter 1). However, the universal perception of faith could not last long, and particularistic factors soon started surfacing, especially the need to preserve the Arab–Hijāzī origin of Islam. At first, the notion of an Israelite messianic link marking the rise of Islam was extended from Syria to Arabia. This expansion is discernible in traditions adding a Hijāzī hue to Jewish Islamised messianism which was worked into traditions describing the Hijāzī stage of the rise of Islam. These traditions pertain to Muḥammad’s prophetic career (Chapter 2). Soon enough, the actual link between Jews and Arabs as established in the traditions about Muḥammad’s life changed from equality to superiority. Muḥammad’s Arabs emerge in the traditions as the only members in the chosen community, while the Jews, who in real life were treated as *ahl al-dhimma*, have been excluded from it. The traditions based the right of the Arabs to replace others as God’s only chosen people on their devotion to the military goals set for them by their Prophet, whose primary aim was to capture the Meccan sanctuary (Chapters 3–4). The superiority of the Arabs was defined not only in the military Hijāzī context but also in the global one, and it became the central axis of world history, from creation to resurrection (Chapter 5).

On the other hand, schisms within Islamic society considerably diminished Islamic self-confidence in its own status as a chosen community, and various sections of Islamic society were accused of assimilation with other communities who had sinned and lost the grace of God. These were factions such as Khawārij and Qadarīs, as well as Shi‘īs, whose ranks included Jewish and Christian converts to Islam. The orthodox campaign against them resulted in traditions basing the link between Muslims and others on the similarity in their sins as well as in their punishments. These traditions became the major weapon which Sunnī Islam employed to face the dangers of assimilation, and to urge the Muslims to adhere to the good *sunna* of the Prophet and his Companions, which would secure for them a distinctive Islamic identity (Chapters 6–10).

Bible and Qurʾān

The material examined in the foregoing chapters revolves around two parallel literary pivots, the Bible (including Talmudic and Midrashic sources) and the Qurʾān. Each of them has a twofold role: to supply Islamic tradition with vocabulary and ideas, and themselves to be a theme in the traditions.

The Bible

The Bible and other Jewish sources are noticed as the origins of vocabulary and ideas mainly in the realm of common Arab–Jewish messianism (Chapter 1). Mainly noticed here are the traditions using Biblical prophecies about the advent of the Servant of God, the destruction of the enemies of Jerusalem, and the reconstruction of the Temple. The prophecies provide the basis for the notion that the Arab conquest of the Promised Land represents Jewish deliverance. For the eschatological stage of the clash with the Byzantines, Jewish sources have provided the hope for the return of the exiled tribes of Israel, which in their Islamic role assist the Muslims to take Constantinople in a renewed exodus. The myth of the Lost Tribes that dwell behind the Sabbatic River is particularly essential in the Ḥijāzi sphere (Chapter 2), where these tribes appear as believers following Muḥammad and as pilgrims to Mecca.

In the realm of messianism, the Bible is also a theme on its own and serves to provide the divine attestation to the notion that the Arab conquest of Syria represents a divine scheme. The relevant passages are adduced from the Bible by Kaʿb al-Aḥbār.

The prevalence of the Bible in the messianic realm indicates a correlation between reliance on Jewish models and acceptance of Jews as equal potential members in the universal community of the believers. This indicates a very early stage in the evolution of the Islamic self-image, when the young Islamic culture that strove for legitimation looked for its models in the well-established monotheistic culture with which it was brought into direct contact.

The Qurʾān

Unlike the Bible, which only serves as the origin of vocabulary and ideas in the messianic sphere, the Qurʾānic impact is noticed almost everywhere, and especially in texts based on a particularist perception of the faith and on the exclusion of the Israelites from the chosen community. The prevalence of the Qurʾān in these texts indicates attempts at dissociation from Jewish models and at exclusive reliance on a genuine Arab origin of sacred history. The Qurʾān serves here as the sole origin of information about the history of Israel, and provides the major themes of Israelite sin, thus rendering the Jews inferior to the Arab believers (Chapters 3–5).

The Qurʾān also remains the major axis in traditions in which the superiority of Arabs over Israelites shifts to similarity uniting them all in a common fate of sin and punishment (Chapters 6–10). Here the Qurʾān not only provides the vocabulary and ideas, but also features as a theme on its own. It plays the pivotal role in schisms and inner divisions, and signals therefore assimilation with the Children of Israel, who were pervaded by similar conflicts over their own scriptures. Hence, although the Qurʾān was supposed to ensure for the Muslims their distinctive identity, it eventually became a source for their assimilation. Perhaps this could not be helped, since from the very outset the Qurʾān and the Bible had so much in common.

Epilogue: the Chronology of the Islamic Self-Image

The above chapters have been arranged according to the assumed chronology of the evolution of the Islamic self-image. However, this chronology cannot be supported by the dating of the traditions because a reliable dating tool does not seem to exist. Various principles for dating traditions have been suggested both by members of the Schacht school and by their opponents alike, but the mutual criticism they exchange with one another shows clearly that a reliable tool for dating traditions has not yet been developed, and probably never will be. Moreover, even if such a tool did exist it would still be of little help, because a chronology of traditions is not identical with a chronology of ideas reflected in traditions. Sometimes, even the earliest possible idea may only survive in a relatively late

tradition. Therefore, when trying to reconstruct a chronology of ideas reflected in given traditions, one ought to rely on external considerations that will make sense. Such considerations were used as a guide when structuring this book.

The main decision taken was to begin with traditions evincing a massive Biblical presence. This was done for two reasons. First, it is common knowledge that Islam developed under the influence (and according to some—as a ramification) of Judaism and Christianity, and therefore traditions bearing a massive Biblical impact should be regarded as reflecting early stages in this development. Second, starting with the traditions that are dominated by the Bible, and hence postponing the traditions bearing an exclusive Qur^ʿānic impact to later sections of the study, implies that the Qur^ʿānic impact on Islamic tradition is secondary to the Biblical one. This has already been one of the conclusions of my previous study on Muḥammad’s biography,³ and it seems to work here as well. In the present context it may perhaps be added that it is unlikely that the Qur^ʿān had a significant impact on the Muslims at the very beginning of their history, because Islamic tradition itself tells us that the process by which this scripture was collected and codified was not accomplished until the early Umayyad period. Since the Qur^ʿān could become a literary model for historiography only when its availability increased considerably, it is feasible to assume that Jewish and Christian models of sacred history preceded the Qur^ʿānic ones in Islamic tradition.

The traditions that are under exclusive Qur^ʿānic domination are different from the Biblical ones mainly in that they change the Israelite image from righteousness to that of sin. These traditions fall into two subgroups, one that treats the sinful Israelites as inferior to the Arabs (Chapters 3–5) and another that treats the Arabs as akin to the sinful Israelites (Chapters 6–10). The former group seems to represent self-satisfaction, in fact, euphoric pride in the historical achievements of Islam following the sweeping conquest of the ancient world, while the latter group reflects disillusionment and fatalism caused by inner crisis. The decision here to discuss the traditions that reflect self-satisfaction

³ See especially the case of Qur^ʿānic and non-Qur^ʿānic layers in the story of Muḥammad’s first revelation, as analysed in Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 103–12.

before the disillusioned ones is based on the assumption that euphoria usually precedes disillusionment, as well as on the supposition that it must have taken quite a while before a reaction against the cultural influences of other communities arose. Such a reaction was caused by the fear that the non-Arab influence on Islamic society might eliminate the special status of Muḥammad's *umma* among the nations, and at this stage the preservation of a distinctive Islamic identity became the most essential need in the eyes of the religious leaders of Islamic society. The result was the dissemination of traditions attacking groups among Muslims who were blamed for the assimilation of Muslims with others, and striving to secure the values of *sunna* and *jamā'a*.

EXCURSUS A

THE MICE AND THE LIZARDS

In Chapters 1 and 2, the tribes of Israel were seen in messianic traditions presenting them as valiant warriors and righteous believers, in fact, as “Judeo-Muslims”. In this excursus traces of them will be sought in other fields of Islamic tradition. Such traces have survived in the realm of dietary law, and the image of the tribes is different here. They do not return in a messianic event of redemption, but rather survive as mice or lizards, having been turned into these animals because of God’s wrath, which means that they are sinners. A survey of the traditions about the survival of the Israelites as mice and lizards will demonstrate the prevalence of the Jews’ sinful image in the eyes of the Muslims, and will at the same time unveil further aspects of the literary tension between the Bible and the Qur’ān.

The basic notion of the relevant traditions is that mice and lizards are survivors of the ancient Children of Israel, which renders their meat forbidden. The legal aspects of these traditions have already been studied by Michael Cook,¹ and the following discussion will concentrate on how the Israelites are treated in these traditions.

The tribes of Israel are represented in the traditions by two different sets of terms describing them and their fate. In one set, the “Biblical” one, the terms are the originally Hebrew words *sibṭ* (a “tribe”) or *sibṭān* (“two tribes”), and their fate is described by a series of verbs derived from the roots *f.q.d.*, *d.l.l.* and *h.l.k.* All three revolve around the notion of getting lost. This set will be referred to as the “Biblical” one because it clearly draws on the Biblical–Talmudic myth of the Lost Tribes that

¹ Michael Cook, “Dietary Law”, 217–77.

dwell beyond the Sabbatic River.² In the second set, the terms describing the Israelites are clearly Qurʾānic: the tribes are depicted as an *umma*, and their fate is *maskh*, which in the present context clearly denotes metamorphosis. Such an idea is Qurʾānic, because the Qurʾān speaks about Israelites being punished by being transformed into animals (Chapter 10).

It is noteworthy that the form *sibt*—which belongs to the vocabulary defined as Biblical here—never occurs in the Qurʾān, while the form *asbāt*, when explicitly referring to the twelve tribes of Israel, is glossed by the more familiar Qurʾānic term *umam* (7:160). This seems to indicate that the significance of the Qurʾānic *asbāt* in the sense of “tribes” was never entirely clear to readers of the Qurʾān. In fact, the Qurʾānic *asbāt* was occasionally taken to stand for an individual proper name.³

In what follows, the interplay between the Biblical and Qurʾānic sets of terms will be discussed first, and then an attempt will be made to trace the process by which the tribes of Israel became linked to mice and lizards.

The Biblical and Qurʾānic Sets of Terms

The Mouse

The Biblical set of terms is revealed in a tradition about the mouse, as recorded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.⁴ The tradition is transmitted by the Baṣran Successor Muḥammad ibn Sirin (d. AH 110), on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurayra. The Prophet declares that a tribe (*sibt*) of the Children of Israel has been lost (*fuqida*), and then goes on to say that mice only partake of the milk of sheep but avoid the milk of camels (which means that they observe Jewish laws). The tradition implies that the mouse is a survivor of a lost Israelite tribe.

The same tradition is also available with a Qurʾānic vocabulary that replaces the Biblical one. This version is found in the *ḥadith* compilation

² Above, 26.

³ Cf. Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 33.

⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 289.

of °Abd al-Razzāq,⁵ and here the term *sibt* and the verb *f.q.d.* do not occur; it is stated instead that the mouse has been metamorphosed (*mamsūkha*).

More versions of the same tradition gained access into canonical *ḥadīth* compilations, and here the two sets are mixed. Thus, in the version appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the root *f.q.d.* is retained, but the term *sibt* has been replaced by that of *umma*. It opens with the statement that an *umma* of the Children of Israel has been lost, and then follow the details about the Jewish diet of the mouse.⁶

The Lizard

Some traditions about the lizard (in Arabic: *dabb*) are clearly of the Biblical type and use the vocabulary of the myth of the Lost Tribes. One of them is a Syrian tradition in which the Prophet is made to say that a tribe (*sibt*) of the Children of Israel has been lost (*halaka*), and that he fears that the lizards might be them.⁷

Another tradition is Baṣran, and is quoted from the Prophet by the Companion Abū Sa°id al-Khudrī. It was recorded by °Abd al-Razzāq and others, and here the Prophet says that a tribe (*sibt*) of the Children of Israel, with whom God was angry, has been lost in wandering (*tāha*) and the lizards may be the survivors of that tribe.⁸

⁵ °Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, IV, no. 8399. The tradition is quoted in Cook, "Dietary Law", 225. See also Ch. Pellat, s.v. "Maskh", *EJ*². And see Muslim, VIII, 227 (53, *Bāb fī l-fa°ri wa-annahū miskh*); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 279, 411.

⁶ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 156 (59:15); Muslim, VIII, 226 (53, *Bāb fī l-fa°ri wa-annahū miskh*). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 234, 497; Ṭaḥāwī, *Mushkil*, IV, 277; Damirī, *Ḥayawān*, II, 204.

⁷ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 227; *Majma° al-zawā°id*, IV, 40 (Aḥmad). The *isnād*: °Abd al-Ḥamid ibn Bahrām al-Madā°ini ← Shahr ibn Ḥawshab (Syrian, d. AH 100) ← °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm (Syrian, d. AH 78) ← Prophet.

⁸ °Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, IV, no. 8679; Ibn Sa°d, I, 396; Ṭabarī, *Tahdhib: Musnad °Umar*, I, 151 (no. 230); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 41, 42. In °Abd al-Razzāq's *isnād* Abū Sa°id is quoted by Abū °Imrān al-Jawnī (Baṣran, d. AH 128). In all other sources he is quoted by Bishr ibn Ḥarb Abū °Umar [°Amr] al-Nadabi (Baṣran).

The Abū Naḍra ← Abū Saʿīd Tradition

The interchange between the two sets of terms is revealed in one more Baṣran tradition of the same Abū Saʿīd, in which this Companion is quoted by Abū Naḍra (al-Mundhir ibn Mālik, Baṣran, d. AH 108). The tradition was disseminated from Abū Naḍra by various authorities, one of whom was the Baṣran Qatāda. In his version, as recorded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the Biblical set of terms is retained. The Prophet says that “two tribes” of the Children of Israel have been lost (*dalla sibṭāni min Banī Isrāʾīl*), and he fears that the lizards might be them.⁹

However, there are two more versions of Qatāda in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tahdhīb al-āthār*, and one of them uses the Qurʾānic vocabulary, not the Biblical one. Here the Prophet says that the lizard might belong to an *umma* that was transformed (*musikhat*).¹⁰ The other version is mixed. In it, the Prophet says that an *umma* of the Children of Israel was “lost” (*dallat*) instead of “transformed”.¹¹

The versions using the Qurʾānic vocabulary are evidently more prevalent than those of the Biblical type. They also gained entrance into canonical compilations of *ḥadīth*. Muslim recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* two versions of the Abū Naḍra ← Abū Saʿīd tradition, one circulated by the Baṣran Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind (d. AH 139) and the other by the Baṣran Abū ʿAqīl al-Dawraqī (Bashīr ibn ʿUqba). In the version of Dāwūd,¹² the Prophet is consulted about the lizard and says that a group (*umma*) of the Children of Israel was transformed (*musikhat*). In Ibn Māja, the version of Dāwūd only speaks of an *umma* that was transformed without specifying its exact affiliation.¹³

Other versions of the Abū Naḍra ← Abū Saʿīd tradition are mixed too. This is the case in another version also transmitted by Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind. It is recorded in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tahdhīb al-āthār* and states that an

⁹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 46.

¹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 151 (no. 229).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, 150–51 (no. 228).

¹² Muslim, VI, 70 (34, *Bāb ibāḥat al-ḍabb*). See also Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 324. And see Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 149–50, 152 (nos. 226, 232); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 5, 19, 66.

¹³ Ibn Māja, II, no. 3240 (28:16). See also Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 182 (no. 297).

umma of the Children of Israel has been “lost” (*fuqīdat*) rather than “transformed”.¹⁴

The version of Abū °Aqīl of the Abū Naḍra ← Abū Sa°id tradition, as recorded by Muslim,¹⁵ is also mixed: the term *sibṭ* emerges, but the root *m.s.kh* is also used, instead of *f.q.d*. The Prophet states that God had cursed (*la°ana*), or had been angry with (*ghaḍība*), a tribe (*sibṭ*) of the Children of Israel, and transformed its members (*fa-masakhahum*) into reptiles, and Muḥammad therefore did not eat lizards because they might be them. In the version of the same Abū °Aqīl as recorded in some non-canonical compilations,¹⁶ “two tribes” (*sibṭayn*) are mentioned, but they are again said to have been “metamorphosed” rather than “lost”.

Other Baṣran Versions

There are further Baṣran versions, one of which uses the Qur°ānic vocabulary. It is of the Baṣran Companion Samura ibn Jundab al-Fazāri (d. AH 58), and in it the Prophet, while speaking about the lizard, declares that an Israelite *umma* has been metamorphosed.¹⁷ Another version, a mixed one recorded by Ibn Māja, is of the Companion Khuzayma ibn Jaz° al-Sulamī. The Prophet says that an *umma* has been lost (*fuqīdat*), and therefore he does not partake of the meat of lizards.¹⁸

Kūfan Versions

There are also Kūfan versions in which the lizard emerges as an Israelite. None of them is purely Biblical; some are Qur°ānic and others are mixed. A Qur°ānic version is the one containing a story in which the Muslims

¹⁴ Ṭabari, *Tahdhīb: Musnad °Umar*, I, 152 (no. 231).

¹⁵ Muslim, VI, 70 (34, *Bāb ibāḥat al-ḍabb*). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 62; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ ma°āni*, IV, 198; *idem*, *Mushkil*, IV, 279.

¹⁶ Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 2153; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 325.

¹⁷ Ṭabari, *Tahdhīb: Musnad °Umar*, I, 182–83 (nos. 299, 300). The *isnād*: °Abd al-Malik ibn °Umayr al-Qurashī (Kūfan, d. AH 136) ← Ḥuṣayn ibn Qabiṣa al-Fazāri (Kūfan) ← Samura ibn Jundab ← Prophet. See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 19, 21; Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, II, no. 1877; VII, nos. 6788–90; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ ma°āni*, IV, 197–98; *idem*, *Mushkil*, IV, 279. And cf. *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1216: *umma musikhat*.

¹⁸ Ibn Māja, II, no. 3245 (28:17). The *isnād*: °Abd al-Karīm ibn Abī l-Mukhāriq (Baṣran, d. AH 127) ← Ḥibbān ibn Jaz° al-Sulamī ← Khuzayma ibn Jaz° ← Prophet.

hunt lizards during the raid of Tabūk and cook them. The Prophet hears about this and asks to see one of the cooked lizards, turns it over with a stick and says: “The foot [of the lizard] resembles a human hand. Groups (*umam*) of the Children of Israel incurred the wrath [of God], and were therefore transformed (*musikhat*) into reptiles crawling on the earth”.¹⁹ In this tradition, the lizard is considered of metamorphic human origin because of the human shape of its foot.²⁰

A large group of traditions was transmitted by the Kūfan Successor Zayd ibn Wahb al-Juhanī (d. AH 96) on the authority of several Companions. Some are strictly Qurʾānic and appear in the canonical compilations. One was transmitted by Zayd on the authority of the Medinan Companion Thābit [b. Yazid] ibn Wadiʿa (or: Wadāʿa) al-Anṣārī. It speaks of an *umma* of the Children of Israel that has been transformed (*musikhat*); it was recorded by Ibn Saʿd,²¹ and reappears in no less than three canonical compilations.²² In some versions, the reference to the Children of Israel is absent, and the *umma* remains unspecified.²³

In a mixed version belonging to the same group, the root *f.q.d.* reappears to describe the fate of the *umma*. This account is only recorded in non-canonical sources.²⁴

¹⁹ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *ʿUqūbāt*, no. 358. The *isnād*: Jarīr ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥamid al-Ḍabbī (Kūfan, d. AH 188) ← ʿAṭāʾ ibn al-Sāʾib (Kūfan, d. AH 136) ← Abū Zabyān (Ḥuṣayn ibn Jundab) (Kūfan, d. AH 89) ← Prophet.

²⁰ See also Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān*, VI, 77; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XVII, 65–66; Jibrail S. Jabbur, *The Bedouins and the Desert: Aspects of Nomadic Life in the Arab East*, trans. from the Arabic and ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Albany, 1995), 147.

²¹ Ibn Saʿd, I, 395–96.

²² Abū Dāwūd, II, 318 (26:27); Ibn Māja, II, no. 3238 (28:16); Nasāʾi, *Kubrā*, III, no. 4832 (38:28); IV, no. 6651 (61:17). See also Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 179 (no. 291); Bukhārī, *Tārīkh kabīr*, II, 170–71 (no. 2092); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 220; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ maʿānī*, IV, 197; *idem*, *Mushkil*, IV, 278.

²³ Nasāʾi, *Kubrā*, III, nos. 4833–34 (38:28); IV, nos. 6649–50 (61:17). See also Dārimī, II, no. 2016 (7:8); Ibn Saʿd, I, 395; Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 179–180 (nos. 292–93); Bukhārī, *Tārīkh kabīr*, II, 171 (no. 2092); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 220, V, 390; Ibn Qānī, *Ṣaḥāba*, I, no. 131; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 325; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ maʿānī*, IV, 198; *idem*, *Mushkil*, IV, 278.

²⁴ Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ maʿānī*, IV, 198; *idem*, *Mushkil*, IV, 279.

Several versions were circulated by Zayd ibn Wahb on the authority of the Companion ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasana (brother of Shuraḥbil ibn Ḥasana). They all appear in non-canonical compilations. In one of them, the Prophet avoids the meat of the lizard because an *umma* of the Children of Israel has been transformed (*musikhat*),²⁵ while in another version, *musikhat* is again replaced by *fuqīdat*: “has been lost”.²⁶ In one account, we find the inconclusive mixed formulation: *umma fuqīdat aw musikhat* (“a group that has been lost or transformed”).²⁷

Zayd ibn Wahb also circulated a tradition on the authority of Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, which is of the Qurʾānic type. It speaks of an *umma* that has been transformed.²⁸

Hijāzī Versions

There is only one version coming from the Hijāz. It was circulated on the authority of the Medinan Companion Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh and has been recorded by ʿAbd al-Razzāq²⁹ and Muslim.³⁰ Here the Prophet refuses to eat a lizard offered to him, saying that it might represent “transformed members of the [old] generations” (*min al-qurūn allatī musikhat*). The Qurʾānic element in the tradition is discernible not only in the idea of *maskh*, but also in the term *qurūn*, by which the Qurʾān sometimes refers to past sinful generations who were punished by God (e.g. 25:38).

²⁵ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XII, no. 5266; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 325; Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 185 (no. 303); Abū Yaʿlā, II, no. 931; *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1217; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ maʿānī*, IV, 197; *idem*, *Mushkil*, IV, 278; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XVII, 65.

²⁶ With *fuqīdat* instead of *musikhat*: Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 180–81, 185 (nos. 294, 302); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 196; Ibn Ḥazm, *Muḥallā*, VII, 431; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, XVII, 65; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, IV, 39–40.

²⁷ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 196.

²⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 178 (no. 290); *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1215. Cf. Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 390.

²⁹ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, IV, no. 8680.

³⁰ Muslim, VI, 70 (34, *Bāb ibāḥat al-dabb*). The *isnād*: Abū l-Zubayr (Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn Tadrus, Meccan, d. AH 126) ← Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh ← Prophet. See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 323, 380; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 324; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ maʿānī*, IV, 198. And see Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb: Musnad ʿUmar*, I, 181 (no. 296): *umma mina l-umam*.

Summary

From this survey of the various traditions about the Israelite lizard, it becomes clear that there are very few strictly Biblical versions, and none appears in a canonical *ḥadīth* compilation. In the canonical compilations, most versions are either strictly Qurʾānic or mixed. In most of the mixed versions, the Israelites are described by their Qurʾānic collective designation (*umma*), but their fate is depicted in its Biblical designation (“lost”).

The predominance of Qurʾānic elements in our traditions confirms the impression gained from the previous chapters, namely, that the Qurʾān tends to replace the Bible as an origin of vocabulary and concepts.

The few strictly Biblical versions are Syrian and Baṣran, while the others are mostly Baṣran and Kūfan, and also Ḥijāzī, though rarely. This accords with the basic assumption made in Chapter 1, in which the Syrian sphere features as the earliest provenance of Biblical notions taken up into Islamic tradition, and especially of those connected with the tribes of Israel.

Israelites and Lizards

While the notion that the sinful Israelites became animals by way of punishment is Qurʾānic, the idea that Israelite sinners could be transformed into lizards or mice stands in clear disharmony with the Qurʾān, where the species into which Jews and Christians were changed are only apes and pigs (Chapter 10). Therefore, the idea of lizards and mice representing Israelite sinners must have reached Islamic *ḥadīth* via a non-Qurʾānic channel. This idea seems to be Arabian by origin.

The Arabian origin of the notion of the Israelite metamorphic origin of the lizard is indicated in a report recorded by Ibn Qutayba in his *Kitāb al-maʿānī al-kabīr*.³¹ Here a poetic verse is recorded which is said to have been composed by an *aʿrābī*, that is, a Bedouin, concerning a lizard which he has hunted:

The people of the market say when we come:
“This is an Israelite, by the Lord of the House”.

³¹ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿānī l-kabīr*, II, 646.

yaqūlu ahlu l-sūqi lammā ji'nā
hādhā wa-rabbi l-bayti Isrā'inā (= Isrā'ilā).

The people who swear by the “Lord of the House”, which is the Ka‘ba, are most probably Meccans who express their dislike of the lizard by saying that it is a metamorphosed Israelite. Ibn Qutayba records in association with this verse a widely current episode in which a certain scholar sees a man eating lizard’s meat, and says to him: “You have just eaten an old man of the Children of Israel”, meaning that the Israelite was transformed (*musikha*).³²

Ibn Qutayba’s report is based on the view that in pre-Islamic Arabia the belief in the Israelite metamorphic origin of some distasteful animals was already prevalent, mainly in sedentary places such as Mecca. In other words, Ibn Qutayba’s report indicates that ideas concerning the Israelite origin of beasts and reptiles could have arisen from anti-Jewish feelings in pre-Islamic Arabia.³³ On the other hand, Israelites were not the only metamorphic origin of lizards, and in a less current report this species is said to be a metamorphosed Bedouin who used to kill passengers or rob pilgrims.³⁴

The following process can be imagined to have taken place in view of this evidence. When the sinful image of the Children of Israel became predominant, the popular pre-Islamic view about the Israelite origin of the lizard was applied to the myth of the Lost Tribes. This combination is reflected in the above traditions, which speak about lizards being survivors of an Israelite *sibṭ* that became lost. Soon enough, the textual formulation of the idea acquired Qur’ānic attire, which is reflected in traditions in which the lizard belongs to a metamorphosed *umma*.

Eventually, the scope of the Qur’ānic punitive transformation could be expanded to include not only apes and pigs, but also lizards, as well as other species not included in the Qur’ānic original list of metamorphosed creatures. The expanded scope is demonstrated in Shi‘i sources, where

³² *Loc. cit.* See also Jāhiz, *Hayawān*, VI, 77, 477. And see Ch. Pellat, s.v. “Maskh”, *EI*².

³³ For other kinds of beasts associated with Jews see Jāhiz, *Hayawān*, VI, 476–77.

³⁴ Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 493–94 (nos. 1–2); al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Ikhtisāṣ*, 137–38.

the theme of metamorphosis is dealt with extensively.³⁵ A tradition of the eighth *imām* Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā (°Alī ibn Mūsā, d. AH 203) describes the Israelite metamorphic origin of the lizard and the eel along similar lines to those of the apes and the pigs. He says that a group (*firqā*) of the Children of Israel did not believe in the miracle of the Table and was lost in wandering (*fa-tāhū*). Some of them fell into the sea (becoming eels), and others ended up on dry land (becoming lizards).³⁶ In other Shīʿī traditions the lizard is not mentioned, but the list of species into which the Children of Israel were transformed is otherwise longer and contains various kinds of fish (including the eel) and reptiles.³⁷

As with the apes and the pigs, the eel and other types of fish became ammunition in Shīʿī anti-Umayyad propaganda. A Shīʿī tradition says that the Marwānids were transformed into eels and so on, because they had shaved their beards and twisted their moustaches.³⁸ They are here accused of imitating the ways of non-Muslims, which again demonstrates the Muslims' fear of assimilation with others.

³⁵ For the idea of metamorphosis in Shīʿī Imāmi sources see Cook, "Dietary Law", 223. To the Shīʿī sources mentioned in nn. 43–47 add Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 493–94 (nos. 1–2); al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Ikhtisās*, 137–38; Kulīnī, VI, 243–47 (nos. 1–16).

³⁶ Kulīnī, VI, 246 (no. 14). Cf. Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, VI, 77; Cook, "Dietary Law", 241.

³⁷ Kulīnī, I, 350. Cf. ps.-Masʿūdi, *Ithbāt*, 80.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 346.

EXCURSUS B

THE TWELVE PRINCES

In his role as a “Judeo-Muslim”, Ka[°]b al-Aḥbār appears in Islamic tradition as providing Islamic sacred history with Biblical foundations that add to its messianic glory (Chapter 1).

In the following lines, yet another example of Ka[°]b’s role as provider of Biblical links designed to anchor the history of the Islamic *umma* in a divine scheme will be analysed. This time the links do not pertain to the conquests but rather to the Islamic state. Ka[°]b turns the caliphs into leaders whose emergence takes place according to a predestined Biblical scheme. However, the Biblical link is now established not merely to glorify the caliphs, but also and mainly to warn the Muslims of an impending calamity. Ka[°]b’s apocalypse will be examined below together with other traditions predicting the emergence of the caliphs, and this analysis will show yet another instance of tension between Bible and Qur’ān.

Bible: the Ishmaelite Link

The Biblical link of the Islamic caliphs comes out in an apocalypse recorded in *Kitāb al-ḥitan* of Nu[°]aym ibn Ḥammād, in which Ka[°]b predicts the emergence of twelve leaders among the Muslims. The apocalypse has its origin in Ḥimṣ, and its earliest versions were circulated by Ismā[°]il ibn [°]Ayyāsh (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 181) on the authority of “trustworthy masters” whom he does not mention by name. In one of these versions, Ka[°]b utters the apocalypse in response to a question posed to him by a person called Yashū[°] who elsewhere is described as a Christian hermit (*rāhib*), well versed in holy scriptures, who acquired his knowledge before the

emergence of the Prophet.¹ In the present version,² Ismāʿil ibn ʿAyyāsh says:

Our trustworthy masters have told us that Yashūʿ asked Kaʿb what the number was of the “kings” (*mulūk*) this community (*umma*) would have, and Kaʿb said: “I have found written in the Torah (*al-tawrāt*): ‘twelve rabbis (*rabbī*)’”.

This tradition obviously alludes to Genesis 17:20, in which God promises Abraham as follows:

As for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes (*nesiʿim*) shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

This passage inspired many Islamic traditions of annunciation in which the clause “great nation” (*goy gadol*) was interpreted as predicting the emergence of Muḥammad as *nabiyy ummī*.³ In the present context, however, attention is focused on the twelve predicted “princes” of Ishmael. In Hebrew they are called *nesiʿim* (sing. *nasīʿ*), i.e. “heads” (of a tribe, etc.). In English translations of the Bible, this word is usually rendered as “princes”, and in the Arabic text of Kaʿb’s apocalypse they are *rabbī* (pl. *rabbāniyyūn*), i.e. “rabbis”. This seems to reflect the form *rabrebin*, which is used in the Aramaic translation (Onkelos) for the Hebrew *nesiʿim*. The identification of Ishmael’s twelve princes with the leaders of “this community” indicates the well-known notion that Ishmael is the genealogical ancestor of the Arabs.

The Islamic rulers who are identified by Kaʿb with the princes of Ishmael are called “kings”, which seems to accord with the fact that Yashūʿ, who calls them so, is not a Muslim. Being a non-Muslim he is not expected to use the strictly Islamic term *khalīfa*, a “caliph”. For a non-

¹ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 65, 113, 424.

² *Ibid.*, 53. The *isnād*: Abū l-Mughīra al-Ḥimṣī (ʿAbd al-Quddūs ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Khawlānī, d. AH 212) ← Ismāʿil ibn ʿAyyāsh ← his masters ← Yashūʿ ← Kaʿb.

³ On Genesis 17:20 and *al-nabiyy al-ummi* see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 24. On the role of Genesis 17:20 in Islam see also Etan Kohlberg, “From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-ʿAshariyya”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976), 527.

Muslim, any Islamic ruler who is not a prophet is a “king”, and this is also how rulers are usually referred to in apocalyptic texts since the Book of Daniel.⁴ However, as will be seen below, the title “kings” has not always remained neutral, later acquiring a derogatory meaning. In the present version, however, the word “kings” is still devoid of such unflattering connotations.

Ka^cb’s apocalypse betrays much pessimism, in fact, fatalism. This is conveyed by the number 12, which is the central axis of the tradition. Twelve is the total number of the predicted rulers, which means that there will only be twelve caliphs. In other words, the twelfth leader will mark the end of the Islamic *umma*, in fact, the apocalyptic end of the world.

This enables us to determine the latest possible date in which the tradition could have been put into circulation. It certainly could not have come into existence when it was already clear that Islamic rule had endured long enough to produce more than twelve caliphs. The tradition, therefore, could have come into existence during the lifetime of the twelfth caliph at the latest.

The identity of the twelfth Muslim caliph is no mystery. He is ^cUmar II. His reign was indeed marked by an increased apocalyptic mood stemming from the fact that it coincided with the year AH 100.⁵ This date, which marked the end of the first Islamic era, precipitated an apocalyptic mood indicated in many texts predicting the end of the world (the Hour) at the turn of the second century.⁶ The apocalyptic fears were mixed with messianic expectations indicated by the fact that ^cUmar II was regarded as a *mahdī*, i.e. the long awaited redeemer, as so too was his predecessor, Sulaymān.⁷ Moreover, actual events which shattered Islamic society and

⁴ E.g. Daniel 7:17, 24.

⁵ For the coincidence of the reign of ^cUmar II with the turn of the second century cf. Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, 114; Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, I, 7. Numbered tables of the Umayyad and ^cAbbāsīd caliphs with dates of accession may be found in Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 403–404.

⁶ For the rise in apocalyptic expectations towards the turn of the second century see Suliman Bashear, “Muslim Apocalypses and the Hour: a Case-Study in Traditional Reinterpretation”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), 90–92.

⁷ Wilferd Madelung, s.v. “Mahdī”, *EI*², V, 231; Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*,

weakened Arab self-confidence took place during that same period; there was a growing sense of impending economic and social crisis which °Umar II tried to deal with through a policy of concessions towards non-Arab Muslims (*mawālī*) and Shi'is. The memory of the recent abortive siege of Constantinople (AH 97–98/715–16)⁸ must have contributed to the apocalyptic despair. In sum, the feeling was that the final *fitan* and the Hour were near at hand, and the situation was therefore ripe to read this menace back into the Biblical prophecy stating that Ishmael, i.e. the Arabs, would only have twelve “princes”. The twelfth “prince” turned out to be none other than °Umar II.

The apocalypse is available in further Syrian versions attributed to persons other than Ka'ab, and these confirm its pessimistic message. In one of them, the prophet Muḥammad appears as the first in the predicted line of twelve Islamic leaders. In this version, the secular title “kings” is not used, only “rabbis”, which makes it possible for the Prophet to join the group. The addition of the Prophet corresponds to the fact that Genesis 17:20 was perceived as containing a prophecy about the emergence of Muḥammad (see above). The apocalyptic statement is this time made by a (Christian?) person named Sirj al-Yarmūkī, who says that he found written in the Torah that this community would have twelve “rabbis”, one of whom would be their prophet, and when that number is completed they will oppress one another, behave unjustly and wage war on each other (*taghaw wa-baghaw wa-waqa'a ba'suhum baynahum*).⁹ The civil wars are explicitly mentioned here as immediately following the twelfth leader. The identity of the last ruler is no longer clear since the Prophet has been included in the group; he may still be °Umar II, provided that another ruler is excluded from the twelve.

103, 114. On °Umar II as *mahdī* and as fifth to the four *rāshidūn* see also Dāni, *Fitan*, V, no. 587; Ibn °Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi' bayān al-°ilm*, II, 185; Lālikā'ī, IV, nos. 2662, 2664–69.

⁸ For which see J.H. Mordtmann, s.v. “Ḳuṣṭantīniyya”, *El*², V, 533.

⁹ Nu°aym ibn Ḥammād, 53. See also Ibn °Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), IX, 214.

The Princes of Moses

There are yet other versions in which the Biblical link of the Islamic rulers has been retained, but these will be discussed later on. A version replacing the Biblical link with a Qurʾānic one must first be discussed, thus again demonstrating the literary tension between the Bible and the Qurʾān. With it we move from Syria to Iraq. This is a Kūfan version of the Companion ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd bearing the *isnād*: Mujālid ibn Saʿid ← al-Shaʿbi (ʿĀmir ibn Sharāḥīl, d. AH 103) ← Masrūq ibn al-Ajdaʿ (d. AH 63) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd ← Prophet. A concise version of the tradition was recorded by Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād,¹⁰ and the full text is available in other sources.¹¹ A group of Companions is assembled in Kūfa at the house of ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd, who reads the Qurʾān to them, upon which one of the Companions asks him: “Have you ever asked the Prophet how many caliphs (*khalīfa*) will rule (*yamlīku*)?” Ibn Masʿūd confirms that he did ask the Prophet this question and that Muḥammad’s answer was as follows: “Twelve, as was the number of the *nuqabāʾ* of Moses.” Muḥammad’s reply alludes to Sūrat al-Māʾida (5):12, which reads:

God took compact with the Children of Israel; and We raised up from them twelve chieftains (*nuqabāʾ*).

The Qurʾān most probably refers here to the Biblical twelve leaders of the tribes of the Children of Israel. In the Bible¹² they are again *nesiʾim*, but the Qurʾān has turned them into *nuqabāʾ*. Post-Qurʾānic sources applied their model to Muslims to whom the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad was delegated. This model is used already in Ibn Ishāq’s biography of the Prophet, where the title *nuqabāʾ* designates the twelve leaders of the Anṣār appointed by Muḥammad during the ʿAqaba meet-

¹⁰ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 52.

¹¹ Abū Yaʿlā, VIII, no. 5031; IX, nos. 5322–23; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 398, 406; *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1586; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, V, 193; Ibn Ḥajar, *Maʾālib*, II, nos. 2040–41; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 248; *Kanz*, VI, no. 14971; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 32; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 267.

¹² Numbers 7:2. Cf. Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 117.

ings.¹³ The latter are also compared to the twelve apostles (*ḥawāriyyūn*) of Jesus.¹⁴

The tradition of ʿAbdallāh ibn Masʿūd applies the Qurʾānic model of Moses' twelve *nuqabāʾ* to the twelve leaders of our apocalypse, and thus the Qurʾānic model of Moses has replaced the Biblical one of Ishmael. The prediction of the emergence of the twelve Islamic leaders is now attributed to the Prophet himself, who has replaced Kaʿb. The versions using the Qurʾānic model of the *nuqabāʾ* gained a wider circulation than did the versions employing the non-Qurʾānic model of the princes of Ishmael. The Iraqi provenance of the tradition employing the model of Moses indicates a rejection of strictly Biblical models originating in Syria. However, the basic message of the link between the caliphs and the twelve princes of Moses is not different from that between them and the twelve princes of Ishmael. In both cases their number is final and hence ominous.

The Revised Apocalypse of the Princes of Ishmael

As time went on and nothing happened after the twelfth caliph, new versions of the apocalypse emerged which reflect the conditions of the history of the Islamic *umma* that continued to unfold after AH 100. The apocalyptic message gradually lost its predominance, and the focus was shifted to the identity of the twelve leaders, whose inclusion in the apocalypse was designed to convey various political messages and eventually to unite the Muslims in loyalty to their legitimate leaders. In these versions, the number 12 was changed from an absolute figure representing the entire number of Muslim leaders, to a relative number representing only a select group of them, not necessarily succeeding one another. Thus, the number 12 became a modular numerical framework which could be fitted to ever-changing lists of specific personalities, the identity of which and the way they were described in being determined by the political bias of the authors of the revised versions.

¹³ Ibn Hishām, II, 85. For more on the circulation of the term *nuqabāʾ* see Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-ʿAshariyya", 529.

¹⁴ Ibn Hishām, II, 88.

The Ka^cb–Yashū^c Discourse

To begin with, there are expanded versions of the discourse between Ka^cb and Yashū^c which were recorded by Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād. These continued to be recorded on the authority of the same tradent, i.e. the Ḥimṣī Ismā^cil ibn ^cAyyāsh, who seems to be the one who collected all of them from his unnamed “masters”. Some basic features remain unchanged in all the versions, notably the title “kings” by which the twelve are described. The more archaic word “rabbis” is no longer used.

The main change in the expanded versions is the addition of specific names of select leaders, not necessarily of those that succeeded one another. The first are usually the first three Medinan caliphs: Abū Bakr, ^cUmar and ^cUthmān. The name of ^cAlī—the fourth leader—is missing from the list, which continues from ^cUthmān directly to Mu^cāwiya, the first Umayyad. The exclusion of ^cAlī indicates that the names for the list were selected by traditionists who were opposed to the Shī^cis and did not recognise ^cAlī’s position as a legitimate ruler entitled to appear on a predestined list.¹⁵

In one of the expanded versions of the discourse,¹⁶ Yashū^c asks Ka^cb whether he knows anything about the “kings” who are destined to succeed the Prophet. Ka^cb not only states that the Torah speaks of twelve “kings”, but also provides a list of their epithets. It opens with the titles of the first three Medinan caliphs: Abū Bakr (*Ṣiddīq*), ^cUmar (*Fārūq*) and ^cUthmān (*amīn*). These are immediately followed by nine Umayyads, the first being Mu^cāwiya, who is described as “the head of the kings” (*ra³s al-mulūk*). The twelfth and last on the list is most probably Marwān II,¹⁷ who was actually the last Umayyad caliph, and about whom it is said here that he will cause suffering; his siege of Ḥimṣ is explicitly mentioned.

This tradition seems to draw a line between the Sufyānid and the Marwānid branches of the Umayyad dynasty, the end of the former apparently being indicated by reference to “the last of the kings” (Mu^cāwiya II), who is followed by the “Owner of the Mark” (^cAbd al-Malik).

¹⁵ Cf. Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, 32.

¹⁶ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 113–14.

¹⁷ See Madelung, “Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ”, 148.

After the description of the last Umayyad, who is twelfth on the predicted list, the tradition states that another family (*ahl bayt*) will take over, which refers to the rise of the °Abbāsīd dynasty.

Thus, the names added to the apocalypse constitute a group of twelve which starts with Muḥammad's death and ends as late as the fall of the Umayyads. The °Abbāsīd revolution has become the mark of the beginning of the apocalyptic stage of human history. In terms of dates, the end of the reign of the predicted twelve has been postponed from *ca.* AH 100 to *ca.* AH 132.

A similar group of twelve is predicted in yet another version of the discourse between Yashū° and Ka°b,¹⁸ which is the most expanded version of the apocalypse. It is again transmitted by Ismā°il ibn °Ayyāsh, who this time explicitly states that some of his masters made additions to the tradition. Here Yashū° is made to elaborate on the virtues of Muḥammad, saying that a prophet will emerge whose religion will overcome any other religion, and goes on to ask Ka°b about the "kings" of Muḥammad's community. In Ka°b's response, the list of "kings" begins as before with the first three Medinan rulers; they are succeeded by nine Umayyads, the first being Mu°āwiya, and the last Marwān II. The latter concludes the group of twelve, and then the tribulations (*fitna*) of the °Abbāsīd revolution are described in detail. The names of al-Saffāh, al-Manšūr and al-Mahdī are specifically mentioned, and their advent portends the apocalyptic stage of history. The events connected with them are described with such common apocalyptic themes as *khasf* (swallowing up by the earth), and great battles with the forces of a false prophet (here: the Sufyāni). This version evidently did not gain its final form before the accession of al-Mahdī, the third °Abbāsīd caliph, i.e. not earlier than AH 158. This caliph assumed the title of "al-Mahdī", which may have added to the apocalyptic mood reflected in this version.

Yet another version of the same discourse¹⁹ lacks any numerical specification and contains but a select list of "kings" destined to rule after the Prophet: °Umar, °Uthmān (*al-amīn*) and Mu°āwiya, the "head of the kings".

¹⁸ Nu°aym ibn Ḥammād, 424–25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

The ʿAbbāsids Included

In yet another version of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, most of the Umayyads are excluded from the list, making room for ʿAbbāsīd figures to enter the group of twelve. The end of the reign of the twelve is thus postponed well into ʿAbbāsīd times. In this version only two Umayyads survive, these being the two first leaders of the Sufyānid line, Muʿāwiya and his son Yazīd.

Kaʿb's present version bears a Syrian/Başran *isnād*.²⁰ It speaks of twelve "managers" (*qayyim*) with whom God has blessed Ishmael. The group opens with the first three Medinan caliphs, who are singled out as the most excellent. Then comes Muʿāwiya, who is described as the "king" of Syria. He is followed by his son (Yazīd). These five names are immediately followed by ʿAbbāsīds: Saffāḥ, Maṣṣūr and two obscure figures: Sin²¹ and Salām. The latter two are glossed by the statement that they stand for righteousness and alleviation, respectively (*ṣalāḥ wa-ʿāfiya*). It is highly probable that the ʿAbbāsīd group originally consisted of seven figures completing the number twelve; three seem to have been omitted due to the inaccurate transmission of the text.

With the inclusion of the first ʿAbbāsīd caliphs in the predicted group, this dynasty became part of the line of Biblically pre-destined legitimate leaders, thus improving its previous status of unlawful agitators whose advent was believed to mark the beginning of an apocalyptic chaotic era.

The Apocalypse of Nāthā

The apocalypse of the twelve is also available in another Syrian tradition containing the vision of an obscure "prophet": Nāth, or Nāthā. His prophecy was again circulated by Ḥimṣī traditionists,²² and recorded by

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 64. See a shortened version, *ibid.*, 53. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 250. The *isnād*: Ḍamra ibn Rabīʿa al-Filastīnī (Syrian, d. AH 202) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Shawdhab (Başran/Syrian, d. ca. AH 150) ← Abū l-Minhāl (Sayyār ibn Salāma, Başran, d. AH 129) ← Abū Ziyād ← Kaʿb al-Aḥbār.

²¹ For this word see editor's note in Dānī, *Fitan*, V, 962 n. 3.

²² The *isnād*: al-Ḥakam ibn Nāfiʿ (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 211) ← Jarrāḥ ibn Mulayḥ (Ḥimṣī) ← Arṭāt ibn al-Mundhir (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 163) ← Nāthā.

Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād.²³ It has already been studied by Michael Cook,²⁴ who has apparently overlooked the role of the number 12 and therefore has ascribed the absence of certain Umayyad leaders to a lacuna in the text.²⁵ But there is no lacuna here. The general structure of the list is similar to that of the Ḥimṣī traditions transmitted by Ismā^cil ibn ^cAyyāsh, but the vocabulary is indeed somewhat different. The number 12 is explicitly stated, and the body of leaders is this time one of commanders (*li-wā³*); they are the twelve descendants of “the banished slave-girl” (*al-ama al-ṭarīda*), i.e. Hagar. The title *liwā³*, which is not used in the other Ḥimṣī versions, is quite neutral and enables Muḥammad to join the group of twelve. However, the Prophet is allotted a special position among them, because all the others are kings again, while he is a person that makes the angels rejoice when he appears; whoever believes in him is a true believer. His victory over the nations is described with specific reference to the conquest of Persia, Africa and Syria.

Each name of the other eleven commanders succeeding Muḥammad is preceded by the statement: *thumma yamliku*: “then there will rule....” ^cAlī is still missing. The descriptions of the first three of the eleven persons represent the first three Medinan caliphs, and after them Mu^cā-wiya and seven more Umayyads are described up to al-Walid II. Major events of the life and career of each of the eleven are recounted in detail, embellished with an apocalyptic chronological framework pertaining to the length of their life. The Sufyānids and the Marwānids are again differentiated from each other, the first of the former (Mu^cā-wiya) being described as “The Head (*ra³s*) of the Greater House”, with the first of the latter (^cAbd al-Malik) being the “Forehead of the House of the Second Head.”

The twelfth and last of the entire predicted group is al-Walid II (ibn Yazīd) who is described as *al-Shābb* (“The Youth”).²⁶ This ruler was childless and is considered the last of the Umayyads in several other tra-

²³ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 429–32.

²⁴ Michael Cook, “An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), 25–29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27–28 n. 29.

²⁶ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 430:2.

ditions.²⁷ After him reference is made to more leaders, but the clause *thumma yamliku* is not repeated concerning them, which definitely leaves them outside the twelve predicted “commanders”. The first of them is Marwān II, whose emergence marks the beginning of the apocalyptic turmoil, and whose accession is described as wind blowing from the *jawf*. He is followed by ʿAbbāsīd figures such as al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr, who are alluded to with cryptic descriptions and whose rise is also described as wind blowing from various directions.

As observed by Cook,²⁸ most parts of the ʿAbbāsīd revolution form the eschatological stage of the vision, which concludes with the emergence of the Qaḥṭānī, the fall of Constantinople, the retrieval of the Ark of the Covenant, and the emergence of the Dajjāl (Antichrist). Cook quite rightly dated the composition of the apocalypse (or more accurately, its final form) to ca. AH 160, which again brings us to the days of al-Mahdī.

On the whole, despite some peculiarities in the vocabulary, all parts of the tradition seem to have much more in common with the general run of the reshaped versions of the other Ḥimṣī apocalypses than Cook assumed. On the other hand, Cook’s arguments for the Christian origin of this specific apocalyptic text seem quite convincing, and there are even more features in the apocalypse which point to a Christian authorship, mainly the designation of the Muslims as sons of “the banished slave-girl”. This accords with the appellation “sons of Hagar” by which Christian apologists often call the Muslims.²⁹ However, the Christian origin of the apocalypse only shows what is evident in so many other Christian chronicles, namely, that the Christian authors were quite familiar with basic historiographical and apocalyptic Islamic (Ḥimṣī) models such as the apocalypse of the twelve, and used them in their own writings.³⁰

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 111, 112.

²⁸ Cook, “An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle”, 28–29.

²⁹ For which see Sidney H. Griffith, “The Prophet Muḥammad: His Scripture and his Message According to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac From the First Abbasid Century”, in Fahd, ed., *Vie du prophète Mahomet*, 122–24.

³⁰ E.g. Han J.W. Drijvers, “The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: a Syriac Apocalypse From the Early Islamic Period”, in Cameron and Conrad, eds., *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I, 202–204.

Companion Versions

Further versions of the apocalypse of the twelve leaders are equipped with *isnāds* of Companions of the Prophet, and all of them are of a non-Syrian provenance. While a few retain the link to Ishmael and the Torah, most of them no longer explicitly mention this Biblical link. They therefore again evince a process of disengagement from the Bible. In some cases, the Companions rely on the Prophet himself, thus making the apocalypse an independent product of his own prophetic powers.

Hudhayfa

One of the Companions on whose authority the apocalypse of the twelve has been circulated is Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, who figures frequently as a source for various apocalypses. His version of our apocalypse does not anchor it in the Bible, but rather appears as Ḥudhayfa's own observation. This is an Egyptian version which keeps dealing with a group of "kings", the last of whom being again the last Umayyad ruler. However, its structure has been reshaped according to a clear anti-Umayyad bias. Ḥudhayfa declares: "There will be after ʿUthmān twelve kings of the Banū Umayya". Someone asks him: "Caliphs (*khulafāʾ*)?" He says: "No, kings!"³¹

In this version, the finality of the group of twelve is no longer asserted, and the twelfth leader is merely the last of the Umayyads, i.e. he is no longer the last before the eschatological stage of history. This means that the focus of the tradition has been shifted from the idea of the approaching end after the twelfth leader to the status of the leaders themselves. In this particular version, the group of twelve consists of Umayyad "kings", while the first three Medinan rulers have been excluded from the group and have gained a more elevated title, "caliphs" (*khulafāʾ*). The main message of the tradition has thus become the degradation of the Umayyads.

This version reflects not only an increased anti-Umayyad impetus, but also an urge to legitimise the authority of the first three Medinan caliphs

³¹ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 52–53, 58, 75. See also Ibn Kathir, *Bidāya*, VI, 250. The *isnād*: Ibn Lahīʿa (Egyptian, d. AH 174) ← Khālid ibn Abī ʿImrān al-Tujībī (Tunisian, d. AH 129) ← Ḥudhayfa.

and thus to counter Shī'ī opposition to them. Hence, the present version must have originated in Egyptian circles opposed to the Umayyads as well as to the Shī'īs. The absence of 'Alī's name from the list again reflects the anti-Shī'ī determination to exclude him from the distinguished and predestined list of legitimate *khulafā'*.

Ibn 'Abbās

The Companion Ibn 'Abbās is also credited with a version of our apocalypse. Here again the group of twelve has been detached from the end of the world, as the twelfth of them is no longer the last before the Hour. The first 'Abbāsīd caliphs are mentioned once more as representing the eschatological stage of history, but although they are not included in the twelve, they are nevertheless presented as legitimate rulers. This version is quoted from Ibn 'Abbās by his Kūfan disciple Sa'id ibn Jubayr. He relates that he once heard people quoting to Ibn 'Abbās a tradition about twelve leaders who would be followed by an apocalyptic figure called the "Commander" (*al-amīr*), which probably stands for the "Commander of the Bands", who will be mentioned below. Ibn 'Abbās retorted: "By God, after them (i.e. the twelve) there will be leaders of our own family, namely, al-Saffāḥ, al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī, and he will hand over the leadership to 'Īsā ibn Maryam (= Jesus)."³²

This tradition plays on the significance of the title "Mahdī" which the third 'Abbāsīd caliph assumed, and assigns to this caliph the messianic role of the Islamic saviour.

Apocalypses predicting the emergence of al-Saffāḥ, al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī are also available in independent versions, without the prophecy of the twelve.³³

'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ

Most prevalent are the versions attributed to the Companion 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ. In all the versions of the apocalypse bearing his

³² Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, 52, 247, 271. Cf. Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 514; Ibn Kathīr, *Bi-dāya*, VI, 246. And see Madelung, s.v. "Mahdī", *EI*², V, 1233b.

³³ See Dānī, *Fitan*, V, no. 508, with further references given by the editor.

name, the title “caliphs” (*khulafāʾ*) is applied to the twelve predicted rulers, so that they are no longer “kings”. However, many versions are incomplete and only provide the names of the first three leaders. This is the case in the following version, which was circulated by Egyptian traditionists.³⁴ It was traced back to the Prophet himself, who predicts the future by his own prophetic power. He is quoted by ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr as stating that there will be twelve caliphs in the Islamic community, and immediately goes on to name Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. He then addresses ʿUthmān, urging him not to give up the “gown that God has dressed you with”, i.e. not to resign from the caliphate.³⁵ This is an allusion to what is known as the “First Civil War (*fitna*)”, which started with the murder of ʿUthmān. This version implies that the Medinan rulers are included in the twelve, but the rest of the group is left unspecified. As presented before us, the apocalypse is only concerned with highlighting the status of the first Righteous Caliphs.

A similar version of the same Companion bears a Baṣran *isnād* with this upper part: Muḥammad ibn Sīrin (d. AH 110) ← ʿUqba ibn Aws al-Sadūsī ← ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr. The tradition is available in various versions, one of which was recorded by Ibn Abī Shayba.³⁶ Here ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr is made to state that there will be twelve caliphs in the Islamic community, but again mentions only Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. He says that the name of each of the three is already known to the Muslims by its correct form (*aṣabtum ismahu*). ʿUmar is called *qarn min ḥadid* (“Iron Horn”³⁷), and ʿUthmān is *dhū l-nūrayn* (“Owner of the Two

³⁴ The *isnād*: al-Layth ibn Saʿd (Egyptian, d. AH 175) ← Khālid ibn Yazīd (Egyptian, d. AH 139) ← Saʿid ibn Abī Hilāl (Egyptian, d. AH 135) ← Rabīʿa ibn Sayf (Egyptian, d. ca. AH 120) ← Shufayy ibn Mātiʿ al-Aṣbaḥī (Egyptian, d. AH 105) ← ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr.

³⁵ Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 1171, 1182 (cf. nos. 1152, 1169); Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, I, nos. 12, 142; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, IX, no. 8744; See also *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, V, 181.

³⁶ Ibn Abī Shayba, XII, no. 12102. The name of the Companion is here distorted, being turned into ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar. This is also the case in *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, IX, 92. But see the correct text in Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 1154 (from Ibn Abī Shayba).

³⁷ Cf. Gil, *A History of Palestine*, nos. 78–79.

Lights”); it is stated that he was “given a twofold of God’s mercy” (*ūtiya kiflayni min raḥmatihī*³⁸) and that he was wrongfully killed.

More detailed is another version³⁹ with the same upper *isnād* in which the predicted leaders fall into two groups, the first again being the three Medinan caliphs (Abū Bakr, °Umar, °Uthmān). The second group consists of seven figures, the last of whom is the “Commander of the Bands” (*amīr al-°uṣab* = South Arabian saviour⁴⁰). The first in this group are the °Abbāsīd al-Saffāḥ and al-Manšūr, followed by al-Mahdī, al-Amin, Sin and Salām. Six of them, it is stated, will be of Ka°b ibn Lu°ayy (i.e. Quraysh), and one (= the Commander) will be of Qaḥṭān, i.e. of Yemeni descent. The present version—like the above Syrian ones—acquired its final form not earlier than the days of the °Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī, i.e. ca. AH 160. The first °Abbāsīds are here included in the group of twelve, and al-Mahdī is again the last before the Hour.

The list is said to have been discovered by °Abdallāh ibn °Amr during the battle of Yarmūk, in an (ancient) book (*fī ba°d al-kutub*). This restores the Biblical link of the apocalypse, though not directly, and not explicitly to Ishmael. It is further stated that all the persons mentioned are virtuous persons, such as never seen before.

The first group in this version consists only of three names, and it may be presumed that it originally contained two more names which completed the total number to twelve. In the above tradition of Ka°b, the three Medinan caliphs are immediately followed by Mu°āwiya and his son Yazīd, and this seems also to have been the case in the apocalypse of °Abdallāh ibn °Amr. It may be assumed that these two names were deliberately omitted during the process of transmission, which made the group

³⁸ Cf. Qur°ān 57:28. °Uthmān’s title *Dhū l-nūrayn* is usually explained as referring to Muḥammad’s two daughters, Ruqayya and Umm Kulthūm, who were his wives. Both died before he did. Cf. Lālikā°i, IV, no. 2576. On °Uthmān’s marriages see Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad: a Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1997), 363–70.

³⁹ Nu°aym ibn Ḥammād, 63. Cf. *ibid.*, 247. And see Suyūṭi, *Akhbār al-mahdī*, no. 235. See also Kister, “*Haddithū*”, 224.

⁴⁰ For the “Commander of the Bands” being an appellation of the Qaḥṭāni, see Madelung “Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ”, 150–54. He observes (p. 153) that “The Qaḥṭāni thus would be miraculously chosen to unite the °uṣab....”

of twelve short by two. The names were expunged due to the °Abbāsīd trend of the traditionists.

One more version of °Abdallāh ibn °Amr,⁴¹ with the same upper *is-nād* of Muḥammad ibn Sirīn, etc., confirms that his apocalypse originally contained the names of the first two Sufyānid rulers. The list again consists of two major parts containing this time five and six persons, respectively. The latter group must have originally been of seven, as in the previous version. The five of the first group are the first three Medinan rulers, followed by Mu°āwiya and his son Yazīd. Mu°āwiya is praised as the “King of the Holy Land”. The three Medinan caliphs are singled out as the most virtuous on the list, and their names and appellations are spelled out as in the former versions. The audience thereupon poses a question to °Abdallāh ibn °Amr: “Will you not mention al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn?” He then repeats the same list (without mentioning the latter two), which is an explicit manifestation of the anti-Shi°ī tilt of the tradition. The second group of six begins with al-Saffāḥ and concludes with the “Commander of the Bands” (*amīr al-°uṣab*). The other four are Salām, Maṣūr, Jābir and Amīn. It is further stated that they (i.e. the six) will all be of Ka°b ibn Lu°ayy (i.e. Quraysh), except for one (i.e. the Commander of the Bands), who will be of Qaḥṭān.

In sum, the basic numerical structure of °Abdallāh ibn °Amr’s list of twelve seems to be 5–7. The five are the first three Medinan rulers plus the first two Sufyānids, and the seven are the first °Abbāsīds and a few messianic figures. Since the various versions acquired their final form in °Abbāsīd times, it is clear why in some of them the two Umayyads were expunged altogether.

In fact, there is one more tradition with the same numerical structure in which the two Umayyads are again missing, while two other figures have been added instead of them. The tradition is of the Egyptian Hārūn ibn Sa°īd al-Ayli (d. AH 253), and in it the link to Ishmael is again explicit. Hārūn relates that he used to know a Jew who had become a Muslim, who from time to time read to him chapters from the Bible, and would then burst into tears. One day, the Jew read to him the following

⁴¹ Nu°aym ibn Ḥammād, 60, 247. Cf. Ibn Sa°d, III, 170; Ibn Abi °Āṣim, *Sunna*, no. 1153; Dāni, *Fitan*, V, nos. 512 (Anas ibn Sirīn instead of Muḥammad ibn Sirīn), 515.

passage from the first book of the Torah: “I will produce from the loins of Ishmael twelve kings”. Hārūn recounted this to his friends, explaining that God produced from the loins of Ishmael twelve nations (*umam*). This is no doubt an Arabic presentation of the Hebrew *goy* of Genesis 17:20. Hārūn continues that the “nations” stand for the leaders (*a'imma*, sing. *imām*) of the Muslims. This is based on the fact that the Arabic words for “nations” and “leaders” stem from the same root (*ʿ.m.m.*). Hārūn goes on to say that the first among the twelve leaders are Muḥammad, Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿUmar II. These are five, and seven remain (to emerge). Hārūn concludes his story with the statement that he thinks that the tradition of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr draws on this Biblical prophecy.⁴²

In Hārūn’s presentation, the predicted group is again of the structure of 5–7, the only difference being that the caliphs Muʿāwiyā and Yazīd are replaced by the Prophet and ʿUmar II. The names of the first two Umayyads disappeared due to the anti-Umayyad (or rather, anti-Sufyānid) trend of the statement. The second group of seven is not specified, but certainly represents the first ʿAbbāsids, as in the above traditions attributed to ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr. The apocalyptic message of the tradition is again vivid, as indicated by the emotional reaction of the converted Jew at the discovery that only seven leaders remained to rule before the End.

ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr: Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy

There are some other shorter versions of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr in which the focus of attention has been shifted from the names of the rulers to their genealogical descent: “Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy”. This genealogical designation is here applied to the entire group of twelve and not just to the ʿAbbāsids, as in the above versions.

One of these genealogical versions is contained in a tradition recorded by Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād in which ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUthmān ibn Khuthaym (Meccan, d. AH 132) relates that ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr took the Meccan Companion Abū l-Ṭufayl (ʿĀmir ibn Wāthila, d. AH 110) by the hand, and said to him:

⁴² Dāni, *Fitan*, V, no. 516.

Oh ʿĀmir ibn Wāthila, twelve caliphs of Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy [will rule], and then fighting and killing [will prevail]; from then on, people will no longer be united under one leader, until the Hour comes.⁴³

In this case, the group of twelve caliphs is again detached from the apocalyptic end of world history, as the last of them is not the last before the Hour, but merely the last to enjoy the undivided support of the entire community.

The genealogical designation “Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy” is used to legitimise the authority of the tribe of Quraysh and to defy opposing circles such as the Qaḥṭānis, who did not acknowledge the legitimate right of the Qurashī caliphs to lead the Islamic community. Of course, this version could also use the name of a more famous Qurashī ancestor, i.e. Quṣayy, but there was a very good reason to prefer the more remote ancestor—Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy. Whereas Quṣayy is the ancestor of the Hāshimīs (Shīʿis and ʿAbbāsids) as well as of the Umayyads, Kaʿb is also the ancestor of Taym and ʿAdī, the clans of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, respectively. The tradition thus implies the legitimacy of the rule of the Umayyads as well as of the first Medinan caliphs. The name of Quṣayy would not have served this purpose, because it covers a narrower section of Quraysh. Indeed, his name is said to have been preferred mainly by Shīʿis wishing to exclude Abū Bakr and ʿUmar from the list of legitimate Qurashī caliphs.⁴⁴

It should be noted that in another less current version of the statement made by ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr to Abū l-Ṭufayl, the ancestor’s name is somewhat different, ʿAmr ibn Kaʿb. Here the prophecy is attributed to the Prophet himself, who reportedly stated: “When twelve people of the sons of ʿAmr ibn Kaʿb have ruled (*malaka*), killing and fighting will begin”.⁴⁵ The genealogical designation is somewhat obscure here, because none of the ruling caliphs except Abū Bakr belonged to ʿAmr ibn Kaʿb, a subgroup of the Banū Taym.⁴⁶

⁴³ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 52. See also *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, XIII, 183–84.

⁴⁴ M.J. Kister, “Social and Religious Concepts of Authority in Islam”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 18 (1994), 97.

⁴⁵ Ṭabarānī, *Awsaṭ*, IV, no. 3865; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, V, 193 (from Ṭabarānī).

⁴⁶ On the members of ʿAmr ibn Kaʿb see e.g. Ibn Qudāma, *Ansāb al-Qurashiyyin*,

ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar

Another statement using the name of Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy is available in a Medinan tradition of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar (d. AH 73), whose name is often interchanged with that of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr.⁴⁷ Ibn ʿUmar is said to have addressed an audience of Quraysh comprising members of Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy, saying: “There will be twelve caliphs from you”.

Prophetic Versions

Most prevalent are the versions which are traced back to the Prophet himself. These bring to culmination the disengagement of the apocalypse of the twelve leaders from the Bible, in that it now entirely originates from the prophetic powers of Muḥammad and not from a scripture.

Muḥammad’s versions too are focused on the genealogical descent of the twelve, which is designated as “Quraysh”.⁴⁸ This is not a name of a specific ancestor but rather a collective designation that has no definite genealogical framework. These versions could suit many Islamic factions—Umayyads,⁴⁹ ʿAbbāsids, as well as Shīʿīs—and therefore gained a universal status, eventually becoming part of the mainstream of Islamic *ḥadīth*. Here they serve the main purpose shared by many other anti-heretical traditions, namely, to unite the *umma* behind the leadership of the Qurashī caliphs.⁵⁰

In most of these canonical versions, the Companion quoting the Prophet is the Kūfan Jābir ibn Samura al-Suwāʿī (d. AH 74). As indicated by his *nisba*, he stems from the clan of Suwāʿa, who had their own quarter in Kūfa.⁵¹ The Suwāʿa belonged to ʿĀmir ibn Ṣaʿṣaʿa, a subgroup of Muḍar to which the Quraysh also belonged. Hence, it is only natural that

305–19.

⁴⁷ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 52. The *isnād*: Muḥammad ibn Zayd ibn al-Muḥājir al-Qurashī (Medinan) ← Ṭalḥa ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAwf al-Zuhri (Medinan, d. AH 97) ← Ibn ʿUmar.

⁴⁸ Cf. Kister, “Concepts of Authority”, 96, with n. 36.

⁴⁹ Thus Muʿāwiya is said to have adduced a statement of the Prophet asserting the right of Quraysh to rule. See Ṭabarāni, *Awsaṭ*, IV, no. 3152.

⁵⁰ For other such traditions see Kister, “Concepts of Authority”, *passim*.

⁵¹ *Tārīkh Baghdād*, I, 186.

a Prophetic utterance legitimising the right of Quraysh to lead the Muslims should be transmitted on the authority of this Jābir ibn Samura. The fact that Jābir is Kūfan may indicate a certain sympathy for ʿAlī, particularly since his mother was the sister of Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, a renowned Qurashī (Zuhri) supporter of ʿAlī.⁵² In this case, the term “Quraysh”, which has replaced the label Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy, would certainly stand just for the Hāshimī branch of Quraysh. Hence, it may be assumed that already in the late Umayyad period—which is when the present versions seem to have originated—the apocalypse of the twelve was beginning to assume a Hāshimī connotation which could suit both the Shīʿīs and the ʿAbbāsids (and this had occurred well before the definite Shīʿī Twelver dogma came into existence⁵³). However, the inclusion of Jābir’s tradition in several Sunnī compilations means that the title “Quraysh” was taken by the authors of these compilations in its broader sense comprising the Umayyad and the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs alike.

Most versions of Jābir’s tradition preserve the basic original structure of the apocalypse of the twelve, the name Quraysh remaining a secondary element in it. This is the case in the version recorded by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in the “book” of *Aḥkām* (“Administration”).⁵⁴ Here Jābir is quoted by the Qurashī Successor ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿUmayr (Kūfan, d. AH 136), who relates that Jābir said:

I heard the Prophet say: “There will be twelve leaders (*amīr*)”. Then he said something which I did not hear. My father said: “He (i.e. the Prophet) said that all of them [would be] of Quraysh.”

In this tradition, the title Quraysh has been annexed to the apocalypse through the intervention of Jābir’s father, who thus corroborates the authenticity of the addition. The confirmatory role of the father is essen-

⁵² For Jābir’s mother see Ibn ʿAsākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), V, 356. For Saʿd’s pro-ʿAlid utterances see, *ibid.*, IX, 269.

⁵³ And see also Kohlberg’s comment on these versions in his “From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-ʿAshariyya”, 530: “In fact, it is not inconceivable that this tradition was originally aimed against the Umayyads, while upholding the right of Quraysh to rule”.

⁵⁴ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 101 (93:51). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 93; Dānī, *Fitan*, V, no. 507; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, nos. 1875, 2062; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, VI, 519.

tial, because Jābir himself, who died more than 60 years after the Prophet's death, must have been very young during the Prophet's lifetime. Therefore, the attribution of such a crucial Prophetic statement to him had to be affirmed by an adult who was made part of the audience addressed by the Prophet.

The text of the tradition of Jābir as quoted by the same ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿUmayr is different in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, where it occurs in the "book" of *Imāra* ("Authority").⁵⁵ Instead of *yakūn*: "There will be [twelve leaders]", it opens with *lā yazālu* ("will not cease to"), which shifts the focus of attention from their number to the situation expected to prevail under them. With such a textual setting, the apocalypse has been made to convey the idea that the leaders of Quraysh are a source for consolidation, success and victory. The number 12 is thus again deprived of its absolute significance, being taken to represent only the leaders possessing these blessed qualities. The present Prophetic statement runs as follows:

The affair (*amr*) of the people will not cease (*lā yazālu*) to proceed (*mādiyan*), as long as twelve persons lead them.

This is followed by the addition of the Quraysh clause by Jābir's father.

The interchange of *yakūn* and *lā yazālu* also takes place in the tradition of Jābir as transmitted on his authority by other Kūfan Successors. One of them is Simāk ibn Ḥarb al-Bakrī (Kūfan, d. AH 123). His *yakūn* version was recorded by al-Tirmidhī in the section of *Fitan*,⁵⁶ and has been repeated in several other sources.⁵⁷ In some of them, Simāk is just one of a group of Successors quoting Jābir, and the name of Quraysh is added to the apocalypse either by Jābir's father or by unidentified persons present in the audience. Simāk's *lā yazālu* version of Jābir's tradi-

⁵⁵ Muslim, VI, 3 (33: *Bāb al-nās tabaʿ li-Quraysh*). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 97, 97–98, 98, 101, 107; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1876 (the clause about Quraysh is missing).

⁵⁶ Tirmidhī/*Tuḥfa*, VI, 471–74 (31:48).

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Jaʿd, *Musnad*, no. 2660 (with other Successors quoting Jābir); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 90, 92, 94, 95, 99, 108; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, nos. 1896, 1923, 1936, 2007 (*sa-yaqūm* instead of *yakūn*), 2044, 2063 (with other Successors quoting Jābir), 2070.

tion was recorded in the compilations of Muslim and Ibn Ḥibbān.⁵⁸ In it the Prophet states that Islam will not cease (*lā yazālu*) to be strong and stable (*‘azīz*) until twelve caliphs [have ruled]. In this version, the Prophetic statement is again completed by Jābir’s father, who tells his son that the Prophet said that all the leaders will be of Quraysh.

In the apocalypse of the twelve leaders, as quoted from Jābir by al-Aswad ibn Sa‘id al-Hamdāni (Kūfan ?), the name of Quraysh is included in the initial Prophetic statement and yet another supplementary clause is added to the apocalypse; it contains a statement to the effect that after twelve leaders of Quraysh have ruled, a chaotic stage in history will begin. The latter statement is added to the apocalypse by the Prophet himself. This setting of the apocalypse is again available in two versions, one—recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān⁵⁹—begins with *yakūn*, the other—recorded by Abū Dāwūd⁶⁰—with *lā yazālu*. In the *lā yazālu* version, the Prophet states that the Islamic *umma* will not cease to be successful and victorious until twelve caliphs of Quraysh have ruled. In both versions, the Prophet makes his initial prophecy then returns home, where the people of Quraysh ask him: “And then what?” The Prophet replies: “Then there will be killing (*al-harj*)”. Implicit here is the idea that leaders succeeding the twelve will no longer be able to prevent civil wars among Muslims.

Further Kūfan versions of the tradition of Jābir appear in the canonical *ḥadīth* compilations, and most of them are assembled in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim in the “book” of *Imāra*. All of them are of the *lā yazālu* type. One is quoted from Jābir by the Kūfan Ḥuṣayn ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. AH 136). The pattern is identical to the above *lā yazālū* traditions: the Prophet states that the affair of the Muslims will prevail until twelve caliphs have ruled, and Jābir’s father provides the complementary

⁵⁸ Muslim, VI, 3 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba‘ li-Quraysh*); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6662. See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 90, 100, 106; Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 1278; Ṭabarāni, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1964.

⁵⁹ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6661. See also Ibn al-Ja‘d, *Musnad*, no. 2662; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 92.

⁶⁰ Abū Dāwūd, II, 421 (35:1). The version here is incomplete. For the complete one, see Ṭabarāni, *Kabīr*, II, no. 2059; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, VII, no. 6378; Bayhaqī, *Dalā’il*, VI, 520.

clause about Quraysh.⁶¹ A *yakūn* version with the same upper *isnād* (opening with the equivalent *yaqūm*) is also available, but did not gain entrance into the canonical compilations.⁶²

In another *lā yazālū* tradition of Jābir ibn Samura, as recorded by Muslim,⁶³ this Companion is quoted by al-Sha^cbi. Al-Sha^cbi's transmission is widely current, also appearing in Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Ḥibbān;⁶⁴ more detailed versions of his, which include the time and place of the announcement, appear in several compilations.⁶⁵ The time is Muḥammad's farewell pilgrimage, and the place is either Minā or ^cArafa, two well-known stations of the Meccan *ḥajj*. The pattern in all the versions remains the same (the Quraysh clause is confirmed by Jābir's father), but is sometimes concise, the Quraysh clause being quoted directly from the Prophet without the father's mediation.⁶⁶ In one case, the Quraysh clause is entirely missing.⁶⁷ A *yakūn* version of al-Sha^cbi's transmission is also available, but did not gain entrance into canonical compilations.⁶⁸ It is stated here that twelve rulers (*qayyim*) will rule, and whoever abandons them can cause them no harm. The Quraysh clause is then provided by Jābir's father.

Another Kūfan version of Jābir's tradition is found in Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*. This one is quoted from Jābir by Abū Khālid al-Aḥmasī, and is again of the *lā yazālū* type. The clause about Quraysh is provided by Jābir's father.⁶⁹ However, in a rare version of the same transmission the clause adduced by the father does not mention Quraysh, but merely states that all twelve caliphs will enjoy the support of the entire *umma*.⁷⁰ There

⁶¹ Muslim, VI, 3 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba^c li-Quraysh*). See also Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, II, no. 2068.

⁶² Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, II, no. 2067.

⁶³ Muslim, VI, 3, 3–4 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba^c li-Quraysh*).

⁶⁴ Abū Dāwūd, II, 421 (35:1); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6663.

⁶⁵ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 87**, 88, 90, 93**, 96**, 98**, 99***, 101; Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, II, nos. 1791, 1795–1801.

⁶⁶ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 52.

⁶⁷ Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, II, no. 1792.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, II, no. 1794.; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, III, no. 2943; Abū Nu^caym, *Hilya*, IV, 333.

⁶⁹ Abū Dāwūd, II, 421 (35:1). See also Ibn Abi ^cĀṣim, *Sunna*, no. 1123; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 519–20.

⁷⁰ Ṭabarāni, *Kabir*, II, no. 1849.

is also a version in which the Successor quoting Jābir is called Abū Khālid al-Wālibī (Kūfan, d. AH 100). In this version, which was not recorded in the canonical compilations of *ḥadīth*, the name of Quraysh is part of the initial *lā yazālu* statement of the Prophet, the father playing here no part at all.⁷¹

Aside from the numerous Kūfan versions of Jābir's tradition, there is a Medinan one which was also recorded in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. This is quoted from Jābir by the Medinan °Āmir ibn Sa°d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (d. AH 104); being Sa°d's son, he was a cousin of Jābir, who, as seen above, was the son of Sa°d's sister. This version opens with a story of Sa°d, who relates that he once sent a letter to Jābir asking him to impart to him some of the traditions he had heard from the Prophet. In response, Jābir wrote down for him some of these traditions, all of which were eschatological. The first is the apocalypse of the twelve, which Jābir says was announced by the Prophet on a certain Friday. It is again of the *lā yazālu* type, and the name of Quraysh forms part of the initial statement: "The religion [of Islam] will not cease to prevail till the Hour (*al-sā°a*) comes, or till twelve caliphs have ruled over you, all of whom are of Quraysh."⁷² This concludes the canonical compilations.

In other sources, one may find further versions of Jābir's statement quoted from him by less renowned Successors. All of them are of the *lā yazālu* type, and the Successors quoting them from Jābir are mostly Kūfan: °Ubaydallāh ibn al-Qibṭiyya (= Ibn Abī °Abbād),⁷³ al-Musayyab ibn Rāfi° (d. AH 105),⁷⁴ Ziyād ibn °Ilāqa (d. AH 153),⁷⁵ and Ma°bad ibn Khālid (d. AH 118).⁷⁶ In their versions Jābir's father is absent, the clause "all of them are of Quraysh" being quoted directly from the Prophet. The father reappears in the version of a certain al-Naḍr ibn Ṣālih,⁷⁷ and of the

⁷¹ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 107; Dānī, *Fitan*, II, no. 199; V, no. 506; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1852.

⁷² Muslim, VI, 4 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba° li-Quraysh*). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 86, 87–88; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, nos. 1808, 1809.

⁷³ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1841; *idem*, *Awsat*, IV, no. 863.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1883.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 2061.

⁷⁶ *Idem*, *Awsat*, IV, no. 3950.

⁷⁷ *Idem*, *Kabīr*, II, no. 2060.

Başran ʿAṭāʾ ibn Abi Maymūna (d. AH 131).⁷⁸ The latter version is of the *yakūn* type, and the clause “all of them are of Quraysh” is confirmed to Jābir by his father as well as by ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. The twelve leaders are depicted as confronting firmly their foes’ enmity.

Among the traditions that did not gain entrance into the canonical compilations, one is related on the authority of a different Companion, namely, Abū Juḥayfa al-Suwāʾī (Wahb ibn ʿAbdallāh, d. AH 74), a fellow tribesman of Jābir ibn Samura who was an official in ʿAlī’s administration.⁷⁹ His tradition⁸⁰ is transmitted by his son ʿAwn, and its basic pattern is the same as that of Jābir ibn Samura’s traditions. As with the latter, Abū Juḥayfa is assumed to have been underage during the Prophet’s lifetime, and the clause “all of them are of Quraysh” is again confirmed to him by an adult, this time his uncle. The apocalypse itself is of the *lā yazālu* type.

To sum up the apocalypse of the twelve in its “Quraysh form”, the Companions to whom it was attributed as a Prophetic utterance are of Muḍar (Suwāʾa of ʿĀmir ibn Ṣaʿṣaʿa) and probably of pro-ʿAlid inclinations, which means that the combination of the prophecy about the twelve leaders and the clause “all of them are of Quraysh” may have had its origin in ʿAlid circles. However, the apocalypse gained wide circulation in the Sunni sources, including canonical compilations, which means that the title “Quraysh” was taken by the compilers in its broadest sense, which pertains to the entire line of Sunnī caliphs.

The two patterns of the structure of the apocalypse—*yakūn* and *lā yazālu*—reflect two focal points of the prophecy. In the *yakūn* type, the emphasis is on the number of the leaders, as it is also in the earliest Syrian versions of the apocalypse. In the second, stress is placed on the situation prevailing under the leadership of the twelve leaders, which implies that their number is not absolute; this structure may therefore be

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 2073; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, V, 194.

⁷⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, XI, 145 (no. 281).

⁸⁰ *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1584; Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, XXII, no. 308; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, VII, no. 6207; *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, V, 193.

regarded as a secondary elaboration on the *yakūn* pattern. The *lā yazālu* type is indeed the one most prevalent in the canonical compilations.

Finally, the combination of the apocalypse of the twelve and the Quraysh clause, although evidently secondary, created a problem of interpretation with which Muslim scholars tried to cope. Their discussions are designed to provide a clear-cut historical identification of the twelve Qurashī leaders, but this will not be discussed here.⁸¹

30 Years + Twelve

A Prophetic version of the apocalypse of the twelve appears combined with another widely current prophecy of Muḥammad, the one predicting that the caliphate after his death will last 30 years, and then kings will rule. The combined version was recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān⁸² and is of the Baṣran Sa'īd ibn Jumhān (d. AH 136), who quotes Safīna, a client (*maw-lā*) of the Prophet. The latter heard Muḥammad say:

The caliphate will last 30 years, and the rest of [the leaders] will be kings (*mulūk*); the number of caliphs and kings is twelve.

The prophecy about the 30 years of caliphate postulates that ʿAlī too is a caliph, together with Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. The reign of all four indeed adds up to 30 years, which is explicitly stated in other versions of the prophecy.⁸³ Thus, unlike the above versions in which ʿAlī is excluded from the list of twelve, he is now admitted, being included

⁸¹ See mainly Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, VI, 520–23; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, 36–41; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 248–50; *Fath al-bārī*, XIII, 181–86. See also Kohlberg, “From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-ʿAshariyya”, 529–30.

⁸² Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6657.

⁸³ Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, 57. See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 220, 221; *idem*, *Faḍāʿil al-ṣaḥāba*, I, nos. 789, 790; II, no. 1027; ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad, *Sunna*, nos. 1327–30; Abū Dāwūd, II, 514–15 (39:8); Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VI, 476–78 (31:48); Nasāʿi, *Kubrā*, V, no. 8155 (76:5); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6943; *Mustadrak*, III, 71, 145; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 1181, 1185; Ṭabarī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-sunna*, no. 26; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, I, nos. 13, 136; VII, nos. 6442–44; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, VI, 341–42; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 184; Lālikāʿi, IV, nos. 2654–56; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣāʿiṣ*, II, 421; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 198, 220, 249. And see also Ṭaḥāwī, *Mushkil*, IV, 313. And cf. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 41 n. 3.

among the more elevated of them, i.e. a caliph and not a king. In other isolated versions of the prophecy of the 30 years of caliphate, the “kings” are identified as the Umayyads.⁸⁴ However, although the tradition distinguishes between caliphs and kings, it does not necessarily mention the latter in a derogatory sense. At least in one other version, the “kings” appear to be no less legitimate than the caliphs. This is a less current Baṣran version reported on the authority of Abū Bakra, and in it Muḥammad adds an allusion to the Qurʾānic notion that God gives sovereignty (*al-mulk*) to whom He wishes.⁸⁵ To this Muʿāwiya is said to have proudly responded: “We are pleased to be kings.”⁸⁶

The present version of the statement in which the total number of caliphs and kings is 12 has caused some trouble to Muslim scholars. Ibn Ḥibbān suggested that the number 12 here pertains to the entire list of rulers from Abū Bakr to ʿUmar II. He provides a detailed list of these twelve and seems to claim that ʿUmar II is the last on the list because he was the last of the “Righteous” (*rāshidūn*) Caliphs. Since the Prophet wished to mention all the Righteous Caliphs and not just the first four of them—who ruled for 30 years—he also mentioned the rulers who reigned between the fourth Righteous Caliph (ʿAlī) and ʿUmar II, hence the number 12.⁸⁷ Strained as this solution may be, it nevertheless confirms the suggestion made at the beginning of this Excursus, to the effect that the apocalypse of the twelve did indeed originally pertain to twelve successive rulers, the last being ʿUmar II. Unlike Ibn Ḥibbān, who takes ʿUmar II to be the last of the *rāshidūn*, it has been suggested above that ʿUmar II features in the apocalypse as the final leader ever to rule the

⁸⁴ Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 1107.

⁸⁵ Qurʾān 2:247; 3:26. I thank Avraham Hakim for drawing my attention to the Qurʾānic origin of the idea.

⁸⁶ Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil*, VI, 342; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, II, 421; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 198, 220. The *isnād*: ʿAlī ibn Zayd ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Mulayka (Baṣran, d. AH 131) ← ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakra al-Thaqafī (Baṣran, d. AH 96) ← Abū Bakra al-Thaqafī (Nufayʿ ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Kalada. Baṣran Companion, d. AH 50) ← Prophet. For a version with a less happy reaction of Muʿāwiya see Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 186.

⁸⁷ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, 36–41.

Muslims before the world will come off to its apocalyptic end at the turn of the second century AH.

The Shi'ā

As already shown by Etan Kohlberg, the apocalypse of the twelve reappears in Shi'ī sources.⁸⁸ Here the absolute significance of the number 12 is preserved, together with its initial eschatological context: twelve persons will lead the Muslims in succession, from the death of the Prophet till the End of Days. The identity of the persons changes, of course, from "kings" or "caliphs" to *imāms*, so that a Prophetic confirmation of Twelver Shi'ī dogma is provided.

In fact, the Shi'ī compilers recorded some of the earliest apocalypses noted above, for example, the one of Sirj al-Yarmūki,⁸⁹ as well as the earliest version of the Ka'b–Yashū' discourse.⁹⁰

However, a Shi'ī reshaping did occur in places, especially in versions containing specific names of caliphs, such as the first three Medinan ones. The traditions were reproduced in Shi'ī sources without the names. This applies to one of the above traditions of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ which reappears in Shi'ī sources,⁹¹ but only with its first part ("There will be after me twelve successors"). However, versions with 'Abbāsīd figures were not always excluded, and the above tradition of Ibn 'Abbās which mentions al-Saffāh, al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī as succeeding the twelve predicted caliphs has been recorded in a Shi'ī compilation.⁹²

A Shi'ī revision seems also to be behind a peculiar version in which the apocalypse of the twelve is glossed by a statement to the effect that two of the twelve will be of the family of Muḥammad, one living 40 years, and the other 30. This version is attributed to the Baṣran Abū l-Jald al-Jawnī (Jaylān ibn Farwa), who is said to have been well versed in holy

⁸⁸ Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'Ashariyya", 526–27.

⁸⁹ Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 473–74 (no. 31); Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 30. The name of Sirj al-Yarmūki is distorted in these sources ("Sarḥ al-Barmaki").

⁹⁰ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 30 (the name of Yashū' is distorted).

⁹¹ Nu'māni, *Ghayba*, 63, 79 (some names in the *isnād* are distorted, and 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr is printed: 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar).

⁹² Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 30.

scriptures.⁹³ In another tradition, the same Abū l-Jald predicts that a man of Hāshim and his son will rule (*yamliku*) for 72 years.⁹⁴ The symbolism of the number 72, which is based on the number 12, has already been mentioned above,⁹⁵ and suggests here that at least one of the two persons is an apocalyptic mythical figure, i.e. the *mahdī*. His affiliation to Hāshim corresponds to other traditions stating that the *mahdī* will be of the same genealogical descent. It is stated that the *mahdī* will remain among the people for 30 or 40 years.⁹⁶

A special modified version of Ka^cb's apocalypse emphasises the finality as well as the eternity of the number 12. Ka^cb states here that there will be twelve successors (*khalifa*), and if they are followed by a righteous generation, God will prolong their lives (until the return of the *mahdī*—U.R.), because a day with God is equivalent to 1,000 earthly years.⁹⁷ The issue of generations living prolonged lives (*mu^cammarūn*) is indeed crucial for the Shī^ci writers defending their Twelver dogma.⁹⁸

The Princes of Moses

The Twelver Shī^ci is also recorded the versions alluding to the Qur^ʿanic model of the twelve *nuqabāʿ* of Moses, both those comparing them with the twelve chieftains of the ^cAqaba,⁹⁹ and the apocalypse of Ibn Mas^ʿūd that links the model of the *nuqabāʿ* to the twelve leaders succeeding the Prophet. The tradition appears in passages dealing with the predestined number of the *imāms*.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, the Shī^ci sources contain other Prophetic traditions alluding to the twelve *nuqabāʿ* of Moses; all of them were recorded in association with the status of the *imāms*. The word used for “leaders” in these

⁹³ Dānī, *Fitan*, II, no. 198; V, no. 505; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʿil*, VI, 523; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 250; *Fath al-bārī*, XIII, 184.

⁹⁴ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 124, 419.

⁹⁵ Above, 120.

⁹⁶ Nu^caym ibn Ḥammād, 228–34.

⁹⁷ Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 474–75 (no. 35).

⁹⁸ E.g. Ṭabrisī, *Iʿlām al-warā*, 441–45.

⁹⁹ Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 491–92 (no. 70).

¹⁰⁰ See Nu^cmānī, *Ghayba*, 63, 74–75; Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 466–69 (nos. 6–11); Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 29; Irbili, *Kashf al-ghimma*, I, 58; III, 309.

versions is *a'imma* (sing: *imām*).¹⁰¹ Most explicit is a tradition in which the Prophet says to Salmān al-Fārisī that every prophet was given by God twelve *naqībs* as successors, and then goes on to enumerate the virtues of the twelve Shī'ī *imāms*, which implies that they are his own *naqībs*.¹⁰²

Quraysh

However, the main versions used by the Shī'īs are those that mention the name of Quraysh,¹⁰³ and in the Shī'ī context the name only represents the Hāshimī branch of this clan, as does the label Ka'ab ibn Lu'ayy, which also appears in the versions recorded in the Shī'ī compilations.¹⁰⁴ The Shī'ī compilers who recorded these latter versions were probably no longer aware of the original genealogical implication of Ka'ab ibn Lu'ayy, in which Abū Bakr and 'Umar were also included.

Additional versions may be found in the Shī'ī compilations which are missing from the Sunnī sources examined above. In one of them, the tradition about Quraysh (of the *lā yazālu* type) is quoted from the Prophet by Anas ibn Mālik, whose name does not appear in the *isnāds* of the above versions.¹⁰⁵

There are also additional versions in which the genealogical affiliation of the twelve leaders remains unspecified. One of them is of Makhūl (Syrian, d. AH 112),¹⁰⁶ and another is of Wahb ibn Munabbih.¹⁰⁷ They say that the Prophet stated that after him there would be twelve successors (*khalīfa*).

In conclusion, the Shī'īs restored the apocalypse of the twelve to its original significance, with the number 12 signifying literally twelve leaders who will rule the Muslims in succession, from the death of the Prophet to the Day of Resurrection.

¹⁰¹ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 258.

¹⁰² Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāma*, 234.

¹⁰³ About which see Nu'māni, *Ghayba*, 62–64, 75–79; Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 469–73, 475 (nos. 12–30, 36, 37); Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāhim*, 29, 110, 163.

¹⁰⁴ Nu'māni, *Ghayba*, 63, 79; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāhim*, 29, 30.

¹⁰⁵ Nu'māni, *Ghayba*, 75, 78–79.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 474 (no. 33).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 474 (no. 34).

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GENERAL INDEX

- Aaron, 69, 81, 187, 188, 189
- °Abbāsids, 258, 259, 266
and Shi'is, 278
- °Abd al-°Aziz ibn Abi Rawwād (Meccan, d. AH 159), 42
- °Abd al-°Aziz ibn Şuhayb (Başran, d. AH 130), 139
- °Abd al-Malik (caliph), 36, 37, 125
and the Dome of the Rock, 19
as Forehead of the House of the Second Head, 260
as Owner of the Mark, 257
- °Abd al-Malik ibn °Umayr al-Qurashi (Kūfan, d. AH 136), 270
- °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn °Abdallāh ibn Mas°ūd, 132
- °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abi l-Zinād (Medinan, d. AH 174), 201
- °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm al-Ash°ari (Syrian, d. AH 78), 228
- °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasana (Companion, brother of Shuraḥbil ibn Ḥasana), 247
- °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sābiṭ (Meccan Successor, d. AH 118), 231
- °Abd al-Razzāq (d. AH 211), 75, 101, 122, 135, 148, 177, 225, 243, 247
- °Abdallāh ibn Abi Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn °Amr ibn Ḥazm (Medinan, d. AH 135), 92
- °Abdallāh ibn °Amr ibn al-°Āş (Qurashi Companion, d. AH 63), 172, 173, 184, 193, 198, 199, 206, 210, 219, 224, 263–68, 278
- °Abdallāh ibn Baḥīr (Yemeni storyteller), 125
- °Abdallāh ibn Ḍamra al-Salūli (Kūfan), 41
- °Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥārith al-Anşāri (Başran), 44
- °Abdallāh ibn Jahsh (Companion), 193
- °Abdallāh ibn Mas°ūd (Medinan/Kūfan Companion, d. AH 32), 40, 72, 87, 132, 141, 174, 203, 205, 219, 255
his *qirā'a*, 194–95
- °Abdallāh ibn al-Mubāarak al-Marwazī (d. AH 181), 120, 141, 142
- °Abdallāh ibn Rabāḥ al-Anşāri (Medinan/Başran, d. ca. AH 90), 193, 227
- °Abdallāh ibn Salām (al-Isrā'ili, Medinan Companion, d. AH 43), 121
- °Abdallāh ibn Shawdhab (Başran/Syrian, d. ca. AH 150), 42
- °Abdallāh ibn °Umar (Meccan Companion, d. AH 73), 218, 221, 269
- °Abdallāh ibn °Uthmān ibn Khuthaym (Meccan, d. AH 132), 267
- °Abdallāh ibn Yazīd al-Khaṭmi (Companion), 145
- °Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr (Meccan, d. AH 73), 36, 40, 125, 218
and °Abd al-Malik, 36
and the Khawārij, 153
- Abraham, 50, 86, 109, 211
and Iraq, 43–44
and the Promised Land, 13
hijra of, 223–24
religion of, 189
test of, 15
- Abū l-°Āliya, Rufay° ibn Mihrān (Başran, d. AH 90), 201
- Abū °Āmir al-Hawzani (Ḥimşī), 136, 218
- Abū °Aqil al-Dawraqī (Bashir ibn °Uqba, Başran), 244
- Abū Asīd al-Barrād, 181
- Abū °Aṭā' al-Yaḥbūrī, 226
- Abū Ayyūb al-Anşāri (Khālid ibn Zayd, Companion), 71, 72

- Abū l-Bakhtari Saʿid ibn Fayrūz (Kūfan, d. AH 83), 175, 176, 225
- Abū Bakr (caliph), 66, 68, 70, 74, 75, 82, 138, 225, 257, 264, 268
and the Khārijī archetype, 133–35
as ʿAlī’s foe, 186
as calf, 187
as *jamāʿa*, 141
as *Ṣiddiq*, 257
as Muḥammad’s best adviser, 70
sunna of, 153
- Abū Bakr al-Hudhali (Başran, d. AH 167), 112
- Abū Bakra al-Thaqafī (Nufayʿ ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Kalada. Başran Companion, d. AH 50), 134, 277
- Abū Burda ibn Abi Mūsā al-Ashʿarī (d. AH 104), 145
- Abū l-Dardāʾ (Anṣārī Companion, d. AH 32), 194
- Abū Dāwūd (d. AH 275), 145, 272, 273
- Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (Companion, d. AH 32), 96, 97
and ʿAlī, 81
- Abū Dujāna al-Anṣārī, and the Shiʿī *mahdi*, 45
- Abū Ghālib al-Bāhili (Nāfiʿ, Başran), and Abū Umāma, 160, 125–31
- Abū Ḥamza al-Sukkari (d. AH 166), 142
- Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā (ʿAlī ibn Mūsā, eighth *imām*, d. AH 203), 98, 250
- Abū l-Haytham Qaṭan ibn Kaʿb (Başran), 129
- Abū Hurayra (Companion, d. AH 57), 30, 39, 40, 67, 86, 94, 104, 109, 111, 140, 145, 161, 166, 181, 183, 184, 185, 199, 200, 205, 206, 219, 224, 230, 231, 242
- Abū Idris al-Khawlāni (ʿĀʾidhullāh ibn ʿAbdallāh, Syrian, d. AH 80), 56
- Abū ʿImrān al-Jawni (Başran, d. AH 128), 193
- Abū Ishāq al-Sabiʿi (Kūfan Shiʿi, d. ca. AH 126–29), 96
- Abū l-Jald al-Jawni (Jaylān ibn Farwa, Başran), 278–79
- Abū l-Jawzāʾ (Aws ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Rabaʿi, Başran, d. AH 83), 222
- Abū Juḥayfa al-Suwāʿi (Wahb ibn ʿAbdallāh, ʿAlī’s partisan, Companion, d. AH 74), 275
- Abū Juhaym (Jahm) ibn al-Ḥārith ibn al-Ṣimma (Companion), 167
- Abū Khālid al-Aḥmasī (Kūfan), 273
- Abū Khālid al-Wālibi (Kūfan, d. AH 100), 274
- Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī (Companion), 229, 230
- Abū Mikhnaf (Kūfan, d. AH 157), 169, 170
- Abū Mirā Qaṭan ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥarrānī (Successor), 126
- Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī (Companion, d. AH 42–53), 40, 145, 223
- Abū Naḍra (al-Mundhir ibn Mālik, Başran, d. AH 108), 244
- Abū Qabil (Egyptian, d. AH 128), 155
- Abū Saʿid al-Khudri (Anṣārī Companion, d. AH 65), 93, 96, 134, 182, 183, 220, 230, 243
- Abū Saʿid al-Maqburi (Kaysān, Medinan, d. AH 100), 182, 183
- Abū Salama ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf (Medinan, d. AH 94), 140
- Abū Ṣāliḥ, 88
- Abū l-Shaʿthāʾ (Jābir ibn Zayd al-Azdi, Başran, d. ca. AH 93–104), 203
- Abū l-Ṭufayl (ʿĀmir ibn Wāthila, Meccan Companion, d. AH 110), 96, 267–68
- Abū ʿUbayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ, 67
- Abū ʿUbayda al-Tamīmī (Muslim ibn Abī Karima), 143
- Abū Umāma al-Bāhili (Syrian Companion, d. ca. AH 81–86), 108, 162, 194, 196, 197, 228
and the beheaded Khawārij, 125–31, 147, 160–61
- Abū Yaʿlā (d. AH 307), 135, 136
- al-Abwāʾ (place), 38
- ʿAdan, Adcn, 74, 224
- Adhān* (“call to prayer”), and the Lost Tribes, 47

- Africa, conquest of, 260
 °Ahd, see Covenant
Ahl al-ahwā' ("people of deviations"), 124, 136, 137, 161, 162, 201, 223
 and Jews and Christians, 164
Ahl al-bayt (Muḥammad's family), 78
 and *hiṭta*, 95–99
Ahl al-dhimma, 57
 Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. AH 241), 66, 107, 137, 139, 142, 242, 244
 °Ā'isha bint Abi Bakr, 149, 161, 207, 215, 231
 °Ā'isha bint Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ (Medinan, d. AH 117), 140
 al-Ājurri (d. AH 260), 136, 154, 208, 211
 °Ali ibn Abi Ṭalḥa (Himṣi, d. AH 143), 106, 208–11
 °Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (caliph), 43, 68, 77, 123, 131, 178, 195, 205, 222, 257, 260, 263
 and Aaron, 187
 and Dhū l-Thudayya (Khārijī figure), 135
 and *hiṭta*, 97
 and the Khārijī archetype, 133–35
 and the Khawārij, 152, 154, 157, 163
 as legitimate caliph, 276–77
 as Muḥammad's *waṣiyy*, 143
 chair of, 169–70, 187–88
 denied right to succeed Muḥammad, 80
 his partisans, 45
 meets a rabbi and an archbishop, 131–32, 138
 Alms, see *Ṣadaqa*, *Zakāt*
 °Alqama ibn Waqqāṣ al-Laythi (Medinan), 75
 Amalekites, 37–38
 Amin (apocalyptic figure), 266
 Amin (caliph), 265
 °Āmir ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ (Medinan, d. AH 104), 274
 °Āmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'a (tribe), 269, 275
 °Āmir al-Sha'bi (Kūfan, d. AH 103), 28
al-Amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar, 214
 and punitive transformation into apes
 and pigs, 226–28
 °Amr ibn al-°Āṣ (Qurashī Companion, d. ca. AH 43), 166
 °Amr ibn °Awf (Anṣārī Companion), 207
 °Amr ibn °Awf al-Muzani (Companion), 38, 181
 °Amr ibn Ka'b (Meccan clan), 268
 Anas ibn Mālik (Baṣran Companion, d. ca. AH 91–95), 40, 42, 75, 76, 110, 122, 134, 138, 142, 144, 145, 151, 165, 194, 219, 222, 230, 280
 Andalus, 28
 Anṣār, 69, 71, 255
 excluded from the chosen community, 72–73
 their apologetics, 73–76, 94–95
 Antichrist, see Dajjāl
Apocalypse of ps.-Methodius, 34
 Apocrypha, and the *halaka* statement, 202–204
 °Aqaba, Aqaba meetings, 255–56, 279
 Arabia, 5, 33
 and the Israelite prophets, 38–44
 tension with Syria and transfer of sacredness to, 36–44, 56
 °Arafa (station of pilgrimage), 42, 273
 Ardaf (river), 27
 Ardaq (river), 27
 Ark of Covenant (*tābūt*), 112, 261
 and °Ali's chair, 187–88
 Armenia, 165
 Arṭāt ibn al-Mundhir (Himṣi, d. AH 163), 218
 Asaph son of Berechiah, 214
 Asceticism, see *Rahhāniyya*, *Ruhbān*, *Zuhd*
Ashrāt al-sā'a, see *Sā'a*
 Aslam (tribe), 92, 93
 Aswad ibn Hilāl al-Muḥārībi (Kūfan, d. AH 84), 205
 Aswad ibn Sa'īd al-Hamdāni, 272
 °Aṭā' ibn Abi Maymūna (Baṣran, d. AH 131), 275
 °Aṭā' ibn Abi Rabāḥ (Meccan, d. AH 114), 39
 °Aṭā' ibn Yasār (Medinan storyteller, d. AH

- 103), 184
 ʿAṭāʾ al-Khurasānī (Syrian, d. AH 135), 220
 ʿAṭīyya ibn Saʿd al-ʿAwfī (Kūfan, Shiʿi, d. AH 111), 96
Awāʾil (“firsts”), 68
 ʿAwf ibn Mālik al-Ashjaʿī (Syrian Companion, d. AH 73), 121, 140, 158
 ʿAwn ibn Abi Juḥayfa al-Suwāʿī, 275
 Aws (tribe), 69
 al-ʿAyyāshi, 80
 Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyāni (Baṣran, d. AH 131), 124, 162
 al-Azdi, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh, 16
 Azhar ibn Šālih, 126
 Azraq (river), 27
- Bāb Ludd*, 29
 Badr, 38, 69–76
 Bahīrā, 47, 133
 Bahrayn, 128
 al-Balqāʾ, 90
Banū Isrāʾīl, see Children of Israel
 al-Bāqir Abū Jaʿfar (the fifth *imām*, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, d. AH 114), 43, 77, 80, 97–98, 142–43
 Bashear, Suliman, 4
Basmala, 85
 Baṣra
 and apes and pigs, 222–23
 and Qadarism, 177
 Bayt al-Maqdis, see Jerusalem
 Beards, shaving of, 250
 Bible (see also Torah)
 and the conquest of Syria, 15–17, 236
 and Qurʾān, as origins of schism, 7, 159, 165–67, 193, 209, 226, 237
 as primary literary element, 238
Bidʿa (“innovation”) 203, 211
 Black slave, obedience to, 127
 Black Stone (in Mecca), 46
 al-Bukhārī, 66, 73, 186, 243, 270
 Busse, Heribert, 21, 84
 Byzantium (see also Rome), 49
 and the *sunna* statement, 185, 187
- Caesarea, 67
 Caleb, 62, 81
 Calf, sin of, 59, 162
 and Abū Bakr, 187
 and ʿAlī’s chair, 170, 187
 and ʿAlī’s foes, 187
 and Israel’s disgrace, 100–13
 and the *sunna* statement, 170–72, 174, 175, 187
 compared with the massacre at Karbalāʾ, 79
 Canaan, 13, 17, 25, 30, 44, 90
 Cave (*kahf*), people of the, 45
Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, 33–34
 Children of Israel (see also Jesus, Lost Tribes, Moses), 2, 200
 and apocryphal writings, 205
 and the Arab conquest of Syria, 11, 13–14
 and the calf, 170, 171
 and Constantinople, 24–30
 and Ḥudaybiyya, 68–69
 and inner conflicts, 60, 118
 and the *mahdī*, 44–45
 and *qadar*, 196
 and *raʾy*, 199
 and the Shiʿis, 76–82
 and Šiffin, 191
 as apes and pigs, 213–14
 divided into 70 parties, 121–23, 159
 excluded from the chosen community, 6, 58, 59, 62, 63, 100–13
 in the Qurʾān, 59–61
 killed their prophets, 60, 78–79
 on pilgrimage to Mecca, 38
 predominance of sinful image of, 6, 55–57, 249
 significance of term, 2
 replaced by Jews and Christians, 130
 suffer worldly calamities, 190
 those who perished in the wilderness, 60, 62, 81
 China, 27, 29, 46
 Christians, see Children of Israel
 “Christo-Muslims”, 31, 131, 133

- Circassians, 172
 Commander of the Bands (apocalyptic figure; see also Qaḥṭāni), 263, 265, 266
 Conquests
 and the evolution of the Islamic self-image, 11–12
 as divine promise, 57–58
 as renewed exodus, 13–18, 63, 68, 71, 90
 Constantinople
 abortive siege of, 254
 and Abū Ayyūb, 71
 and Arab–Jewish messianism, 20–26
 and Biblical models, 30–31
 and the *mahdī*, 44
 and the Promised Land, 25
 and the tribes of Israel, 5, 24–30
 and Tyre, 22
 apocalyptic battle for, 24, 261
 as the “New Rome”, 33
 in Christian documents, 34
 in Jewish documents, 33
 Islamic conquest of, 12
 Constitution of Medina, 48–49
 consultation (*mashūra*), 66
 Cook, Michael, 49–52, 241, 260, 261
 Covenant, of God, 59–61
 Crone, Patricia, 49–52

 Dajjāl (Antichrist), 29, 31, 34, 120, 179, 261
 and the Jews, 108
 Damascus, 74, 125
 Ḍamra ibn Ḥabīb (Ḥimṣi, d. AH 130), 218
 Dan (Israelite tribe), 34
 al-Dāni (d. AH 444), 45
 Daniel, book of, 253
 al-Dārimī (d. AH 255), 136
 David (king), 19, 214, 228
 House of, 24
 son of, 33
 Dāwūd ibn Abi Hind (Başran, d. AH 139), 177, 244
 Dāwūd ibn (Abi) al-Sulayk, 130
 Day of Resurrection, 145, 280

 Deluge, see Noah
 Devil, 135
 Dhāt Anwāt (place), 171
 Dhāt al-Hanẓal (place), 92, 93
 Dhū l-Thudayya (Khārjī leader), 134, 135
 Dhū Ṭuwā (place), 65
 Dome of the Rock, 36
 and the Bible, 19–20
 and the direction of prayer, 57

 Edessa, 50, 51
 Edom, 32, 33
 Egypt, exodus from, 13, 27, 29
 Elad, Amikam, 36
 Eldad ha-Dani, 26–28, 34, 50
 Ephraim (Israelite tribe), 84
 Esau, 31, 32, 33, 223
 Exodus (see also Conquests; Egypt; *Hijra*; Moses), 8, 49, 59
 and the Arab conquest of Syria, 5, 13–18
 and Arabia, 37
 in the Bible, 13

Faḍāʿil (reports about virtues), 68
 Falatān ibn ʿAṣim (Kūfan Companion), 105
 Farqad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Sabakhi (Başran, d. AH 131), 228
 al-Farrāʾ, Yahyā ibn Ziyād (d. AH 207), 102
Fath (“opening”, “conquest”), 64
 First Civil War, 156, 264
Fitan, *fitna* (“tribulations”), 121, 145, 147, 149, 203, 254, 258, 264
 Friday, 104, 155, 274
 and the Lost Tribes, 48
Furqān (“deliverance”), Day of, 69
Futūh, see Conquests

 Gabriel, 43, 48
 Gadites (Israelite tribe), 25
Ghayba (“Concealment”), 77
Ghulāt (“Extremists”), 170
Ghuluww, 201
 Gileadites, 84
 God
 Greatest Name of, 120–21

- mercy of, 59–61, 62, 265
 retained for Muslims, 144–46
 shifted from Israelites to Muḥammad's *umma*, 60–61, 100–13
- Goitein, S.D., 169, 177, 234
- Goldziher, Ignaz, 46, 157
- Goy* (“nation”), and the Arabs, 252, 267
- Great Kenesseth, 123
- Greek Daniel*, 34
- Guillaume, Alfred, 87
- Ḥadīth* (“Tradition”)
 dating of, 237
 significance of term, 2
 writing down of, 204–206
- Ḥadīth ilāhī*, 109
- Hagar, as the banished slave-girl, 260, 261
- Hair, fashion of doing, 207
- Hajj*, see Pilgrimage
- al-Ḥakam ibn ʿUmayr (Companion), 141
- Ḥammād ibn Salama (Baṣran, d. AH 167), 127, 160
- Ḥammād ibn Zayd (Baṣran, d. AH 179), 127
- Hammām ibn al-Ḥārith al-Nakhaʿī (Kūfan, d. AH 65), 176
- Ḥanash ibn al-Muʿtamir (Kūfan), 95, 97
- Hanīfiyya*, *ḥanīfs*, 46–47, 189
- Haram*, 91
- Hārūn ibn Saʿīd al-Ayli (Egyptian, d. AH 253), 266
- Ḥarūrāʾ (place), 163
- Ḥarūriyya (see also Khawārij), 120, 148, 149, 156, 227–28
- al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d. AH 110), 42, 86, 103, 148, 177, 200
 and the Khawārij, 164
- al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, 80, 98, 266
- Hāshim (clan of Quraysh), Hāshimis, 120, 270, 279, 280
- Hāshimi (apocalyptic figure), 219
- Hashwiyya (Islamic trend), 209
- Hawāriyyūn* (Jesus’ disciples), 256
- Hell, 216
 and the Khawārij, 156, 158, 163
 and the People of the Book, 160
- gates of, 227
 most of the Islamic parties will go to, 144
 one Islamic group will enter, 144
- Heqqesh*, and *qiyās*, 197
- Heresiography, and the *firaq* tradition, 119–21
- Ḥijāz, see Arabia
- al-Ḥijr (place), 42
- Hijra* (see also Abraham), as exodus to the Promised Land, 223
- Ḥimṣ, 56, 68, 218, 251
 and Islamic messianism, 20
 siege of, 257
- Hishām ibn ʿUrwa (Meccan, d. AH 146), 67, 92
- Ḥiṭṭa*, 59
 and the Shiʿa, 95–99
 Biblical origin of, 84–88
 changed by the Children of Israel, 85–88
 gate of
 in Jerusalem, 89–91
 in the Qurʾān, 83–84
 in the story of al-Ḥudaybiyya, 92–95
- Homosexuality, homosexuals, 175, 230
- Hour, see *Sāʿa*
- Hoyland, Robert, 34
- Hūd (Qurʾānic prophet), on pilgrimage to Mecca, 40, 41
- Hūd ibn ʿAṭāʾ (Syrian), 134
- al-Ḥudaybiyya
 and *ḥiṭṭa*, 91–95
 campaign of, 64–69
- Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān (Medinan/Kūfan Companion, d. AH 36), 44, 155, 165–66, 175, 176, 179, 221, 225, 247, 262–63
- Ḥunayn, campaign of, 171
- Ḥuṣayn ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (Kūfan, d. AH 136), 272
- Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, 266
 and Aaron, 189
 martyrdom of, 78–80
- Ibāḍiyya (Khārijī trend), 124
- Iblis (see also Devil), and the Jews, 112

- Ibn ʿAbbās (Medinan, d. AH 68), 39, 40, 42, 46, 48, 51, 86, 97, 109, 111, 143, 149, 152, 158, 173, 178, 182, 183, 196, 201, 205, 208–11, 228, 263, 278
and the Khawārij, 164
and the Umayyads, 185
- Ibn Abi ʿĀṣim (d. AH 287), 73, 76
- Ibn Abi Ḥatīm (d. AH 327), 72
- Ibn Abi Shayba (d. AH 235), 75, 96, 126, 174, 264
- Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfi, 13, 17, 56
- Ibn Bābūyah (d. AH 381), 142
- Ibn Ḥibbān (d. AH 354), 272, 276, 277
- Ibn Ḥubaysh (d. AH 584), 16
- Ibn Ibād, 124
- Ibn Ishāq (d. AH 150), 37, 64, 70, 82, 87, 92, 122, 171, 255
- Ibn al-Jawzi (Abū l-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, d. AH 597), 88
- Ibn Jurayj (Meccan, d. AH 150), 46, 106, 112
- Ibn Kathir (d. AH 774), 31
- Ibn al-Kawwāʾ (= ʿAbdallāh ibn Awfā al-Yashkuri), Khārijī leader, 163
- Ibn Māja (d. AH 275), 126, 139, 140, 219, 244, 245
- Ibn Qutayba (d. AH 276), 247–48
- Ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī, 46
- Ibn Saʿd (d. AH 230), 141, 246
- Ibn ʿUmar (Meccan Companion, d. AH 73), 156
- Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ashtar, 79
and ʿAlī’s chair, 170
- Ibrāhīm ibn Yazid al-Nakhaʿi (Kūfan, d. AH 96), 106
- Ibrāhīm al-Taymī (Kūfan, d. AH 92), 56, 203
- ʿIkrima, *mawla* of Ibn ʿAbbās (Medinan, d. AH 105), 75, 97, 178, 182, 183
- Īliyāʾ (see also Jerusalem), 89
- Ilyās (= Elijah), on pilgrimage to Mecca, 41–43
- Imāms* (see also *Ghayba*), 77
and the Ark of the Covenant, 188
and God’s Greatest Name, 121
and the hidden Israelites, 77
and Moses’ *nuqabāʾ*, 188–89
and the prophets, 77
as Muḥammad’s *nuqabāʾ*, 279–80
pre-destined number of, 279
- ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn (Meccan Companion, d. AH 52), 44, 229–30
- Incest, 174, 183
- Injil*, 166
- Iraq, 43, 186
- ʿIrq al-Zabya (place), 38, 70
- ʿĪsā ibn al-Mughīra al-Tamīmī (Kūfan), 56
- Isaac (Israelite patriarch), 109
children of, 30–31
- Isaiah, 103
and the Children of Israel, 103
- Ishāq ibn Rāhūyah, and Muḥammad ibn Aṣlam al-Ṭūsi, 142
- Ishmael, 31, 32, 33, 50, 109, 189, 252
and the twelve princes, 252, 254, 256, 259, 262
- ʿIṣma (“immunity”), of Moses, 110
- Ismāʿil ibn ʿAyyāsh (Ḥimṣī, d. AH 181), 251–52, 257, 258, 260
- Isnāds*, evidence of, 3
- Isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj*, 47, 110
- Isrāʾīliyyāt* (traditions about Israelites) 3, 137
- Jābir (apocalyptic figure), 266
- Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh (Medinan Companion, d. AH 77), 94, 177, 205, 206, 247
- Jābir ibn Samura al-Suwāʾī (Kūfan Companion, d. AH 74), 269–75
- Jābir ibn Zayd (Abū l-Shaʿthāʾ al-Azdī, Baṣran, d. ca. AH 93–104), 143
- Jacob (prophet), 31, 109
- Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Abū ʿAbdallāh (sixth *imām*, d. AH 148), 80, 189
- Jahmiyya (Islamic trend), 142
- Jamāʿa*, 128, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140, 144, 208, 211
individual sense of, 141–42
- Jamarāt* (in Minā), 201
- al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. AH 370), 103

- al-Jawf (place), 261
 al-Jawraqāni (d. AH 543), 144
 Jericho, 90
 and Constantinople, 30–31
 Jerusalem (see also *Īliyā'*), 27, 29
 and Constantinople, 20–23
 and the Dome of the Rock, 19, 36
 and the Hāshimi, 219
 and *hiṭṭa*, 89–91
 and Ilyās, 42
 and Mecca, 45–46
 and the Temple, 84
 and Tyre, 21–23
 Arab conquest of, 13, 62–63, 67
 ʿUmar in, 13–19, 20, 57
 Jesus, 211
 and the Children of Israel, 2, 200, 214, 227
 and Joshua, 29–30, 108
 and the Lost Tribes, 46
 and the *mahdī*, 263
 and Peter, 143
 apostles of, 256
 as the Word of God, 148
 on pilgrimage to Mecca, 39, 41, 43
 scripture of, 109, 166
 Jews (see also Children of Israel, “Judeo-Muslims”, Lost Tribes)
 and the Constitution of Medina, 48–49
 as apes and pigs, 215
 in Muḥammad’s army, 51
 of Arabia, origin of, 37–38
Jihād, 65, 72
Jinn (“demons”), 43
 Jordan River, 25, 29, 84, 90
 Josephus Flavius, 26
 Joshua the son of Nun
 and ʿAli, 81
 and Caleb, 62, 81
 and the conquest of the Promised Land, 13, 25
 and Jesus, 29–30, 108
 and the sinful Israelites, 55
 as successor of Moses, 45, 122, 123, 143
 Jubayr ibn Nufayr (Ḥimṣi, d. AH 75), 218
 Judaea, 34
 “Judeo-Muslims”
 as the saved party in the *firaq* tradition, 131, 133
 and the unbelieving Israelites, 57
 Jews of Arabia as, 49
 Kaʿb al-Aḥbār as, 18, 23, 35, 56
 significance of term, 18–19
 tribes of Israel as, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 35, 46, 48, 55, 119
 Judges, bending the rulings of the Qurʾān, 176
 Juhayna (tribe), 192
Jumhūr (“masses”), 141
 Jundab ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Bajali (Companion), 158
 Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, 5, 56, 77, 85, 224, 227, 265
 and anti-Jewish polemics, 110
 and apocalypse about Constantinople, 20, 25
 and apocalypse about Israelite tribes, 24
 and Biblical description of ʿAbd al-Malik, 19
 and Biblical descriptions of Muslims, 14–17, 101
 and Biblical descriptions of Shiʿis, 77
 and Ṣiffin, 191–92
 and the twelve princes, 251–54, 257–59
 and ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 13–17, 56–57, 77
 as “Judeo-Muslim”, 18, 23, 35
 changed image of, 56–57
 conversion of, 13–14, 56
 Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy (clan of Quraysh), 265, 266, 267–68, 269, 270
 in Shiʿi context, 280
 Kaʿba (see also Mecca), 36, 38, 41, 45, 46, 47, 64, 249
 and the direction of prayer, 57
 and the *mahdī*, 45
Kaffāra (“expiation”), 15
 Karaites, and Khawārij, 159
 Karbalāʾ, 78–80, 169
 Kedar, 16, 21

- al-Khaḍīr, on pilgrimage to Mecca, 42, 43
 al-Khaḍrāʾ (place), 36
 Khālid ibn Maʿdān (Himṣī, d. AH 103), 23
 Khālid ibn al-Walid, 65
Khamr, see Wine
Khandaq (“Ditch”), battle of, 71
Khasf (apocalyptic calamity), 91, 217, 220, 221, 229, 230, 258
 Khawārij (see also Nahrawān, *Qurraʾ*), 117, 120, 177, 186
 and allowing *munkar*, 227
 and Baṣra, 177
 and Karaites, 159
 and the *mutashābihāt*, 147–50
 and scripturalism, 150–51
 and the *sunna*, 152–54
 and *taʾwil*, 154–57
 archetype of, 133–36
 as evil-doers, 180
 as *māriqūn*, 134
 history of, 123–24
 Israelite stigma of, 7, 147, 150, 159–65
 rebuked in Qurʾānic exegesis, 160–63
 seeing other Muslims as *kuffār*, 156
 slogan of, 150–51
 standard description of, 151
 Khaybar, 51
 Khazraj (tribe), 74, 95
 Khuḏāʿa (tribe), 64, 66
 Khuzayma ibn Jazʾ al-Sulamī (Companion), 245
 Kināna (tribe), 192
 Kister, M.J., 3, 169
 Kohlberg, Etan, 278
 Kūfa, 44, 169, 195, 255, 269
 mosque of, 43
 al-Kulīnī (d. AH 329), 142
 Kurāʿ al-Ghamim (place), 65
Kurʾsiyy (“chair”), ʿAlīʾs, 169
al-Lawḥ al-mahfūz (“guarded tablet”), and the Islamic *umma*, 103
 Leopard skins, and Quraysh, 65
 Lesbians, 230
 Lewinstein, Keith, 119
 Lizard
 and the Children of Israel, 243–50
 and the *sunna* statement, 180–86
 as metamorphosed Bedouin, 249
 Lost Tribes (see also Children of Israel), 5, 6, 241
 and Arabia, 46–48
 and Constantinople, 29–30
 and Sebeos, 50–52
 and the Shiʿi *imāms*, 77
 as mice and lizards, 241–50
 changed image of, 55
 in Christian documents, 34
 in Qurʾānic exegesis, 26–30
 Lot, and homosexuality, 175, 176
 Lydda, 29
 Maʿbad ibn Khālid (Kūfan, d. AH 118), 188, 274
 al-Madāʾin, 203–204
 Magians, 2, 178
Mahdī (see also Messiah)
 and Arabia, 44–45
 and the Children of Israel, 44–45
 and Constantinople, 44
 and Shuʿayb ibn Ṣāliḥ, 120
 as the caliph al-Mahdī, 263
 as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya, 169
 as ʿUmar II, 45, 253
 emerges after tribulations, 121
 emerges before tribulations, 219
 his reign, 279
 al-Mahdī (caliph), 258, 261, 263, 265, 278
 Makḥūl (Syrian, d. AH 112), 178, 280
 Makhzūm (clan of Quraysh), 207
 Mālik ibn Anas (Medinan, d. AH 180), 124
 and the Khawārij, 156
 Mālik (ibn al-Ḥārith) al-Ashtar, 45, 153
 Maʿmar ibn Rāshid (Baṣran/Yemeni, d. AH 154), 65, 92, 101
 Manasseh (Israelite tribe), 25
 Mann, Jacob, 33
 Manna, 27, 214
 al-Manṣūr (caliph), 258, 259, 261, 263, 265, 266, 278

- al-Marwa (in Mecca), 39
- Marwān (II) ibn Muḥammad (caliph), 257, 258, 261
- Marwān (I) ibn al-Ḥakam (caliph), 64, 92
- Marwānids, 250, 260
and Muḥammad's *minbar*, 224
as metamorphosed animals, 250
- al-Marwazi (d. AH 294), 143
- Mashriq, 44
- Masjid al-Khayf (in Minā), 41
- Maskh* ("metamorphosis"), 215–20, 221, 222, 230
into mice and lizards, 242–50
- Maskin (place), 186
- Masruq ibn al-Ajda' (Kūfan, d. AH 63), 255
- Mawālī*, and °Umar II, 254
- Mecca (see also Ka'ba, Pilgrimage), 46, 63, 91, 137, 207, 249
and the *mahdī*, 44–45
as Zion, 46
pilgrimage of prophets to, 38–44
- Medina, 39, 48, 56, 70, 77, 80, 192
- Messiah (see also *Mahdī*), 41
appearing in Constantinople, 33
- Messianism
Arab–Jewish, in Syria, 13–34
retained in the Shi'a, 187
in Christian documents, 34
- Metamorphosis, see *Maskh*
- Milk, and the Khawārij, 155–56
- Minā, 40, 41, 42, 201, 273
- Minbar* ("pulpit"), Muḥammad's, and the Umayyads, 224
- al-Minhāl ibn °Amr al-Asadī (Kūfan), 80
- al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad (Companion)
as *qārī'*, 68
as supporter of °Ali, 68, 81–82
at Badr, 71–76
at al-Ḥudaybiyya, 67–69
- Mishnah, 123, 204
- Miswar ibn Makhrama (Medinan Companion, d. AH 64), 64, 92
- mithāq*, see Covenant
- Moses
and the affair of the spics, 61–63, 186
and the Amalekites, 37–38
and the Ark of Covenant, 188
and Biblical descriptions of Muslims, 101–11
and the Exodus, 13
and the 70 elders, 122–23
and *furqān*, 69
and *hiṭṭa*, 83
and Joshua, 143
and sinful Israelites, 18, 162, 171
as Israelite prophet, 2
commands Israelites to believe in Muḥammad, 48, 51
his *nuqabā'*, 188, 255–56, 279
on pilgrimage to Mecca, 38–41, 80
People of, 25–26, 28, 45, 77, 131
religion of, followed by Muslims, 18, 109, 211
smashes the tablets, 100–13
story of, known to Muḥammad, 50
- Mouse
and the Children of Israel, 242–43
and the *sunna* statement, 183
- Moustaches, twisting of, 250
- Mu'adh ibn Jabal (Anṣārī Companion, d. AH 18), 230
- Mu'ammari'n*, 279
- Mu'āwiya (I) ibn Abi Sufyān (caliph), 259, 260, 265, 267
and °Ali, 123, 191, 257
and the *fīraq* tradition, 136–37
and Ka'ba al-Aḥbār, 13
and the palace of al-Khadrā', 36
as Head of the Greater House, 260
as Head of the Kings, 257, 258
as king, 277
as King of the Holy Land, 266
as King of Syria, 259
rebuked by Ibn Ṭābbās, 185
- Muṭāwiya ibn Ḥayda (Baṣran Companion), 103
- Muṭāwiya (II) ibn Yazid (caliph), 257
- Muḍar (tribe), 44, 106, 107, 269, 275
- Muhājar Ibrāhim, see Abraham
- Muhājirūn, 68, 71

- al-Muhallab ibn Abi Šufra (anti-Khārijī warrior), 125
- Muḥammad, 37, 47
 and the Constitution of Medina, 49
 and the Lost Tribes, 47–48, 51
 and prophets in Arabia, 38–44
 and the twelve princes, 254, 260, 267
 armour of, 188
 as Aḥmad, 101
 as “crazy man”, 33
 as merchant, 50
 as Qurashī, 78
 as *ummi*, 48, 103, 112, 252
 Biblical descriptions of, 105
 biographies of, 37, 50
 consulting his Companions, 66–67, 70
 described in Kaʿb’s scrolls, 16–17
 farewell pilgrimage of, 273
 House of, 45
 letters of, 49
shafāʿa of, 107
- Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿAlqama (Medinan, d. AH 144), 75
- Muḥammad ibn Aslam al-Ṭūsi, as *sawād aʿzam*, 141
- Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya, and al-Mukhtār, 169
- Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar ibn al-Zubayr (Medinan., d. ca. AH 110–20), 122
- Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb al-Quraẓi (Medinan, d. AH 117), 134
- Muḥammad ibn Sirin (Baṣran, d. AH 110), 164–65, 205, 242, 264
- Muḥkam*, *muḥkamāt*, of the Qurʾān, 147, 149
- Mujabbira (Islamic trend), 209
- Mujāhid ibn Jabr (Meccan, d. AH 104), 39, 40, 138, 178, 211
- Mujālid ibn Saʿid (Kūfan), 255
- Mujir al-Din al-Ḥanbali (d. AH 927), 89–90
- al-Mukhtār ibn Abi ʿUbayd, 169–70
 and ʿAlī’s chair, 187–88
- Munāfiqūn* (“hypocrites”) 155, 179
- Munkar*, see *al-Amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*
- Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. AH 150), 27, 29, 41, 47, 55, 74, 112, 148
- Murjiʿa (Islamic trend), 120, 124, 178, 196
- Murra ibn Sharāḥil al-Hamdāni (Kūfan, d. AH 76), 203
- Mursal* (incomplete *isnād*), 67
- al-Musayyab ibn Rāfiʿ (Kūfan, d. AH 105), 274
- al-Musayyab ibn Wāḍiḥ (Himṣi), 119
- Mushabbīha (Islamic trend), 209
- Mushrikūn*, 209
- Music, objection to, 228, 229, 231
- Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. AH 261), 31, 94, 243, 244, 245, 247, 271, 272, 273, 274
- al-Mustawrid ibn Shaddād (Qurashi Companion, d. AH 45), 173
- Mutashābihāt*, of the Qurʾān, 129, 147–50, 152
 and the *halaka* statement, 209–10
- Muʿtazila, 158
- al-Naḍr ibn Šālīh, 274
- Nahrawān, and the Khawārij, 134, 135, 154, 163, 164, 186
- Najrān, delegation of, meets the Prophet, 148
- al-Naqqāsh (d. AH 351), 47
- al-Nasāʿi (d. AH 303), 158
- Nāth, Nāthā (prophet), 259–61
- Nawf ibn Faḍāla al-Bikāli (son of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār’s wife, d. ca. AH 90–100), 112
- Nazzāl ibn Sabra (Kūfan), 195
- Nebuchadnezzar, and Tyre, 21
- Nesiʿim* (“heads”) of the tribes of Israel, 252, 255
- Niʿma* (“mercy”), see God
- Noah (prophet), 2, 211
 Ark of, 95–97, 188
- Nuʿaym ibn Hammād (d. 229 AH), 22, 24, 173, 218, 229, 255, 257, 260, 267
- Nuqabāʾ*, of Moses, 188, 255–56, 279
- Onkelos, 252
- Oral Torah, 159
 writing down of, 204

- Palestine, see Syria
- Paradise
 70,000 members of the Islamic *umma* will enter, 104
 most of the Islamic groups will enter, 144
 Muslims enter first, 14, 104
 one Islamic group only will enter, 121–44
 one of the valleys of, 38
- People of the Book, 59, 136
 and apocrypha, 206
 significance of term, 2
- Persia, 36, 49
 and the *sunna* statement, 185, 187
 conquest of, 260
- Peter (Sham^cūn), as *waṣīyy* of Jesus, 143
- Pharaoh, 24, 59
 believer of the House of, 45
 in Shi^ci tradition, 80
- Pilgrimage to Mecca, 5, 137, 273
 and asylum in Mecca, 51
 of the Lost Tribes, 47
 of prophets to Mecca, 38–44, 51
 prescription of, 199
- Plague, 212, 221
- Prayer
 and the Lost Tribes, 47
 five times a day, not a Qur^ānic injunction, 179
 prescription of, 110
- Promised Land, see Abraham; Conquests; Constantinople; *Hijra*; Joshua the Son of Nun
- Pulpit, see *Minbar*
- Punishment stories (Qur^ānic), 190
- Qabiṣa ibn Dhu^ṣayb, (Medinan Successor d. AH 86), 229
- Qadar*, in the Qur^ān, 177
- Qadaris, Qadarism, Qadariyya, 117, 120, 124, 144, 177–80, 220
 and the *halaka* statement, 195–97
 as apes and pigs, 220–23
 as evil-doers, 180
- Jewish and Christian stigma of, 7, 177–79
- Qadhif* (apocalyptic calamity), 217, 218, 220, 221, 229
- Qaḥṭān (tribe), 265, 266, 268
- Qaḥṭāni (apocalyptic figure; see also Commander of the Bands), 261
- Qatāda ibn Di^cāma (d. AH 117), 44, 69, 86, 101–10, 122, 148, 151, 209, 225, 244
- Qaynuqā^c (Jewish tribe), 51
- Qays ibn al-Sakan (Kūfan), 186
- Qibla* (“direction of prayer”) 36, 47, 57
 and the Lost Tribes, 46, 48
- Qirā^ṣa*, see Qur^ān
- Qīṣaṣ* (“stories”; see also Storytellers), 202
- Qiyās* (“analogous deduction”) 197
 and the *firaq* tradition, 158
 and the *halaka* statement, 199
- al-Qummi, ^cAli ibn Ibrāhīm, 163
- Qur^ān (see also Bible, *Muḥkamāt*, *Muta-shābihāt*, *Ta^ṣwīl*)
 and previous scriptures, 108–109
 and *sunna*, 152–54
 as secondary literary element, 238
 “beating” parts of scripture, 197–98, 210
 becoming main origin of divine knowledge, 58, 237
 coexistence of, with the Torah, 18
 collection of, 166, 238
 controversies over, 165–67, 193–99, 208–12, 237
 dependence on Bible and Talmud, 58
 exclusive status as written book, 205
 history of the nations in, 58
 in Ka^cb’s statement to ^cUmar, 14–15
 mysterious letters, 148
 readings of (*qirā^ṣāt*), 68, 165, 193
 replaces the Bible as literary source, 6, 58, 237, 238, 248, 255
 seven *ahruf* of, 166–67
- Quraysh, 63, 65, 78, 266, 269
 and the twelve leaders, 269–78
 in Shi^ci context, 280
- Quraysh ibn Ḥayyān (Baṣran), 129

- Qurayza (Jewish tribe), 215
*Qurra*² ("Qur²an readers") 151, 153, 154, 155, 157, 163
Quşayy, 268
 and the Shi^cis, 268
Quşşās, see Storytellers

 Rabbi Ishmael, 33
 Rabi^c ibn ^cAbdallāh (perhaps ibn Khuṭṭāf, Başran), 189
 Rabi^c ibn Anas al-Bakri (Başran, d. AH 139), 86, 122, 123
 Rabi^c ibn Şabiḥ (Successor), 160
 Rabi^ca (tribe), 107
 Rabi^ca al-Shāmi, 21
 Rabies, and Muslim heretics, 137
 Raḍin ibn ^cAṭā² (Syrian), 55
 Rāfi^c ibn Khadij (Anşāri Companion, d. ca. AH 59–74), 221
Rahbāniyya ("asceticism"; see also *Ruhbān*), 132–33
 Rajā² ibn Ḥaywa (Syrian, d. AH 112), 20, 56
 Rajab (month), 192
Rajf, *Rajfa* ("earthquake"), as punitive calamity, 100, 218, 220
 Ramaḍān, 42, 85
Ramy (pilgrimage rite), 201
 al-Rawḥā² (place), 38, 39, 40, 43
*Ra*²y (rational opinion) 155, 201
 and the *firaq* tradition, 158
 and the *halaka* statement, 198–99
 and the Khawārij, 157–58
 Jewish origin of, 158
 Red Sea, 31
 Reubenites (Israelite tribe), 25
 Rib^ci ibn Ḥirāsh (Kūfan, d. AH 100), 175, 177
 Rome (see also Byzantium), 32, 33, 44
Ruhbān ("hermits"; see also *Rahbāniyya*), 163, 202
 Rūm (see also Byzantium)
 and the children of Isaac, 31
 and the *sunna* statement, 185

Sā^ca ("Hour"), 30, 185, 219, 253, 254, 268, 274.
 ashrāt al-sā^ca ("Portents of the Hour"), 121, 185
 Saba², 21
 Saba²iyya, 148, 149
 and ^cAli's chair, 170, 188
 Sabatyon, see Sambatyon
 Sabbath, 26, 27, 48, 59, 60, 213
 violation of, and Karbalā², 79
 Sabbatic River, see Sambatyon
 Şabiḥ ibn ^cIsl, and ^cUmar, 149
Sābiqun ("first ones"), 104–105
 Sa^cd ibn Abi Waqqāş (Companion, d. AH 55), 51, 140, 192
 and ^cAli, 270
 on the Persian front, 58
 Sa^cd ibn Mālik, see Sa^cd ibn Abi Waqqāş
 Sa^cd ibn Mu^cādh (Anşāri Companion), 71, 74, 75, 82
 Sa^cd ibn ^cUbāda (Anşāri Companion), 74, 75
Şadaqa, *şadaqāt* ("alms"), 14, 105
 al-Şafā (in Mecca), 39
 al-Saffāh (caliph), 258, 259, 261, 263, 265, 266, 278
 Safina (*mawla* of the Prophet), 276
 Şafwān ibn ^cAmr (Ḥimşī, d. AH 100), 24, 26
 Şafwān ibn Sulaym al-Zuhri (Medinan, d. AH 132), and Abū Umāma, 161
Şahiḥ ("sound"), 3, 157
 Sahl ibn Sa^cd al-Anşāri (Medinan Companion, d. AH 88), 173, 185, 219, 230
 Sa^cid ibn Abi ^cArūba (Başran, d. AH 156), 106, 108
 Sa^cid ibn Abi Hilāl (Egyptian, d. AH 135), 139, 142
 Sa^cid ibn Abi Rāshid (Companion), 219
 Sa^cid ibn Abi Sa^cid al-Maqburi (Medinan, d. AH 123), 184, 185
 Sa^cid ibn Jābir, and Ka^cb al-Aḥbār, 22
 Sa^cid ibn Jubayr (Kūfan, d. AH 95), 178, 205, 263
 Sa^cid ibn Jumhān (Başran, d. AH 136), 276
 Sa^cid ibn al-Musayyab (Medinan, d. AH 94), 41, 224

- Sakina* ("Shechina"), 112, 188
 Salām (apocalyptic figure), 259, 265, 266
 Šālih (Qurʾānic prophet), on pilgrimage to Mecca, 40, 41
 Šālihūn ("righteous people"), 231
 Sālim ibn Abi Ḥafṣa al-ʿIjli (Kūfan, d. ca. AH 140), 200
 Salmān al-Fārisi (Companion), 45, 81, 186, 280
 and ʿAli, 81
 al-Samarqandi (d. AH 375), 48
 Sambaṭyon (mythological river), 26, 242
 Sāmīri ("Samaritan"), 187
 Samura ibn Jundab al-Fazāri (Baṣran Companion, d. AH 58), 245
 Saul (king), 38, 188
al-Sawād al-aʿzam, 126, 127–28, 130, 139
 individual sense of, 141–42
 Sayf ibn ʿUmar (d. AH 180), 57, 183
 Sayyār al-Umawi (Syrian), 125
 Scripturalism, and Khawārij, 150–51
 Sebeos, 5
 chronicle of, 49–52
Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿon, 32–33
 al-Shaʿbi (ʿĀmir ibn Sharāhil, Kūfan, d. AH 103), 255, 273
 Shaddād ibn ʿAbdallāh (Abū ʿAmmār, Syrian), and Abū Umāma, 161
 Shaddād ibn Aws (Medinan Companion, d. AH 58), 179
Shafāʿa ("intercession"), 105–107
Shahāda, 85, 231
Shahid ("martyr"), 227
 Shahr ibn Ḥawshab (Syrian, d. AH 100), 16, 18, 223
 al-Shām, see Syria
 Shamʿūn, see Peter
 Shaqiq ibn Salama, Abū Wāʿil (Kūfan, d. AH 82), 195
 Shariḥ ibn ʿUbayd (Ḥimṣi), 218
 Shechina, see *Sakina*
 Shiʿa, Shiʿis (see also *Imāms*)
 and the Children of Israel, 76–82
 and the *firaq* tradition, 141–43
 and *ḥiṭṭa*, 95–99
 and metamorphosis, 249–51
 and the *sunna* statement, 186–89
 and Umayyads, 43
 foes of
 as *awlād zinā*, 79
 compared to the sinful Israelites, 78–81
 Imāmi stream, 143
 in heresiographic lists, 120
 Twelver dogma, 270, 278
 victims of Karbalāʾ compared with persecuted Israelites, 79
Shibboleth, and *ḥiṭṭa*, 84–85
 Shoes, taking off in mosques, 57
 Shuʿayb (Qurʾānic prophet), 206
 Shuʿayb ibn Šālih (apocalyptic figure), 120
 Shurahbil ibn Ḥasana (Companion), 247
 Shurayḥ ibn ʿUbayd (Ḥimṣi), 23
 Sif al-Baḥr, 94
 Šiffin, 123, 125, 155, 191–92
 Silk, objection to, 228, 229
 Simāk ibn Ḥarb al-Bakrī (Kūfan, d. AH 123), 271
 Sin (apocalyptic figure), 259, 265
Sira (Muḥammad's biography) 37
 and *sunna*, 153
Širāʾ ("upright way") 211
 in eschatology, 216
 Sirj al-Yarmūki, and the apocalypse of the twelve leaders, 254, 278
 Slave-girls, 228, 229, 230, 231
 Storytellers, storytelling, 137, 138, 202
 al-Suddī (Ismāʿil ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Kūfan, d. AH 128), 28, 74, 203
 Sufyān ibn ʿUyayna (Meccan, d. AH 196), 112, 125, 134
 Sufyāni (false prophet), 258
 Sufyānids, 260, 266
Sujūd ("prostration"), 88–89
 Sulaym ibn Qays (Kūfan, d. ca. AH 90), 97
 Sulaym ibn Zurayr (Successor), 127
 Sulaymān (caliph), 253
 Sulaymān (= King Solomon), 43
 al-Šunābiḥi (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUsayla, Syrian), 179

- Sunan*, 80, 152, 153, 168, 171, 173, 181, 189, 201, 205, 225, 226
- Sunna*, 80, 149, 211
as *hadith* text, 203
rejected by the Khawārij, 152–54
- Sunna* statement, 225
and apes and pigs, 225–26
and the Shi‘a, 80, 186–89
and the worship of the calf, 169–72
imitation type of, 180–86
Qur’anic basis of, 168–69
symmetry type of, 173–80
- Sunnat Allāh*, 169
- Sunnat al-awwalin*, 168
- Šūr, see Tyre
- Suwā‘a (tribe), 269
- Suwayd ibn Ghafala (Kūfan, d. AH 81), 132
- Syria, 121
Arab conquest of, 4, 12, 49, 260
- Ṭā‘a (“obedience”) 127, 141
and *jamā‘a*, 128–29
- al-Ṭabarāni (d. AH 360), 71, 96, 125
- al-Ṭabari (Muḥammad ibn Jarir, d. AH 310), 28, 42, 44, 46, 69, 112, 132, 139, 182, 185, 209, 211, 244
- Table (of Jesus), miracle of, 200, 214, 250
- Tabūk, Muḥammad’s raid on, 42, 246
- Tābūt*, see Ark of Covenant
- Tafsir* (Qur’ān exegesis), compilers of, 55
- Tahrif* (“distortion of scripture”), 60, 109
- Talbiya*, 39, 40, 41, 43
- Ṭālūt (Saul), 188
- Tamim (tribe), 106
- Tawāf* (“circumambulation”), 36, 39
- Ta’wīl* (“interpretation”), of Qur’ān, 148, 149, 201
and Khawārij, 154–57
- Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān (Yemeni, d. AH 101), 200
- Taym (clan of Quraysh), 268
- Tent of Meeting, and the gate of *hiṭṭa*, 91
- Thābit [b. Yazid] ibn Wadi‘a al-Anṣāri (Medinan Companion), 246
- al-Tha‘labi (d. AH 427), 110
- Thaniyyat al-Murār (place), 92, 94
- al-Tirmidhi (d. AH 279), 103, 160, 229, 231, 271
- Titus, and the exiled Israelites, 26
- Torah (see also Bible), 14, 18, 59
and ‘Abd al-Malik, 19
and Arab conquest of Syria, 14–17
and Ishmael’s twelve princes, 252, 254, 257, 262, 267
and Muḥammad’s Qur’ān, 18
distortion of, 60
line of transmission of, 122–23
read from written copies, 15, 105, 112
written out in 70 or 72 languages, 122
- Tyre, and Constantinople, 21–23
- ‘Ubāda ibn al-Šāmit (Syrian Anṣāri Companion, d. AH 34–45), 226, 228
- ‘Ubaydallāh ibn al-Qiṭīyya (= Ibn Abi ‘Abbād, Kūfan), 274
- ‘Ubaydallāh ibn Ziyād, and al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā‘, 79–80
- ‘Umar (II) ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (caliph), 45, 253, 254, 267
as one of the *Rāshidūn*, 277
- ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (caliph), 161, 196, 199, 258, 275
addresses Arab warriors, 58
and apocryphal writings, 203, 205
and Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, 13–17, 20, 56–57
and the Khārījī archetype, 133–35
and the Khawārij, 150, 152
and the Shi‘is, 138, 225
as *fārūq*, 18, 257
as *jamā‘a*, 141
as Muḥammad’s best adviser, 70
as *qarṇ min ḥadīd*, 264
as the Sāmīrī, 187
at Badr, 70, 75–76, 82
sunna of, 153
- Umayyads, 224, 258, 259
and Byzantine and Persian influences, 185
and Muḥammad’s *minbar*, 224
and Yemenis, 223

- apologetic needs of, 17
 as kings, 262, 277
 rebuked by Shi'is, 78
- Umma* ("community"), see God; *al-Law al-Mahfūz*; Paradise
- °*Umra* (lesser pilgrimage), 64
- °Uqba ibn °Amir al-Juhani (Companion), and the Khawārij, 155, 156, 164
- °Uqba ibn Aws al-Sadūsi (Başran), 264
- °Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (Medinan, d. AH 94), 37, 41, 64, 67, 91, 198, 207
 letter to °Abd al-Malik, 37
- Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr (leader of the Anşār), 69
- Usury, objection to, 228, 230
- °Utba ibn °Abd (Companion, d. AH 87), 76
- °Uthmān ibn °Affān (caliph), 124, 155, 165, 166, 257, 262
 and the First Civil War, 264
 and the Khawārij, 153
 as *amin*, 257, 258
 as *dhū l-nūrayn*, 264–65
shafā'a of, 107
- °Uthmān ibn al-Aswad (Meccan, d. AH 150), 40
- °Uzayr, and *qadar*, 196–97
- Verus Israel*, Christians as, 34
- Waddān (the Biblical Dedan), 21
- Wādi l-Azraq (place), 39
- Wādi °Usfān (place), 40
- Wahb ibn Munabbih (Yemeni, d. AH 110), 103, 111, 280
- al-Walid (II) ibn Yazid II (caliph), 260
- Wansbrough, John, 4
- al-Wāqidī (d. AH 207), 38, 51, 63, 69, 70, 93
- Waraqā ibn Nawfal, meets Muḥammad, 47
- Wāthila ibn al-Asqa° (Syrian, d. AH 83), 43, 194, 199
- Weights and measurements, 206
- Wigs, 207
- Wine, 228, 229, 231
- Yaḥyā ibn Abi °Amr al-Saybāni (Ḥimṣi, d. AH 148), 31
- Yaḥyā ibn Ja°da (Qurashi Successor), 204
- Ya°qūb ibn Zayd ibn Ṭalḥa (Medinan judge, d. ca. AH 140), 131
- Yarmūk, Battle of, 265
- Yashū° (Christian hermit), and the apocalypse of the twelve leaders, 251, 252, 257, 258, 278
- Yazid (I) ibn Abi Sufyān (caliph), 63, 259, 265, 267
- Yazid ibn Abān al-Raqāshi (Başran storyteller, d. ca. AH 110–20), 134, 138–39
- Yemen, Yemenis, 44, 94
 and apes and pigs, 223–24
- Yūnus ibn Mattā (Qur°ānic prophet), 47
 on pilgrimage to Mecca, 39, 40, 43
- Yūsuf ibn Asbāt al-Shaybāni (Syrian, d. AH 195), 119
- Zādhān Abū °Umar (Kūfan, d. AH 82), 143
- Zakār* ("almsgiving"), and the Lost Tribes, 48
- al-Zamakhshari (d. AH 538), 209
- Zamzam, well of, 42
- Zayd ibn °Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn (Medinan, d. AH 122), 78
- Zayd ibn Aslam (Medinan, d. AH 136), 136, 182
- Zayd ibn Wahb al-Juhani (Kūfan, d. AH 96), 247
- Zindiq* ("heretic"), 144
- Zion, as Mecca, 46
- Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh (Kūfan, d. AH 83), 195
- Ziyād ibn °Abdallāh al-Numayrī (Başran), 139
- Ziyād ibn °Ilāqa (Kūfan, d. AH 153), 274
- Ziyād ibn Yaḥyā al-Ḥassāni al-Nukri (d. AH 254), 178
- al-Zubayr ibn al-°Awwām (Companion, d. AH 36), 207
- Zuhd* ("asceticism"), 202
- al-Zuhri (Medinan, d. AH 124), 37, 51, 64, 65, 67, 92, 165, 171
 and the Khawārij, 156

INDEX OF QUR'ĀNIC REFERENCES

2:40-43	59	3:112	60
2:47	59	3:137	168
2:53	69	3:159	67
2:54	79	3:181	60
2:58-59	83-89	3:187	59, 60
2:61	60		
2:63	59	4:11	106
2:65	213	4:26	189
2:75	60	4:46	60
2:79	203	4:47	14, 56
2:83-84	59	4:140	210-11
2:87	60	4:154	59, 88
2:91	60	4:155	60
2:93	59	4:161	228
2:122	59	4:171	148, 201
2:124	15		
2:136	108-109	5:3	60
2:159	60	5:7	61
2:174	60	5:11	61
2:186	107	5:12	59, 188, 255
2:231	61	5:13	60
2:247	276	5:18	60
2:248	188	5:20-26	60, 61-62
		5:20	59
3:7	129, 147-50, 152, 159, 160, 209-10	5:21	186
3:19	60, 118, 122	5:24	68, 69, 75, 76
3:21	60	5:26	190
3:26	277	5:41	60
3:59	70	5:44	176
3:103	61, 139	5:60	213
3:105	160, 184, 209	5:65-66	131
3:106	160, 161	5:70	59, 60
3:106-107	160	5:77	124, 201
3:110	102, 104, 227	5:78-79	214, 227
		5:89	15

5:101–102	200	15:13	168
5:112–15	214	15:44	227
6:91	60	16:45	217
6:150	124	17:4	80
6:153	211	17:4–7	190
6:159	161	17:104	24, 26, 27, 46, 47
6:160	109	18:22	45
7:81	175	18:55	168
7:85	206	18:103–106	162–63
7:138–67	59–60	19:87	106
7:138	171	20:85	187
7:144	101	21:48	69
7:144–57	100	21:105	57
7:152	162	23:53	210
7:155–57	100	23:61	104
7:156	112	24:54	127
7:157	112	25:38	247
7:159	25, 28, 45, 46–48, 102, 131	26:52–68	31
7:160	242	26:165	175
7:161–62	83	26:181–82	206
7:162	190	27:55	175
7:166	213	28:81	217
7:181	131	29:15	95
8:5–7	72, 74	29:29	175
8:38	168	29:40	217
8:41	69	29:49	15
9:30	196	30:32	161, 209
9:33	58		
9:69	182, 185		
9:70	217		
10:93	60, 118		
11:84–85	206		
14:6	59		

33:9	61	48:23	169
33:62	169	48:28	58
		48:29	15, 16
34:9	217		
		53:53	217
35:43	168		
		56:10	104
36:63–67	216		
		57:27	132
37:8	218	57:28	265
40:25	79	61:5	162
40:28	45	61:9	58
40:85	169		
		67:16	217
42:13	211		
42:26	106	69:9	217
43:58	198	73:14	218
44:30–33	59	74:48	106
45:16–17	60, 118	78:18	230
45:18	124		
		79:6	218
48:1	64		

INDEX OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Genesis		Isaiah	
10:7	21	11:15-16	13
17:20	252, 254, 267	21:15	33
19:29	217	28:16	45-46
Exodus		31:4	23
3:6-17	13	42:1-13	16
7:15	217	42:2	103
12:10	214	51:9-11	13
16:20	214	54:1	46
16:31	28	63:1	33
24:1	123	63:11-14	13
32:30-34	100		
Leviticus		Jeremiah	
22:30	214	2:30	60
Numbers		11:4	13
7:2	255	30-31	24
11:16-17	100	30:18	19
13-14	61	31:4, 38-40	19
Deuteronomy		Ezekiel	
4:34	13	26-28	21-23
7:6-8	13	37:15-28	24
Joshua		Hosea	
1:12-14	25	1:10-11	24
Judges		Jonah	
12:5-6	84	3:4	217
I Samuel		Micah	
15:8-9	38	7:15	13
II Kings		Zechariah	
2:1-18	41	6:12-13	20

Psalms

50:2 46
78:65–66 34

Daniel

7:17, 24 253

1 Chronicles

6:24 214
25:2 214

2 Chronicles

29:30 214

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