# A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur'ān and the Bible

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When an interpreter approaches the Holy Qur'ān from a perspective informed by a history of the world's major religions, this canonical collection of 114 *sūra*s or "chapters" has the nature of a third canonical collection among the People of the Book. Traditional interpretation argues that around 90 C.E. rabbis at Jamnia (Jabneh or Yavneh) established the twenty-four books of the Tanak[1] (Hebrew Bible) as canonical[2] Holy Scripture for Jewish people.[3] By approximately 110 C.E. Christians had written additional letters, narratives, and the like containing a dynamic relation to the Jewish Tanak,[4] and by 200 C.E. most early Christians began to refer to a selection of these writings as New Testament (or New Covenant) alongside the Tanak as Old Testament (or Old Covenant).[5] Shortly after the death of Muhammad in 632 C.E., the Qur'ān emerged as a canonical recital of God's Holy Word that reconfigured aspects of both Hebrew Bible and New Testament discourse in a context of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim interaction. Building on this insight, the

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[1] Judaism regularly refers to the Hebrew Bible as the Tanak (also Tanakh or Tanach), which is an acronym created from the first Hebrew letters of *Torah, Neviim* (Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (Writings).

[2] For the concept of canon, see James A. Sanders and Harry Y. Gamble, "Canon," *ABD* 1:837–61.

[3] See Jack P. Lewis, "Jamnia (Jabneh), Council of," *ABD* 3:634–37.

[4] The Christian Old Testament contains the same writings as the Tanak. However, it divides the twenty-four books into thirty-nine, making some into "first" and "second," like 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel. Also, after the first five books of the Torah (or Pentateuch), the Christian Old Testament gives some of the books a different location than they have in the Hebrew Bible.

[5] See Harry Y. Gamble, "Canon: New Testament," *ABD* 1:853–61; Jack R. Lundbom, "New Covenant," *ABD* 4:1088–94.

authors of this essay probe the relation of the Qur'ān to the Bible from the perspective of the relation among the Tanak, the New Testament, and the Holy Qur'ān.

Early Muslims perceived that there was a close relationship between the Qur'ān and antecedent biblical texts and figures. In the first Islamic century, Muslim exegetes sought Jewish and Christian texts that would explain the qur'ānic biblical references, enhance a general understanding of the history of revelation in general, and show in particular how the Qur'ān stood at the end of a series of revelations from God to humankind. The texts that came into the purview of the Muslim exegetes comprised more than just the biblical texts of Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts were used as well as midrashic and homiletic writings, often with uncertain understanding about their relationship to the accepted canons of scripture in Judaism and Christianity. The result was the introduction into the Muslim understanding of the Qur'ān a vast body of material generally termed *Isrā'īlīyāt*. By the end of the second and into the third Islamic centuries, the general Muslim attitude viewed the *Isrā'īlīyāt* material at first with suspicion and then with hostility. In the face of polemics with Jews and Christians, who argued that the Qur'ān was merely derivative from the Bible, Muslims argued for the unique and inimitable nature of the Qur'ān. Any relationship between biblical figures and themes found in the Qur'ān was held to be the result of God's previous revelation to humankind, and any differences were the result of Jews and Christians corrupting that revelation. The Qur'ān was not regarded as an imitation of the Bible. Rather, the biblical figures of the Qur'ān were thought to be incomplete foreshadows of Muhammad, who was the Seal of the Prophets and the culminating recipient of God's Word.[6]

The modern history of Western scholarship about the relationship of the Qur'ān to the Bible begins in earnest with Abraham Geiger's *Was hat Mohammad aus dem Judenthume aufgennomen?*[7] His insights were a product of the Enlightenment and nourished by the development of the perspectives of scientific inquiry developing in the nineteenth century. For Geiger, the "scientific"[8] approach required a search for Ur-texts, paralleling the search for Mesopotamian and Egyptian Ur-texts for the Hebrew Bible.

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[6] For a discussion of this period with relevant bibliography, see Gordon D. Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 10–12.

[7] Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen? Eine von der Königl. Preussischen Rheinuniversität gekrönte Preisschrift* (Bonn: Baaden, 1833).

[8] That is, *wissenschaftlich* or scientific in the broadest sense.

Subsequent Western scholarship in this vein came to regard the Qur'ān as somehow inferior to antecedent scripture precisely because it was derivative, and considerable effort was spent explicitly or implicitly attempting to demonstrate that the biblical ideas and figures in the Qur'ān were "borrowed" from Judaism or Christianity.[9] Because scholarship of this sort was tied to various colonial enterprises, few Muslims pursued this line of inquiry, even when they acknowledged that there was some kind of relationship between the Bible and the Qur'ān.[10]

In the last third of the twentieth century, some scholars began a thoroughgoing exploration of the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the formative period of Islam. This included a renewed look at the relationship between the qur'ānic text and the biblical texts, including many of the noncanonical works. It became clear that the relationship between any particular qur'ānic text and its biblical referent was the product of complex interactions among different readers of the texts, who were reading for different reasons and ends. The tools of historical philology that had dominated Orientalism were augmented by the techniques of literary criticism that were being applied to biblical texts. It became clear to some that the Qur'ān could be viewed as a product of the coparticipation of reading God's Holy Word by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.[11] From this perspective, the polemical interpretations of the "borrowing/lending" metaphor as well as the reductionist search for the Ur-text could be

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[9] Of the many articles and monographs, the following give a representative sample of this type of approach to the relationship of the Qur'ān and the Bible: Tor Andrae, *Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wicksells, 1926); Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment* (London: Cass, 1926); idem, "Muhammad and Previous Messengers," *MW* 24 (1934): 330–40; S. D. Goitein, "Muhammad's Inspiration by Judaism," *JJS* 9 (1958): 149–62; Bernard Heller, "La legende biblique dans l'Islam," *REJ* 98 (1934): 1–18; H. Hirschfeld, *Jüdische Elemente im Korân: Ein Beitrag zur Korânforschung* (Berlin: self-published, 1878); J. Horovitz, "Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran," *HUCA* 2 (1925): 145–227; Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938); M. Lidzbarski, *De propheticis, quae dicuntur, legendis arabicis: Prolegomena* (Lipsiae: Drugulini, 1893); Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran* (Paris: Vrin, 1958); G. Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'ān* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965); W. Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1922); I. Schapiro, *Die haggadischen Elemente im erzählenden Teil des Korans* (Leipzig: Fock, 1907).

[10] For a seminal critique of Orientalist scholarship and its relationship to colonialism, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

[11] See Newby, *Making,* 21–25 for a discussion and some relevant bibliography.

replaced by the more generative method of analyzing the rhetorical structures of the Qur'ān's readings of God's Holy Word.

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LITERARY POETICS AS A STEP TOWARD RENEWED INTEREST
IN THE RELATION OF THE QUR'ĀN TO THE BIBLE

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Work on the literary nature of the Bible during the final quarter of the twentieth century brought new insights into the study of the Tanak and the New Testament. These insights began a transitional stage that can guide a renewed investigation of the relation of the Qur'ān to the Bible. William A. Beardslee's *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* reveals Amos Wilder's influence on literary interpretation of the New Testament as early as 1970.[12] Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative*[13] and *The Art of Biblical Poetry*[14] exhibit a shift of interest to the literary poetics of the Tanak by the 1980s. In 1985, Meir Sternberg's *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* focused on the ideological and dramatic nature of biblical narrative.[15] By 1987, Robert Alter and Frank Kermode had assembled essays on the writings of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament under the title of *The Literary Guide to the Bible*.[16] During the same period of time, Michael Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* focused on innerbiblical exegesis, exhibiting dynamics of legal, haggadic, and mantological exegesis in the Hebrew Bible.[17] Then in 1988, a collection of essays appeared entitled *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*.[18] By the 1990s, the interplay of literary, innerbiblical, and ideological interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament began to reach a significantly advanced stage. Commentaries guided by modern literary insights into biblical literature began to appear on individual writings, and investigations of

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[12] William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

[13] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

[14] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

[15] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

[16] Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[17] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

[18] Martin Jan Mulder, ed., *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

portions of biblical discourse from the Hebrew Bible to Islamic tradition began to emerge.[19]

In the midst of the new interest in the literary poetics of the Bible, Paul Ricoeur gave us, with his essay in 1980 entitled "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,"[20] an especially good place to begin a renewed investigation of the relation of the Qur'ān to the Bible. In this essay, he discusses five discourses in the Tanak: prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom, and hymnic discourse.[21] This means, for Ricoeur, that there are five distinctive "literary poetics" in the context of Torah, Prophets, and Writings. In each instance, there are two or more entire books in the Hebrew Bible that contain a particular kind of literary poetics. Ricoeur does not list them, but it is easy to see the literary home of prophetic poetics in those books called the Major and Minor Prophets in higher biblical criticism; the literary home of narrative poetics in Genesis through Exod 19, Joshua through 2 Kings, Ezra-Nehemiah through 1–2 Chronicles, and perhaps Ruth; the literary home of prescriptive poetics in Exod 20–40, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy; the literary home of wisdom poetics in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job; and the literary home of hymnic poetics in Psalms and Songs of Songs. This was an important advance in biblical interpretation, because it called attention to the power of biblical literature to evoke poetic modes that call forth imaginative, creative images of human life and its responsibilities in the world.

When an interpreter moves to the Christian New Testament, it is obvious that there is no book of Psalms and no book of prophetic oracles in it. This means, following Ricoeur's perspective, that there is no entire book containing hymnic or prophetic discourse. Also, there is no entire book containing extended prescriptive discourse like Exod 20–40, Leviticus, or Deuteronomy. In addition, there is no book of Proverbs in the

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[19] E.g., Shalom Goldman, *The Wiles of Women/The Wiles of Men: Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in Ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, and Islamic Folklore* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[20] Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 75–85. Subsequently, David Tracy built on Ricoeur's insights in *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). Also see Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (2d ed.; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995).

[21] Ricoeur does not give substantive consideration to apocalyptic discourse but refers to it simply as "subsequently grafted on to the prophetic trunk" (77). His lack of attention results, of course, from his focus on the Tanak, where there is so much prophetic literature and the earliest images of destruction during the "last days" occur in this literature. Nevertheless, his typology of five kinds of discourses is a good place to begin in an assessment of discourses in the New Testament.

New Testament. But this does not mean there is no entire book containing wisdom discourse in the New Testament, since the Epistle of James is regularly considered to be wisdom discourse. The epistle is different in many ways from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job in the Hebrew Bible, but it has important relationships with Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon in the Old Testament Apocrypha. There are five biographical-historiographies in the New Testament: the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. In Ricoeur's terminology, all of these books are some kind of "narrative." After the five biographical-historiographies, a reader finds twenty-one letters or epistles in the New Testament, with "letter" referring to writings interpreters think actually were sent to early Christian communities to be read to them[22] and "epistle" referring to more formal treatises that early Christians over time referred to as letters.[23] Then, the New Testament ends with an apocalypse, a form embedded in Daniel in the Tanak[24] and on the horizons of the Old Testament Apocrypha with *4 Ezra* and among the Jewish pseudepigrapha with *1 Enoch, 2 Baruch,* and other writings.

In many ways, what one might call the invasion of epistolary poetics into scripture becomes most noticeable in the New Testament. Twenty-one of the twenty-seven writings that constitute the New Testament are called epistles. In addition, there are two letters in the Acts of the Apostles (15:22–29; 23:25–30)[25] and seven in the Apocalypse of John. In fact, the nature of the opening and closing of the Apocalypse of John gives it the framework of an ancient letter.[26] In the New Testament, then, twenty-seven writings that exhibit an "epistolary poetic" are a medium of revelation in the context of five biographical histories (four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles) and one apocalypse (Apocalypse of John).

If the relation of the five poetic discourses in the Hebrew Bible (prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom, and hymnic) to the three in the New Testament (biographical-historiography, epistle, and apocalyptic) demonstrates a substantive reconfiguration of canonical discourse, the Qur'ān represents an even more substantive reconfiguration with its recital of rhyming prose.[27] Some of the *surā*s that contain rhyming prose

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[22] Such as Paul's 1 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and Philemon.

[23] Such as the Epistle to the Hebrews and 2 Peter.

[24] Dan 7–12.

[25] Roman Christians report in Acts 28:21 that they have received no letters from Judea about Paul.

[26] Adela Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," *ABD* 5:696–99.

[27] Devin J. Stewart, "Saj' in the Qur'ān: Prosody and Structure," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21 (1990): 101–39.

are similar to what Ricoeur called "hymnic discourse," some of the *sūra*s contain what one might call "prayer discourse," and still other parts of it are like "hymnic narration." Overall, however, a literary poetic approach to the relation of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'ān is not a very promising approach.

FROM LITERARY POETICS TO SOCIAL RHETORICS IN THE BIBLE

During the 1990s, rhetorical interpreters of the Bible moved beyond the literary poetics to the social rhetorics of biblical literature. The goal has been not only to claim more fully the power of biblical discourse but to claim its power in social, cultural, and ideological contexts. The current essay builds on advances made during the 1990s by merging insights into rhetorics with insights into social, cultural, and ideological discourse.

SOCIAL RHETORICS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Recently, Walter Brueggemann's *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*[28] has moved analysis and interpretation of the Tanak beyond its literary poetics into its "rhetorics."[29] This is a very significant move, since it shifts the focus beyond the literary poetics of the Tanak to its oral power (its rhetorics) to effect change within human community. It is well known that throughout Mediterranean antiquity people did not regularly read texts individually, as we do today. Rather, people experienced written text as a flow of sounds in a context where someone performed the text orally. Biblical text, then, was first and foremost an oral performance for people.[30] During and after the fourth

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[28] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

[29] For the importance of the term and concept of *rhetorics,* see Wilhelm Wuellner, "Hermeneutics and Rhetorics: From 'Truth and Method' to 'Truth and Power,'" *Scriptura* S 3 (1989): 1–54; see also Vernon K. Robbins, "Where Is Wuellner's Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us? From Schleiermacher to Thistleton and Beyond" (forthcoming).

[30] See John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); idem, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); idem, "Jesus and Tradition: Words in Time, Words in Space," *Semeia* 65 (1994): 139–47; Vernon K. Robbins, "Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response," *Semeia* 65 (1994): 75–91; Bernard Brandon Scott and Margaret E. Dean, "A Sound Mapping of the Sermon on the Mount," in *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies* (ed. D. R. Baur and M. A. Powell; SBLSymS 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996),

century C.E., certain people began to read the Bible individually. Still to our present day, however, many people experience the Bible primarily through oral performance of it in public settings.

Brueggemann's analysis and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible brings to life the multiple rhetorics of testimony to God in four kinds of testimony: (1) core testimony; (2) countertestimony; (3) unsolicited testimony; and (4) embodied testimony. The core testimony of Israel features: (a) verbal sentences;[31] (b) adjectives;[32] (c) nouns;[33] and (d) Yahweh fully uttered.[34] The countertestimony of Israel features: (a) cross-examining Israel's core testimony;[35] (b) the hiddenness of Yahweh;[36] (c) ambiguity and the character of Yahweh;[37] and (d) Yahweh and negativity.[38] The unsolicited testimony of Israel features: (a) Israel as Yahweh's partner;[39] (b) the human person as Yahweh's partner;[40] (c) the nations as Yahweh's partner;[41] and (d) creation as Yahweh's partner.[42] The embodied testimony of Israel features: (a) the Torah as mediator;[43] (b) the king as mediator;[44] (c) the prophet as mediator;[45] and (d) the sage as mediator.[46] This is a rhetorical theology of the Hebrew Bible that contributes directly to sociorhetorical analysis and interpretation of early Christian and qur'ānic discourse. The first question for us is how first-century Christians appropriated and reconfigured conventional

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311–78; Margaret E. Dean, "The Grammar of Sound in Greek Texts: Toward a Method for Mapping the Echoes of Speech in Writing," *ABR* 44 (1996): 53–70; Richard A. Horsley and Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999).

[31] Brueggemann, *Theology,* 145–212.

[32] Characteristic markings of Yahweh (ibid., 213–28).

[33] Yahweh as constant (ibid., 229–66).

[34] Ibid., 267–303.

[35] Ibid., 317–32.

[36] Ibid., 333–58.

[37] Ibid., 359–72.

[38] Ibid., 373–99.

[39] Ibid., 413–49.

[40] Ibid., 450–91.

[41] Ibid., 492–527.

[42] Ibid., 528–51.

[43] Ibid., 578–99.

[44] Ibid., 600–621.

[45] Ibid., 622–79.

[46] Ibid., 680–94.

rhetorics in the Mediterranean world, which included the rhetorics in the Hebrew Bible.

With the aid of three major literary modes—biographical-historiography (Gospels and Acts); epistles; and apocalypse—first-century Christians interwove six sociorhetorical modes of discourse—wisdom, miracle, prophetic, suffering-death, apocalyptic, and precreation discourse—into a distinctive, dynamic, and multivalent mode of discourse that became canonical for Christians in the Mediterranean world. In sociorhetorical interpretation, the technical term for each mode of discourse is *rhetorolect*.[47]

> A rhetorolect is a form of language variety or discourse identifiable on the basis of a distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentations. By their nature, rhetorolects interpenetrate one another and interact with one another like dialects do when people from different dialectical areas converse with one another. The interaction of rhetorolects in early Christianity created new configurations of speech as the movement grew. Every early Christian writing contains a configuration of rhetorolects that is somewhat different from every other writing. These differences, interacting with one another, create the overall rhetorical environment properly called early Christian discourse.[48]

In order to understand each rhetorolect, it is necessary to understand the nature of rhetorical discourse. A beginning place is to understand that rhetorical discourse elaborates *topoi*. In Carolyn Miller's terms:

> The *topos* is a conceptual space without fully specified or specifiable contents; it is a region of productive uncertainty. It is a "problem space," but rather than circumscribing or delimiting the problem, rather than being a closed space or container *within* which one searches, it is a space, or a located perspective, *from* which one searches. I am thinking here of the linguistic notion of "semantic space." ... Such semantic

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[47] For a discussion of the term *rhetorolect,* see Vernon K. Robbins, "The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse," *Scriptura* 59 (1996): 353–62; also available online at http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/dialect/dialect353.html. For the argumentative nature of each rhetorolect, see Vernon K. Robbins, "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts* (ed. A. Eriksson et al.; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002), 27–65.

[48] Robbins, "Dialectical Nature," 356.

networks may be conditioned both by the peculiarities of community history and by apparently logical relationships (like opposition and inclusion).[49]

For rhetorical analysis and interpretation, it is important to understand that "Once a topical pattern has developed into common use, it will be used over and over in various manifestations and will be effective by virtue of its recognizability."[50] This recognizability sometimes is distinctive of a particular kind of culture in a particular region of the world. Wilhelm Wuellner has taught us, basing his insights on ancient rhetorical treatises and Curtius's interpretation of them, that rhetorical discourse elaborates *topoi* in two ways: amplificatory-descriptive; and argumentative-enthymematic.[51] Thus, a major presupposition for sociorhetorical interpretation is that each rhetorolect in the New Testament uses social, political, cultural, and religious locations of thought, practice, and argumentation as resources for elaboration and argumentation. One of the keys is to identify locations that function in a primary way in one or another rhetorolect. For example, one primary location for the *topoi* in New Testament wisdom discourse is the household, for miracle discourse a major location is the intersubjective body of individuals, for prophetic discourse the kingdom is a major location of thought, for suffering-death discourse the *polis,* and for apocalyptic and precreation discourse the empire is a major location of thought.

SOCIAL RHETORICS IN THE QUR'ĀN

The Qur'ān contains substantive miracle, wisdom, prophetic, and apocalyptic discourse. Precreation discourse is implicit rather than explicit in the Qur'ān. In the decades after the death of the prophet Muhammad, the Qur'ān itself became a dynamic subject of precreation discourse, in particular in the controversy about whether the Qur'ān was created or uncreated. In a context where Christians were arguing that Jesus existed with God

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[49] Carolyn R. Miller, "The Aristotelian *Topos:* Hunting for Novelty," in *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric* (ed. A. G. Gross and A. E. Walzer; Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 141.

[50] Barbara Warnick, "Two Systems of Invention: The Topics in *Rhetoric* and *The New Rhetoric,*" in Gross and Walzer, *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric,* 110.

[51] Wilhelm H. Wuellner, "Toposforschung und Torahinterpretation bei Paulus und Jesus," *NTS* 24 (1978): 467: "eine zweifache Funktion: eine argumentativ-enthymematische und eine amplifikatorisch-darstellerische Funktion." See also Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 110–11. See the less explicitly rhetorical approach to "motifs" in F. Gerald Downing, "Words As Deeds and Deeds As Words," *BibInt* 3 (1995): 129–43.

prior to creation as the Logos and Jesus was never created, many Muslims argued that the Qur'ān existed with God prior to creation and was never created. In turn, Jewish tradition in contemporaneous midrashic works, for example, *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*, argued that seven things existed with God prior to creation: Torah; Gehinnom, the garden of Eden, the throne of glory, the temple, repentance, and the name of the messiah. The Qur'ān does not develop suffering-death discourse characteristic of Christianity. Six verses in the Qur'ān assert that the prophets were wrongfully slain,[52] but opposition to the belief that Jesus was slain is so strong that suffering-death discourse is not prominent in qur'ānic discourse.

MIRACLE DISCOURSE IN THE QUR'ĀN

Miracle discourse is prominent in the Qur'ān. Thirty-six times in the Qur'ān the clause "Allah is (Thou art/He is) able to do all things" occurs.[53] In addition, ten verses refer to Allah as "Almighty,"[54] and forty-eight verses refer to Allah as "Mighty."[55] In qur'ānic discourse, the miraculous power of Allah is grounded in Allah's creation of the heavens and the earth. As Q 50:38 says: "And verily We created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, in six Days, and naught of weariness touched Us."[56] Since Allah produced all creation originally, Allah has the power to reproduce it.[57] Indeed, God's ability to produce and reproduce creation is easy,[58] and people can easily see the evidence that God produced it by "traveling in the land" (Q 29:20). In addition, God has no difficulty giving life to humans and resurrecting them to new life, since humans are one of God's creations out of dust. As Q 64:7 says: "Those who disbelieve assert that they will not be raised again. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Yea, verily, by my Lord! ye will be raised again and then ye will be informed of what ye did; and that is easy for Allah."[59] The

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[52] Q 2:61, 91; 3:21, 112, 181; 4:155.

[53] Q 2:20, 106, 109, 148, 259, 284; 3:26, 29, 165, 189; 5:17, 19, 40, 120; 6:17; 8:41; 9:39; 11:4; 16:77; 18:46 [45]; 22:6; 24:45; 29:20; 30:50; 33:27; 35:1; 41:39; 42:9; 46:33; 48:21; 57:2; 59:6; 64:1; 65:12; 66:8; 67:1.

[54] Q 3:6, 18; 12:39; 13:16; 14:48; 22:40, 74; 40:16; 57:25; 58:21.

[55] 2:129, 209, 220, 228, 240, 260; 3:62, 126; 4:56, 157, 165; 5:38, 118; 6:96; 8:10, 49, 63, 67; 9:40, 71; 14:4; 16:60; 27:9, 78; 29:16, 42; 30:27; 31:9, 27; 34:27; 35:2, 44; 36:38; 39:1; 40:8; 45:2, 37; 46:2; 48:7, 18; 57:1; 59:1, 24; 60:5; 61:1; 62:1, 3; 64:18; 67:2.

[56] See also Q 7:54; 10:3; 11:7; 25:59; 32:4; 57:4.

[57] Q 10:3–4, 34; 27:64; 30:11, 19; 50:11; 85:13.

[58] Q 29:19; 30:27.

[59] See also Q 2:73, 260; 3:27; 6:35, 95, 111; 7:57; 10:31; 21:21; 22:6; 25:3; 30:50; 36:12, 33; 41:39; 42:9; 50:3, 11, 43.

emphasis on humans as made of earth occurs clearly in Q 30:19: "He brings forth the living from the dead, and He brings forth the dead from the living, and He revives the earth after her death. And even so will you be brought forth."

In the Hebrew Bible, narratives about Moses, Elijah, and Elisha describe scenes with dramatic miracle discourse. The Qur'ān refers to Moses more than any other person in the Bible or anywhere in the world[60] (137 times), and there are a significant number of words in the context of these references that qualify as miracle discourse. In the context of nine references to Moses, there is explicit mention of clear proofs or miracles,[61] a term that occurs fifty times in the Qur'ān.[62] There are seventy-four references to Pharaoh in the Qur'ān, and most of these references recount, speak directly about, or evoke dynamics of Moses' confrontations with Pharaoh. A number of these verses use constructions such as "when we did deliver you" (2:49), "we rescued you" (2:50), "and we drowned the folk of Pharaoh" (2:50) to communicate God's miraculous activity of leading the people of Israel out of Egypt. Q 7:133 refers to the flood, locusts, vermin, frogs, and blood as a succession of clear signs or miracles that Pharaoh and his people did not heed.

The Qur'ān articulates no discourse with an emphasis on miracle either for Elijah or Elisha. Reference to Elisha occurs only twice in qur'ānic discourse: once he is listed with Ishmael, Jonah, and Lot as people whom God preferred among God's creatures (6:86 [87]); and once he is listed with Ishmael and Dhu'l Kifl as of the chosen (38:48). There is no emphasis on miracle in either context referring to Elijah or Elisha.

The Qur'ān refers to Elijah three times. Q 6:85 (86) lists Elijah along with Zechariah (father of John the Baptist), John (the Baptist), and Jesus as among the righteous. While there is no emphasis on miracle in this context, qur'ānic discourse about Zechariah and Jesus includes an emphasis on miracle, and John's birth is miraculous. Thus, in an implicit manner the grouping of Elijah with Zechariah, John, and Jesus may be perceived

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[60] One might think the Qur'ān would refer to Muhammad more times than anyone else. Since many verses in the Qur'ān address Muhammad directly, Pickthall's English version adds Muhammad's name in parentheses so often that a concordance search exhibits 272 occurrences of his name. However, the name Muhammad occurs only four times in the Arabic text of the Qur'ān (3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29).

[61] Q 2:92; 4:153; 7:85, 104–105; 11:17; 17:101; 20:70–72; 29:39; 40:28.

[62] In addition to the references in note 49, Q 2:87, 185, 209, 213, 253; 3:86, 105, 183, 184; 5:32, 110; 6:57, 157; 7:101; 8:42 (bis); 9:70; 10:13, 74; 11:28, 53, 63, 88; 14:9; 16:44; 20:133; 30:9; 35:25, 40; 40:22, 34, 50, 66, 83; 43:63; 47:14; 57:25; 61:6; 64:6; 98:1, 4.

to evoke an image of righteous people around whom God's miraculous powers were at work in a special way. One should mention again, however, that the emphasis in the context is on these men as "of the righteous," without any reference to God's miraculous work in the world. The other two references to Elijah occur in Q 37:123, 130, where the discourse attributes speech to Elijah as one who was sent to warn. Since the content of Elijah's speech is apocalyptic in tone, discussion of these references is present in the section below on apocalyptic discourse.

Unlike the Qur'ān's reference to Elijah only three times, the New Testament refers to Elijah twenty-nine times,[63] in comparison to sixty-six references to Elijah in the Hebrew Bible. Luke 4:25–26 and Jas 5:16–17 summarize episodes in which God's miraculous power worked through Elijah, and Jesus' raising of the son of the widow of Nain from death in Luke 7:11–17 is a reconfiguration of Elijah's raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kgs 17:17–24.[64] In addition, the Elijah-Elisha stories in the Hebrew Bible functioned for early Christians as a prefiguration of Jesus' miracles and played a highly formative role in the narrative portrayal of those activities in the Gospels of Mark and Luke.[65] Moreover, the one explicit reference to Elisha in the New Testament (Luke 4:27) focuses on his healing of Naaman the Syrian from his leprosy.[66]

There are seventy-nine references to Moses in the New Testament.[67] Only Rev 15:3, however, comes close to associating Moses with miraculous discourse when the song of Moses and the Lamb begins with "Great and amazing are your deeds." John 6:32 refers to Moses' giving of the bread out of heaven to the people, but it is doubtful that there is any emphasis on the miraculous in the assertion. In contrast, the miracle is "the true bread from heaven that the Father gives." One could almost say, then, that the New Testament and the Qur'ān exhibit a reversal of emphasis on miracle in the context of Elijah and Moses. For the New Testament, Elijah is the prominent miracle prophet in the story of Israel, and Elisha is

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[63] Matt 11:14; 16:14; 17:3, 4, 10, 11, 12; 27:47, 49; Mark 6:15; 8:28; 9:4, 5, 11, 12, 13; 15:35, 36; Luke 1:17; 4:25, 26; 9:8, 19, 30, 33; John 1:21, 25; Rom 11:2; Jas 5:17.

[64] A similar story is recounted of Elisha in 2 Kgs 4:32–37.

[65] Wolfgang Roth, *Hebrew Gospel: Cracking the Code of Mark* (Oak Park, Ill.: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988); Thomas L. Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative As an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000).

[66] The Hebrew Bible contains eighty-six references to Elisha, in comparison with sixty-six references to Elijah.

[67] The Hebrew Bible refers to Moses more than seven hundred times.

included in this emphasis; for the Qur'ān, Moses is the prominent miracle prophet in the story of Israel rather than Elijah and Elisha.

The other person whom qur'ānic discourse associates explicitly with miracles is Jesus, son of Mary. Q 2:87 emphasizes that Jesus followed after Moses with "clear proofs," and God supported Jesus with the holy spirit.[68] Once the Qur'ān clearly groups Moses and Jesus together (2:136), and once Moses and Jesus are grouped together at the end of a list of four prophets including Noah and Abraham (33:7). Jesus is the only one in the Qur'ān, besides God himself, who is given the power to raise the dead. Jesus raises the dead with God's permission (3:49; 5:110) alongside of his creating a live bird out of clay, healing the blind, and healing the leper. Qur'ānic discourse refers to these activities respectively as Jesus' coming with a sign (3:49) and with clear proofs (5:110).

The Qur'ān refers to Jesus twenty-five times,[69] exactly the same number of times it refers to Adam.[70] No miracles are attributed to Adam, but the Qur'ān asserts that "the likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, then He said unto him: Be! and he is" (Q 3:59). Like Adam, Jesus was human; but also like Adam, God created Jesus simply by saying, "Be!" As the angel explained to Mary, "So (it will be). God creates what He will. If He decrees a thing, He says unto it only; 'Be!' and it is" (Q 3:47).

WISDOM DISCOURSE IN THE QUR'ĀN

Since "God creates what He will" (5:17) and is able to do all things, there could be great difficulty if Allah's will were arbitrary. To the good fortune of all, Allah's power and will are grounded in wisdom, which includes mercy and forgiveness. Forty-eight times the Qur'ān refers to Allah as "(Al)mighty, Wise"[71] and seven times as "Knower, Powerful" or "Mighty, Knower."[72] In the Qur'ān, God's knowledge is fully as great as God's power. Words referring to knowing, knowledge, and knower occur, on the basis of Pickthall's version, 692 times in the Qur'ān. Thirty-two times the

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[68] See also Q 2:92, 253.

[69] Q 2:87, 136, 253; 3:45, 52, 55, 59, 84; 4:157, 163, 171; 5:46, 78, 110, 112, 114, 116; 6:85; 19:34; 33:7; 42:13; 43:63; 57:27; 61:6, 14.

[70] Q 2:31, 33, 34, 35, 37; 3:33, 59; 5:27; 7:11, 19, 26, 27, 31, 35, 172; 17:61, 70; 18:50; 19:58; 20:115, 116, 117, 120, 121; 36:60.

[71] Q 2:129, 209, 220, 228, 240, 260; 3:6, 18, 62, 126; 4:56, 158, 165; 5:38, 118; 6:96; 8:10, 49, 63, 67; 9:40, 71; 14:4; 16:60; 27:9, 78; 29:26, 42; 30:27; 31:9, 27; 34:27; 35:2, 44; 36:38; 39:1; 40:8; 45:2, 37; 46:2; 48:7, 19; 57:1; 59:1, 24; 60:5; 61:1; 62:1, 3; 64:18; see also 42:51 (Exalted, Wise); 41:42 (Wise, Owner of Praise).

[72] Q 16:70; 30:54; 40:2; 41:12; 42:3, 50; 43:9.

Qur'ān refers to God as "Knower, Wise."[73] Thirteen times the Qur'ān says that God is "the Knower of all things."[74] God knows the invisible and the visible,[75] the things hidden,[76] the unseen.[77] God knows what is in the breasts of people,[78] and God knows sins.[79]

The Qur'ān also refers to God in a manner Pickthall rendered as "Aware." God is aware of "all who are in the heavens and the earth" (17:55). Indeed, God is "Aware of all things."[80] The Qur'ān refers to God six times as "Wise, Aware,"[81] four times as "Knower, Aware,"[82] four times as "Subtle, Aware,"[83] and twice as "Responsive, Aware."[84] God is aware what all people do:[85] both the good things of those who go aright[86] and those who do evil or wrong.[87] God is aware of all that is hidden in human breasts.[88]

God is aware of all these things and knows them because God both hears and sees all things. God is the Hearer, Knower.[89] As part of this, of course, God is the Hearer of Prayer.[90] In addition, God sees all things

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[73] Q 2:32; 4:11, 17, 24, 26, 92, 104, 111, 170; 6:18; 8:71; 9:15, 28, 60, 97, 106, 110; 12:6, 83, 100; 22:52; 24:18, 58, 59; 33:1; 43:84; 48:4; 49:8; 51:30; 60:10; 66:2; 76:30.

[74] Q 2:29, 282; 4:32, 176; 5:97; 8:75; 24:35, 64; 33:54; 42:12: 57:3; 58:7; 64:11; see also 4:70 (Knower); 36:79 (Knower of every creation); 15:86 (all-wise Creator); 4:12; 22:59 (Knower, Indulgent).

[75] Q 6:73; 9:105; 19:9; 23:92; 32:6; 39:46; 59:22; 62:8; 64:18; cf. 18:26.

[76] Q 5:109; 9:78; 34:48.

[77] Q 34:3; 35:38; 72:26; see also 6:50.

[78] Q 3:29, 119, 154; 5:7; 8:43; 11:5; 28:69; 31:23; 35:38; 39:7; 42:24; 64:4; 67:13.

[79] Q 17:17; 15:58.

[80] Q 2:231; 6:101; 9:115; 21:81; 29:62; 33:40; 48:26; 49:16; see also 35:14.

[81] Q 6:73, 83, 128, 139; 15:25; 27:6; 34:1; cf. 11:1 (Wise, Informed); 24:10 (Clement, Wise).

[82] Q 4:35; 31:34; 49:13; 66:3.

[83] Q 6:103; 22:63; 31:16; 33:34; 67:14; see also 4:39 (ever Aware).

[84] Q 2:158; 4:147.

[85] Q 2:283; 13:33; 17:54; 22:68; 23:51; 48:11; 58:13; 63:11; 64:8.

[86] Q 2:215; 3:92, 115; 4:127; 6:53; 9:44; 16:125; 17:84; 24:30, 41; 28:56; 39:70; 53:30, 32.

[87] Q 2:95, 187, 246; 3:63; 6:58, 119; 9:47; 10:36, 40; 12:19; 19:70; 20:104; 23:96; 26:188; 28:85; 35:8; 39:70; 46:8; 53:30; 62:7; 68:7.

[88] Q 3:119, 169, 154; 11:5; 29:10; 31:23; 35:38; 42:24; 64:4; see also 60:1.

[89] Q 2:127, 137, 181, 224, 227, 244, 256; 3:34, 35, 121; 4:148; 5:76; 6:13, 115; 7:200; 8:17, 42, 53, 61; 9:98, 103; 10:65; 12:34; 21:4; 24:21, 60; 29:5, 60; 31:28; 41:36; 44:6; 49:1; 58:1; see also 34:50 (Hearer, Nigh).

[90] Q 3:38; 14:39; 37:75.

(67:19). God is the "Hearer, Seer."[91] God sees "what you [pl.] do"[92] and "what they do."[93]

In the Qur'ān, Joseph, son of Jacob, and the qur'ānic personage Luqmān are the people most closely associated with wisdom, with Solomon and David also included. Joseph received wisdom and knowledge (12:22) from God for his task on earth. This made Joseph a lord of knowledge (12:76). In turn, Joseph is called "the truthful one" (12:46: *ayyuha*). This wisdom even enables Joseph to make his father Jacob a wise seer who can say: "Said I not unto you that I know from Allah that which ye know not" (12:96). In the *sūra* titled Luqmān, God is "the True" (31:30), and there is an emphasis that God gave Luqmān wisdom (31:12). In the context of Joseph and Luqmān, there is an emphasis on God as true. In turn, God gave David and Solomon wisdom (judgment and knowledge). This made them wise in judgment and understanding (21:78–79).

The Qur'ān does not contain a separate "wisdom" section but rather embeds wisdom, attributed to God, throughout many of the *sūra*s. The wise, who submit to God's will, who become Muslim, are those who see the wisdom within the qur'ānic discourse itself.

PROPHETIC DISCOURSE IN THE QUR'ĀN

Everyone knows there is prophetic discourse in the Qur'ān, since Muslim tradition emphasizes that Muhammad is the final, most authoritative prophet. Readers of the Qur'ān will know, however, that the word messenger (*rasūl*) is even more frequent than the word *prophet* (*nabī*) and that Muslims refer first and foremost to Muhammad as The Messenger. The Qur'ān refers a total of seventy-eight times to a prophet.[94] The New Testament refers to a prophet 150 times,[95] which is almost twice as many times as the Qur'ān. In contrast, the word "messenger" occurs 368 times in the Qur'ān (Pickthall: 243 times in the singular and 125 times in the plural). This is almost two and one-half times as often as the word "prophet" occurs in the New Testament and almost four and three-fourths times more than the word "prophet" occurs in the Qur'ān.

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[91] Q 4:58, 134; 17:1; 22:61, 75; 40:56, 20; 42:11; see also 17:96 (Knower, Seer); 18:26 (clear of sight, keen of hearing).

[92] Q 2:110, 232, 237, 265; 3:156, 163; 11:112; 33:9; 34:11; 41:40; 48:24; 49:18; 57:4; 60:3; 64:2; see also Knower of what you used to do (16:28); Seer of his bondsmen (3:15, 20; 42:27); and Seer of his slaves (35:31, 45).

[93] Q 2:96; 5:71; 8:39, 72.

[94] Fifty-seven times in the singular; twenty-one times in the plural.

[95] Sixty-four times in the singular; eighty-six times in the plural.

The remarkable frequency of the word *messenger* in the Qur'ān indicates that, for this revelatory discourse, God sent messengers at various times to people with various combinations of abilities.[96] They are sent as miracle workers; as people who transmitted God's wisdom, knowledge, and truth; as people who announced God's good news; and as special warners of the terrible things that will happen to disbelievers. The concept of prophet is closely related to messenger, since God sends prophets. In qur'ānic discourse, however, God sends all kinds of messengers, and only certain ones are regularly referred to as prophets. God sends only certain messengers with miracles to confirm what they do. There are signs that accompany all of God's messengers, since God's creation presents signs of God's powerful activity every day. These signs function only for believers as portents that reveal the remarkable beneficence and mercy of God, of course. For unbelievers, these signs are simply natural functions of the universe and not anything that especially reveals the nature and magnificence of God.

*Sūra* 21, entitled The Prophets (*al-Anbiyā'*), recounts circumstances around eleven Hebrew Bible people (Noah, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Job), one New Testament person (Zechariah, father of John the Baptist), and three other prophets (Idrīs, Dhu'l-Kifl, Dhū'l-Nūn). In addition to *Sūra* 21, which is devoted entirely to prophets, there are lists of prophets in various verses in the Qur'ān. Jesus is most noticeably absent from *Sūra* 21, since he is included in lists of prophets among Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses in 2:136; 3:84; 4:163–164 and among Noah, Abraham, and Moses in 33:7. It is also surprising that Jonah does not appear in *Sūra* 21. Jonah appears only once in a list of prophets (4:163–164), but he has wonderful company there: Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Job, and Jesus. In addition, Jonah appears among Ishmael, Elisha, and Lot in 6:86; receives special recognition in 37:139–148 after Noah (37:75–82), Abraham (37:83–111), Isaac (37:112–113), Moses and Aaron (37:114–122), Elijah (37:123–132), and Lot (37:133–138); and there is a *sūra* named Jonah (Q 10 *Yūnus*).

The term *prophethood* and the singular or plural of *prophet* occurs eighty-three times in the Qur'ān. There is no verb that Pickthall interprets in English as "to prophesy." God promises 117 times. Prophets transmit God's knowledge, wisdom, truth, and good news; and they warn. Prophets in the Qur'ān do not prophesy. Thus, the Qur'ān makes no references to prophecies, and it does not describe anyone as prophesying. Both God and Satan promise (2:268). This would seem to fit the Islamic contention that Muhammad ends prophecy.

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[96] A current web site offers an article arguing for the introduction of twenty scriptures by twenty successive prophets: http://www.submission.org/Quran-19.html.

APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE IN THE QUR'ĀN

Apocalyptic discourse is highly present in the Qur'ān. References to the day of judgment occur fourteen times,[97] to those who believe in God and the last day twenty-seven times,[98] and things that will happen on the day of resurrection seventy-one times.[99] Norman O. Brown, following the lead of Louis Massignon, has called *Sūra* 18 the "Apocalypse of Islam." "Surah 18," he says, "is the apocalypse of Islam: the heart of its message, not displayed on the surface, is the distinction between surface and substance, between *Zahir* and *bâtin*."[100] What Brown asserts about *Sūra* 18 is true for most of the Qur'ān. Almost the entire presentation of themes in the Qur'ān involves either an implicit or explicit reference to the eschaton. As we have indicated elsewhere, the very presentation of time is focused on a compression of the period from creation to the last day, with a resulting emphasis of making all temporal events affected by a sense of the end.[101] In this context, one of the tasks of God's messengers is to warn people about the rewards of belief and the consequences of disbelief.

Apocalyptic discourse in the Qur'ān sets up the alternative of gardens and paradise for believers and fire for disbelievers. The gardens and paradise as humans' reward for good action are mentioned 130 times.[102] These gardens, modeled on the garden of Eden in Gen 2–3, have much

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[97] Q 1:4; 15:35; 26:82; 37:20; 38:78; 51:12; 56:56; 68:39; 70:26; 74:46; 82:15, 17, 18; 83:11.

[98] Q 2:8, 62, 126, 177, 228, 232, 264; 3:114; 4:38, 39, 59, 136, 162; 5:69; 7:45; 9:18, 19, 29, 44, 45, 99; 24:2; 29:36; 33:21; 58:22; 60:6; 65:2.

[99] Q 2:85, 113, 174; 3:55, 77, 161, 180, 185, 194; 4:87, 109, 141, 159; 5:14, 36, 64; 6:12; 7:32, 167, 172; 10:60, 93; 11:60, 98, 99; 16:25, 27, 92, 124; 17:13, 58, 62, 97; 18:105; 19:95; 20:100, 101, 124; 21:47; 22:9, 17, 69; 23:16; 25:47, 69; 28:41, 42, 61, 71, 72; 29:13, 25; 30:56; 32:25; 35:14; 39:15, 24, 31, 47, 60, 67; 41:40; 42:45; 45:17, 26; 46:5; 58:7; 60:3; 75:1; 75:6.

[100] Norman Oliver Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 81.

[101] Gordon D. Newby, "Quranic Texture: A Review of Vernon Robbins' *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* and *Exploring the Texture of Texts,*" *JSNT* 70 (1998): 93–100.

[102] Q 2:25, 82, 221, 266; 3:15, 136, 195, 198; 4:13, 57, 122; 5:12, 65, 85, 119; 6:99; 7:40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 49, 50; 9:21, 72, 89, 100, 111; 10:9, 26; 11:23, 108; 13:23, 35; 14:23; 15:45; 16:31, 32; 17:91; 18:31–34, 40; 19:61, 63; 20:76; 22:56; 23:19; 25:15, 24; 26:85, 90; 29:58; 30:15; 31:8; 32:19; 34:15–16; 35:33; 36:34; 37:43; 38:50; 39:73–74; 40:8, 40; 42:7, 22; 43:70, 72; 44:25, 52; 46:14, 16; 17:5, 15; 48:5, 17; 50:9, 31; 51:15; 52:17; 53:13; 54:54; 55:46, 54, 62; 56:12, 89; 57:12, 21; 58:22; 59:20; 61:12; 64:9; 65:11; 66:8, 11; 68:17, 34; 69:22; 70:35, 38; 71:12; 74:40; 76:12; 78:16, 32; 79:41; 80:30; 81:13; 85:11; 88:10; 89:30; 98:8.

in common with the heavenly garden-city as it is depected in Rev 22:1–5. Fire, the reward of those who sin, is mentioned 148 times,[103] and there are 103 references to hell.[104] This means that sixty-one *sūra*s refer explicitly to the fire, with one more implying it (Q 42). Fifty-two *sūra*s appear not to contain a reference to the fire for unbelievers or allude to it.[105] *Sūra* 2: *al-Baqarah*, the longest *sūra* in the Qur'ān, has fourteen or fifteen references to the fire, more references than any other *sūra*. *Sūra* 3: *Āl-'Imrān,* has eleven references to the fire. *Sūra* 101: *al-Qāri'ah* ends with the words "raging fire." It is unusual that the phrase "the fire of God" appears only once in the Qur'ān (104:6), since fire is intimately associated with the nature of God in the Bible.[106] The Qur'ān appears to present fire much more like the Revelation to John, where fire is explicitly an instrument of God but not identified so intimately with the internal nature of God.[107]

In a context where people face an alternative between the raging fire and gardens of delight on the basis of belief or disbelief, a major task of God's messengers is to warn people about the rewards of belief and the consequences of disbelief. It was noted above in the section on miraculous discourse how the Qur'ān emphasizes the role of Elijah as warner about the consequences of disbelief, rather than as agent of God's miraculous

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[103] Q 2:24, 39, 80, 81, 119, 126, 167, 174, 201, 217, 221, 257, 266, 275; 3:10, 16, 24, 103, 116, 131, 151, 162, 185, 191, 192; 4:10, 14, 30, 56, 145; 5:29, 27, 72, 86; 6:27, 128; 7:36, 44, 47, 50; 8:14; 9:17, 35, 63, 68, 81, 109, 113; 10:8, 27; 11:16, 17, 83, 98, 106, 113; 13:5, 35; 14:30, 50; 16:62; 18:29, 53; 21:39; 22:19, 51, 72; 23:104; 24:57; 27:90; 28:41; 29:24; 32:20; 33:64, 66; 34:12, 42; 35:6, 36; 38:27, 59, 61, 64; 39:8, 16, 19; 40:6, 41, 43, 46, 47, 49, 72; 41:19, 24, 28, 40; (42:45); 45:34; 46:20, 34; 47:12, 15; 51:13; 52:13, 14, 18, 27; 54:48; 55:35; 56:94; 57:15, 19; 58:17; 59:3, 17, 20; 64:10; 66:6, 10; 69:31; 70:15; 71:25; 72:15, 23; 73:12; 74:31; 76:4; 84:12; 85:5; 87:12; 88:4; 90:20; 92:14; 98:6; 100:2; 101:11; 102:6; 104:6; 111:3.

[104] Q 2:119, 206; 3:12, 197; 4:55, 93, 97, 115, 121, 140, 169; 5:10, 86; 7:18, 41, 179; 8:16, 36–37; 9:35, 49, 63, 68, 73, 81, 95, 109, 113; 11:119; 13:18; 14:16, 29; 15:43; 16:29; 17:8, 18, 39, 63, 97; 18:100, 102, 106; 19:68, 86; 20:74; 21:29, 98; 23:103; 25:34, 65; 26:91; 29:54, 68; 32:13; 35:36; 36:63; 37:23, 55, 64, 68, 163; 38:56, 85; 39:32, 60, 71–72; 40:7, 49, 60, 76; 43:74; 44:47, 56; 45:10; 48:6; 50:24, 30; 52:13, 18; 54:48; 55:43; 56:94; 57:19; 58:8; 66:9; 67:6; 69:31; 70:15; 72:15, 23; 78:21; 79:36, 39; 81:12; 82:14; 83:16; 85:10; 89:23; 96:18; 98:6; 102:6.

[105] 1, 12, 15, 17, 19–20, 25–26, 30–31, 36–37, 43–44, 48–50, 53, 60–63, 65, 67–68, 75, 77–83, 86, 89, 91, 93–97, 99, 103, 105–110, 112–114.

[106] E.g., Num 16:35; Deut 4:24, 33, 36; 5:4, 5, 22, 24, 26; 9:3; 18:16; 32:22; 1 Kgs 18:24, 38; 2 Kgs 1:10; Job 1:16; Pss 18:8; 29:7; 50:3; 78:21; 79:5; 89:46; 97:3.

[107] Rev 1:14; 2:18; 3:18; 4:5; 8:5, 7, 8; 9:17, 18; 10:1; 11:5; 13:13; 14:10, 18; 15:2; 16:8; 17:16; 18:8; 19:12, 20; 20:9, 10, 14, 15; 21:8.

power. Q 37:123–132 evokes Elijah's confrontation with the worshipers of Baal with reference to the doom that awaits them, rather than with reference to the manifestation of God's power in fire that came down and consumed the offerings (1 Kgs 18:36–39; see also 2 Kgs 1:10).

In addition, a number of *sūra*s in the Qur'ān vividly present details of the day of judgment in a manner reminiscent of Mark 13, Matt 24, Luke 21, and Rev 20–21 in the New Testament. *Sūra* 82 ("The Cleaving" [*al-Infiṭār*]) presents in only nineteen verses the splitting of the heavens, the dispersing of the planets, the raging of the seas, and the overturning of the graves that will occur on the day of judgment. *Sūra* 75 ("The Rising of the Dead" [*al-Qiyāmah*]) presents in detail the sequence of events at the end, including the darkening of the sun and moon (see Mark 13:24 and its parallels), when the righteous will be resurrected.

Noah and Jonah are apocalyptic prophets. In many ways, their discourse brings coherence to all of qur'ānic discourse, which, as we mentioned above, seems apocalyptic in its overall nature, while at the same time using a variety of discourses.

CONCLUSION

In this prolegomenon, we have tried to indicate a new direction for qur'ānic study that places the Qur'ān within the same discourse environment as Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Through the use of social and rhetorical analysis, the three scriptures and their related interpretive writings can be treated as commensurable without being reductionist or assuming a discourse of "borrowing/lending," which always privileges the antecedent tradition. Our efforts are already generating new arenas of investigation for us. One, mentioned above, is the pervasive apocalyptic nature of the Qur'ān. Another is how closely the Qur'ān is in conversation with the Gospel of Luke and its subsequent heritage in Christian tradition. Space in this essay has not allowed us to demonstrate these directions, but we hope to publish studies on these topics in the near future. In the meantime, it is our hope that other scholars will see the utility of the method we have outlined here and help us with our project of analyzing just how the Qur'ān is the third partner in this conversation about God's Word.