

# New Approaches to Human Dignity in the Context of Qur'ānic Anthropology:

*The Quest for Humanity*

Edited by

Rüdiger Braun and Hüseyin I. Çiçek

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Anthropology: The Quest for Humanity

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## CHAPTER THREE

# TRIALOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: THE QUR'ĀN ON ADAM AND IBLĪS IN VIEW OF RABBINIC AND CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE

HOLGER ZELLENTIN

### **Qur'ānic Studies and Qur'ānic Anthropology**

The Qur'ān, set as God's speech to His prophet, in turn functions as this prophet's address to his audience. Already in its earlier phase, traditionally placed in Mecca (Arabic *makkah*, see e.g. Q 48.24), the Qur'ān engages in a *dialogue*, casting its audience as constituted of insiders and outsiders, as “believers” and “unbelievers,” as pious *muslimūn* – with whose side it self-identifies – and as impious *mušrikūn* (those “associators” whose monotheism it perceives as impure).<sup>1</sup> Yet especially in its later phase, traditionally placed in Medina (*madīnah*, see e.g. Q 9:101), the Qur'ān, in direct and often in indirect ways, also increasingly addresses the “Scripture people,” the “sons of Israel,” i.e. the Jews and the Christians not

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<sup>1</sup> On the term *širk* see Gerald Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. 67-87; see also Holger Zellentín, “*Aḥbār* and *Ruhbān*: Religious Leaders in the Qur'ān in Dialogue with Christian and Jewish Literature,” in *Qur'ānic Studies at the University of Chicago*, edited by A. Neuwirth and M. Sells (Routledge Studies in the Qur'ān; New York: Routledge, 2016), 284 note 18.

only of the past, but also of its own present. Jews and Christians are portrayed sometimes as pious and sometimes as lacking in true faith. Along with the *munāfiqūn*, the “hypocrites,” which equally appear here, the Jews and Christians in Medina tend to constitute a new *marginal* category, neither fully within nor fully without the circle of believers.<sup>2</sup> When addressing the sons of Israel, the Medinan Qur’ān has shifted from a dialogue between *muslimūn* and *mušrikūn* to a *trialogue* of the Muslims with two groups of marginal insiders.<sup>3</sup>

At the example of a few well-studied passages regarding the events surrounding the creation of Adam and the angels’ subsequent prostration before him, this chapter will argue that the Meccan Qur’ān, in this instance, engages in a subtle, sophisticated, and intense dialogue with the Christian tradition.<sup>4</sup> However, the same story about Adam and the angels will show that the Medinan Qur’ān, in its retelling of Meccan passages, often engages in what I will call a *trialogical* debate: its discourse often – though not always – combines a simultaneous echo of Christian as well as the Jewish traditions with an address, *inter alia*, to real or evoked Christians, Jews and Muslims in the audience (relegating the *mušrikūn* to a rank of secondary urgency). Yet instead of being constituted by the voices of the two outside groups these dialogues address, the Qur’ān here formulates a theological narrative meant to supersede the erroneous “Israelite” particularism it associates with each of the two “groups among the sons of Israel (*tā’ifatun min banī ’isrā’īla*, see Q 61:14).”<sup>5</sup> Situating itself as the voice of an original tradition historically anterior and

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<sup>2</sup> We should, therefore, understand the “hypocrites” to be largely Jewish or Christian; cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’an: Second Edition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), esp. 150-61.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the Qur’ān’s dialogue with Jews and Christians see e.g. Zellentin, “*Ahbār and Ruhbān*,” on the shift from the Qur’ān’s community of believers to Muslim self-identity – which I believe to have happened during the lifetime of the prophet – cf. Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> For a study detailing the Meccan Qur’ān’s use of rabbinic traditions see now Zellentin, “The Synchronic and the Diachronic Qur’ān: *Sūrat Yā Sīn*, Lot’s People, and the Rabbis,” in Asma Hilali (ed.), *The Fragment and the Whole: Approaching Religious Texts in a New Perspective, from Mesopotamia to Arabia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> In line with Syriac churches that saw themselves not only as the spiritual or the true but also as the ethnic Israel – constituted of “the people” and “the peoples” – the Qur’ān recasts both Jews and Christians as two factions among the one people of Israel; see Zellentin, *The Qur’ān’s Legal Culture: The Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 162-4.

theologically superior to both Judaism and Christianity, the Medinan Qur'ān recasts the Christian as well as the Jewish narratives about Adam and the angels within the framework of its own doctrines. With its own sense of an exclusivist monotheism, the Qur'ān rejects claims about Adam's creative intelligence and innate divinity made by rabbis and by Christians in their respective versions of the same story.<sup>6</sup>

The remarkable developments in the field of Qur'ānic studies over the past decades make it necessary to situate the following inquiry more precisely in a field which remains reluctant to establish a consensus on even the most basic issues.<sup>7</sup> Previous studies of some of the same Qur'ān passages about Adam and the angels to be considered in the sequel are of great value in their own right. Yet these explorations, even though they identify relevant materials from both the Jewish and the Christian tradition, tend to operate within a more modular model, identifying specific "building blocks" of Qur'ānic narrative without giving full attention to two phenomena: one, the way in which especially the Medinan Qur'ān formulates its own doctrine in a dialogue, in carefully calibrated response to both its Jewish and Christian contemporaries and to their traditions, and two, the discernible recurrent patterns with which it tends to combine its response to the traditions of Jews and Christians.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, I propose a close study of how the Medinan Qur'ān deals with particular "biblical" narratives known by members of its particular audience. Such a study can offer us insights into how the Qur'ān formulates a "middle" position in between Judaism and Christianity, and how it aims to create an *umma wasaṭ*, a "middle people" (Q 2:143) situated in between the Jews and the Christians. Namely, the Qur'ān sustains many individual Jewish and the Christian exegetical traditions all

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<sup>6</sup> On the Qur'ān and monotheism cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and His People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); see also Zellentin, "The Rise of Monotheism in Arabia," in Nicholas Baker-Brian and Josef Lössl (eds.), *Blackwell Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell), forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> The best indicators of current directions remain Gabriel Said Reynolds, *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān: The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context 2* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Angelika Neuwirth, Michael Marx, and Nicolai Sinai (eds.), *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu* (Brill: Leiden, 2010); and Reynolds (ed.), *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context* (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> It is evident that the Qur'ān also engaged in detailed dialogues with the traditions of the Meccan *muṣrikūn*, yet their traditions of course have not been preserved; see Patricia Crone, *The Qur'ānic Pagans and Related Matters: Collected Studies in Three Volumes* (Brill: Leiden 2015); Vol. 1, esp. 52-182.

the while juxtaposing them in a way that presents the teachings of each side in a way that implicitly highlights the perceived errors and shortcomings of the other one. The Medinan Qur'ān thus stages a trialogue, in which it situates itself as representing the Scriptural Muslim truth that emanates from its divine author. Yet in addition to appealing to the faith of the members of its audience, it also appeals to their rationality. The Qur'ān suggests that much of this same divine truth could be confirmed if one only took a close combined look at the Jewish and the Christian narratives, separating the truth that tends to lie in their overlap from their sectarian shortcomings that tends to lie in their disagreements.<sup>9</sup>

Only the Medinan Qur'ān names “the Jews” and “the Christians” at all (see e.g. Q 5:18, as opposed to the more ubiquitous “sons of Israel”), yet it tends not explicitly to attribute the traditions it employs to either group.<sup>10</sup> We will see, however, that in the case of the particular narrative of Adam and the angels, the Qur'ān engages with the Christian tradition both in Mecca and Medina, and with the Jewish one exclusively in Medina – a not at all common phenomenon, for rabbinic narratives are important for many Meccan surahs.<sup>11</sup> The unusually late turn to the rabbinic traditions points to the fact that in the case of this specific narrative, the Qur'ān's geographical and chronological shift in focus – from a dialogue with the Christian tradition in Mecca to a trialogue equally encompassing the Jewish tradition in Medina – goes along with an increasingly intense focus on a trialogue with both Israelite groups. Moreover, the same separation of its engagement may suggest that the Qur'ān expected at least part of its implied audience to recognize the traditions in question as either Jewish or Christian.

Disentangling some of the traditions, which the Qur'ān engages as either Jewish or Christian, we will see, may thus be of great value for those seeking to understand its original message – it leads us to appreciate its concomitant endorsement and criticism of its religious contemporaries in surprisingly specific ways. Knowledge of the Jewish and Christian tradition, we can in turn safely surmise, resides largely with the Jews and Christians among the Qur'ān's audience. The following considerations will thus be based on the knowledge, which the Qur'ān surmises among and imparts on its *implicit audience*. This is the audience inscribed in the text, which, without being identical, has great affinity with the Qur'ān's

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<sup>9</sup> See note 3 above.

<sup>10</sup> On the concept of the Israelites in the Qur'ān see the still useful volume by Uri Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'ān. The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> See note 4 above.



partially reconstructible first *historical audience*, constituted in turn of the formative Islamic community and those on and beyond its margins.<sup>12</sup> Moving in hermeneutical circles, this study thus combines arguments about the Qur'ān's historical audience with arguments about its implied audience. Both types of arguments are derived from the study of texts within their historical context: they combine a literary study of the Qur'ān itself with the way in which it relates to select Jewish and Christian texts; a triangle that allows us to approach the oral discourse of Late Antique Arabia in which the Qur'ān was first heard.<sup>13</sup>

The novelty of the present study may lie in its fuller integration of traditional source-criticism with a focus on the Qur'ān's literary qualities that are defined by its self-image as Scripture.<sup>14</sup> During the last century, scholars reading the Qur'ān, usually in line with their own religious or cultural affiliation, have either used Jewish and Christian texts rather uncritically as constitutive of Muhammad's putative learning (positing a communally oriented prophet falsely as "author"), or alternatively denied the comparative value of these outside texts entirely, instead emphasizing the Qur'ān's meta-historical truth.<sup>15</sup> It is true that the text constitutes itself as Scripture, as a divine transcript in line with previous revelation that does not generally see itself as historically contingent. Yet the Qur'ān does not actually seek to dissimulate its historical situatedness, in contrast, for example, with many – though not all – Jewish and Christian "Scriptural" texts.<sup>16</sup> To the contrary, the Qur'ān points to its meta-historical permanency

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<sup>12</sup> On the nascent Islamic community see esp. Angelika. *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2010), 44-5.

<sup>13</sup> On the Qur'ān's orality see Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, 135-41, see also Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture*, 14-5 and 49-50 n. 59.

<sup>14</sup> On the Qur'ān's self-image see esp. Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau, *Le Coran par lui-même: Vocabulaire et argumentation du discours coranique autoréférentiel* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Stefan Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006); and Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self-image. Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> The most efficient model of the particular prophetic "authorship" of the Qur'ān has been sketched by Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, esp. 19-36.

<sup>16</sup> We should note that many Jewish and Christian texts tend to eradicate the context of their genesis by evoking the authority of Tannaitic or apostolic figures, respectively; medieval Jewish as well as patristic Christian authors, of course, tend to reveal their historical circumstances. The issue needs further study, but see already Arnold Maria Goldberg, "Die Zerstörung von Kontext als Voraussetzung für die Kanonisierung religiöser Texte im rabbinischen Judentum," in Aleida and

all the while emphasizing the historical particularities of its implied audience, addressing their specific customs and their specific errors, making references to historical events of their time, and last not least explicating that it address its audience in a shared language: it describes itself as uttered in *lisān ‘arabī mubīn*, in “clear Arabic,” or, as Sidney Griffith put it nicely, in “clarifying Arabic” (see Q 16:103 and cf. Q 26:193-5).<sup>17</sup> The Qur’ān thereby sees itself as being intelligible to a group of people articulated in a specific Arabian and Arabic context, doubly indicating its reliance on the linguistic and cultural comprehension of its implied audience. Muslims, over the centuries, have perpetuated and universalized many aspects of this specific Arabian context by spreading both Arabic and Arabian values, by apprenticing themselves to the Qur’ān and by shaping their culture based on the text. The text, inversely, lends itself particularly well to an analysis based on its implied original audience – and part of this audience, I hold, was well acquainted with specific, demonstrable, and reconstructible Christian and Jewish traditions.

Before beginning an inquiry into its account of the angels’ prostration following Adam’s creation, one further quality of the Qur’ān that needs to be clarified in the present context is how this study deals with the aforementioned difference between the first and the second stage of its development, corresponding to what the Islamic tradition sees as the “Meccan” and “Medinan” phase of the revelation. Regardless of the difficult question of how these two phases relate to actual places, and how such actual places would in turn relate to the two cities by the same names in the contemporaneous Hejaz, it is clear that a basic, two-partite chronology of first Meccan and then Medinan can be taken for granted, even if it cannot be specified in every textual instance, and even if the internal order of the two periods remains doubtful.<sup>18</sup> The composition of

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Jan Assmann (eds.), *Kanon und Zensur; Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Munich: W. Fink, 1987), 201-211.

<sup>17</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: the Scriptures of the People of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>18</sup> On the issue of the Qur’ān’s chronology see Nicolai Sinai, “Inner-Qur’anic Chronology,” Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah *The Oxford Handbook of Qur’anic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016), forthcoming; Joseph Witztum, “Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology and the Study of Intra-Quranic Parallels,” in Asad Q. Ahmed et al. (eds.), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1-50; Nicolai Sinai, “The Qur’ān as Process,” in idem et al. (eds.), *The Qur’ān in Context*, 407-440 and cf. Gabriel Said Reynolds, “Le problème de la chronologie du Coran,” *Arabica* 58 (2011): 477-502; see also Zellentin, “The Synchronic and the Diachronic Qur’ān.”

the Qur'ān's implied audience, crucially, shifts with its two major phases, as this study will once again illustrate.

In line with the aforementioned shift from its (mainly Meccan) dialogue between *muslimūn* and *muṣrikūn* towards a (mainly Medinan) triologue between Muslims, Jews, and Christians, the audience of the Medinan Qur'ān, in a general way, is implied to be much more scripturally astute than the Meccan audience, which may have been familiar with Biblical stories only in a rudimentary way. The Meccan Qur'ān, often sequentially, relates biblical narratives in a way that introduces them to the part of the audience that is not sufficiently familiar with them; at the same time, it seeks to rectify the pre-existing conceptions held by the part of the audience that knew the basic narratives at least superficially. The Medinan Qur'ān, by contrast, presupposes at least part of its audience to command broad knowledge not only of its own Meccan antecedents but also of many more aspects of what we can call the Scriptural Tradition of Late Antiquity: the texts it names the *taurāt*, the *zabūr* of David, the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham and Moses, and the *'inḡīl*, which correspond in many ways to an idealized version of the Hebrew Bible, of the New Testament, as well as to the rabbinic and Christian traditions that developed the understanding of Scripture throughout Late Antiquity.<sup>19</sup> In the specific case of the narratives about Adam and the angels, we will see that the Meccan Qur'ān relates the Christian materials about Adam and the Angels in a sequential way that introduces Christian narratives to its audience at the same time as criticizing Christian beliefs (in Q 7:11-18; Q 15:26-48; Q 17:61-65; Q 20:116-23; Q 18:50-53; and Q 38:71-85). The Medinan Qur'ān continues this trend, augmenting its anti-Christological bend, all the while introducing its audience to the rabbinic materials on the same story, equally correcting perceived misconceptions of its increasingly Biblicized audience (Q 2:28-39).

Much work remains to be done in order to clarify what exactly was known where in Arabia, in what language it was transmitted, and most importantly, how knowledge of various Biblical traditions among the Qur'ān's implied audience relates to the presence of various groups among its historical audience. I have argued, for example, that the rabbinic traditions reflected in the Medinan Qur'ān, while showing occasional Mesopotamian strands, continue to be of predominantly Palestinian origin, as those of the Meccan Qur'ān likely were almost exclusively.<sup>20</sup> If my

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<sup>19</sup> See Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, esp. 561-671.

<sup>20</sup> In light of the ascendancy of the Babylonian rabbinic academies already before the seventh century CE, the persistence of Palestinian rabbinic traditions both in Mecca and Medina is surprising; see my comments in Mehdi Azaiez et al. (eds.)

claim was true, would it mean that Palestinian rabbis had travelled to the Hejaz, or that Hejazi Jews were in contact with Palestine? While the presence in Palestine of Jews from Himyar in Southern Arabia (in the present day Yemen) has recently been confirmed, the situation may have been quite different in the Hejaz, even if the region is situated in closer proximity to Palestine.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, much research remains to be done on the Qur'ān's presupposition regarding its audience's knowledge of aspects of the Syriac tradition, i.e. Aramaic Christian lore. Over the past ten years, scholars have identified persuasive evidence that the Qur'ān should be read in the context of Syriac literature. Q 18 *Sūrat al-Kahf*, for example, part of which we will consider below, has been contextualized persuasively in light of the religious poetry of the bishop and scholar Jacob of Serugh and others.<sup>22</sup> Again, while we know that Jacob has addressed the oasis of Najran in his writings – again a place to the south of the Hejaz – it is not yet clear which Christian communities, if any, would have been present in a “Mecca” or in a “Medina,” regardless of the places' location. The traditional Islamicate reports about the prophet's own journeys, even if corroborated by images relating to travel and long-distance trade in the Qur'ān, are impossible to verify – yet the likelihood of travel on the part either of the prophet or of part of his audience nevertheless complicates any facile identification of scriptural tradition, group, and place both in Meccan and in Medina.<sup>23</sup> While we are thus still far away from any

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*The Qur'an Seminar Commentary: A Collaborative Study of 50 Qur'anic Passages* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 44, 110 and 168. .

<sup>21</sup> On relevant Hejazi inscriptions see Christian Julien Robin, “The peoples beyond the Arabian Frontier in Late Antiquity: Recent Epigraphic Discoveries and Latest Advances,” in Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Greg Fisher (eds.) *Inside and Out. Interactions between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014): 33-79; and Robert Hoyland, “The Jews of the Hijaz in the Qur'ān and in their Inscriptions,” in Reynolds, *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān*; 91–116.

<sup>22</sup> See esp. Sidney H. Griffith, “Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur'ān: The ‘Companions of the Cave’ in Surat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian Tradition,” in Reynolds (ed.), *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*, 109–37; Kevin van Bladel, “The Legend of Alexander the Great in the Qur'ān 18:83–102,” in *ibid.*, 175–203; and Joseph Witztum, “Joseph Among the Ishmaelites: Q12 in Light of Syriac Sources,” in Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān*, 425–448.

<sup>23</sup> On Meccan trade see esp. Francis Edward Peters, “The Commerce of Mecca before Islam,” in F. Kazemi and R.D. McChesney (eds.), *A Way Prepared. Essays on Islamic Culture in Honor of Richard Bayly Winder* (New York: New York University Press 1988), 3-26; and Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

incipient consensus regarding the precise nature of the Jewish or Christian communities of Mecca and Medina, a study of the Qur'ān's implied audience does not rely on such knowledge – such a study, inversely, should be the grounds on which we attempt to build a consensus.<sup>24</sup>

In short, for the present paper, I want to approach the identities of the Qur'ān's historical audience by focusing on the preliminary question of what the Qur'ān expected its implied audience to know. This constitutes a variant of the old orientalist inquiry into the “sources” of the Qur'ān, yet turned on its head. If we ask what the Qur'ān expects its audience to know, rather than how it came to know it, we are much freer to ask ourselves how the Qur'ān deals with the expectations of its implied audience, allowing us to understand how the Qur'ān generates its message.<sup>25</sup> How the Qur'ān uses, partially fulfils, and partially frustrates its audience's expectations is a question that uses traditional philology for the end of a literary history, promising to tell us something about the religions of Late Antique Arabia. I hold that the Meccan Qur'ān is predominantly a dialogical document, while the Medinan Qur'ān, is often – though again not always – best understood in a triological setting: it addresses both the Jews and the Christians at the same time, and over and over strikes a moderate and a “median” position in between what it portrays as the respective theological excess of each of the two parties it faces. I have previously written on how the Qur'ān situates itself in between what it perceives as legal excess on the side of the rabbis and legal nonchalance on the side of the Christians.<sup>26</sup> I now want to portray the Qur'ān as striking a similarly moderate and median position when it comes to its anthropology: I hold that the Qur'ān calibrates its anthropology by beginning a dialogue with the Syriac Christian traditions on the creation of Adam in Mecca, and by extending this dialogue into a triologue also including the rabbinic traditions in Medina.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For a much more assertive view of what can be known about the communities of Mecca and Medina, based in turn on Islamic historiography, cf. e.g. Haggai Mazuz, *The Religious and Spiritual Life of the Jews of Medina* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), as well as Michael Lecker, *Muhammad and the Jews* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2014) and idem, *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> On the ways in which the rabbinic tradition generates a message by retelling narratives see e.g. Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); for the ways in which rabbis equally could use such retellings for parodic ends see Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> See Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture*, 155-74 and note 3 above

<sup>27</sup> On Medina and its Jews see note 24 above.

My argument will be that the Meccan Qur'ān introduces part of its audience to the story of the creation of Adam and of the refusal of one of the angels to prostrate before him. The Qur'ān expands on various details of this account in its several repetitions of it that stand in line with an identifiable oral tradition equally attested in the Syriac Christian history called the *Cave of Treasures*. At the same time, another part of the audience recognized the Adam narrative as Scriptural and attached the very same Christological expectations to it that we find in the Syriac tradition; it is these expectations, which the Meccan Qur'ān counters through its corrective retelling of the story. The Medinan Qur'ān maintains the dialogue with the Christian tradition, yet dramatically expands this story in simultaneous dialogue also with a rabbinic oral tradition of which we equally have an indirect written record in the Palestinian exegetical work called *Genesis Rabbah*. Again, the Medinan Qur'ān counters assumptions that part of its audience may have attached to the text, in this case rabbinic ones.

The *Cave of Treasures* and *Bereshit Rabbah*, therefore, emerge as sources of special value for the Qur'ān's narrative, just as both of them stand in close relationship to the *Clementine Homilies*, a text in turn crucial for the understanding of the Qur'ān's legal culture, as I have previously argued.<sup>28</sup> As Sergey Minov has recently illustrated, the tradition of Adam and the angels permeated much of Jewish and Christian culture for centuries, with many variants preserved in Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic and of course Arabic literature.<sup>29</sup> It would thus be false to reduce the Qur'ān's narrative to any particular Syriac or rabbinic version of its retelling. Yet I will seek to argue that the *Cave of Treasures* and *Genesis Rabbah*, along with the *Clementine Homilies*, are the most important repositories of aspects of an Arabian oral tradition that allow us to understand what the Qur'ān expects its audience to know – and how it deals with this knowledge.

The identification of sources from the rabbinic and the Syriac tradition as especially relevant for the Qur'ān's narratives about Adam is not my own; studies ranging from that of Heinrich Speyer to that of Gabriel

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<sup>28</sup> See Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture*, esp. 77-126.

<sup>29</sup> See Sergey Minov, "Satan's Refusal to Worship Adam: A Jewish Motif and its Reception in Syriac Christian Tradition," in Kister et al. (eds.), *Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 230-71.

Reynolds may serve as two examples of the fine work on which I rely.<sup>30</sup> Yet both Speyer and Reynolds tend to be among those scholars primarily interested in the important, yet ultimately preliminary task of identifying the “influences” on the Qur’ān by understanding its building blocks, as laid out above. Building on these works and others, I suggest three ways of developing them, firstly by focusing on the Qur’ān’s oral culture, secondly by focusing more on its literary strategy, and thirdly by appreciating the ways in which the rabbinic text already responds to the Christian tradition. This will allow us to see how the Qur’ān embraces the Jewish and Christian narratives all the while rejecting their inscribed mutual exclusivity. These three ways inform the method of this paper in the following way.

First, I suggest shifting our emphasis from the written rabbinic and Syriac texts as they happen to be preserved to an oral milieu of intertextuality. We must not forget that our sources are secondary and sometimes far removed foreign witnesses to an Arabian oral milieu that we can approach only in incremental and incomplete ways. In addition to the general caution that must prevail when dealing with any historical source, an emphasis on the primary and secondary orality of our texts also allows for a more auditory approach to our readings.<sup>31</sup> Very often, the various Jewish and Christian traditions we will analyse emphasize certain themes by repeating key words, as is common throughout Late Antique literature.<sup>32</sup> The Qur’ān equally repeats certain key themes, thereby

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<sup>30</sup> Gabriel Reynolds, *The Qur’ān and Its Biblical Subtext* (London: Routledge, 2010), 39-53; and Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Gräfenheinrichen: Schulze, 1931), 41-83; see already Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Islam* (New York: Ktav, 1970 [1898]). Another important study is that of John C. Reeves, “Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qur’ān,” in *Bible and Qur’ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 43-60; unfortunately, Reeves focuses on post-Qur’ānic rabbinic literature and does not give *Bereshit Rabbah* its due, see note 192 below.

<sup>31</sup> On the orality of the Qur’ān, see note 13 above. On orality in late antique Judaism and Christianity, see e.g. Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 Bce-400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), see also Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, esp. 7-8. On Secondary Orality see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> For the use of repetition in rabbinic Judaism see esp. Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), see also Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*. While many New Testament scholars pay close attention to key themes in the Gospels,

highlighting them as of special significance for the ears of an audience that is well-attuned to such emphasis through repetition.<sup>33</sup> Simultaneously, we will see that the Qur'ān also tends to recasts with special care precisely those elements of the Jewish and Christian texts which these traditions had already highlighted themselves. While there may be some “noise” in a focus on key words – many of the ones discussed below are exceedingly common in the Qur'ān – we can minimize the fuzziness of the results by highlighting the shared use of unusual or rare words, and by considering common ones in clusters of two or more.

Secondly, we will focus on the Qur'ān's literary strategy by understanding the ways in which it agrees with aspects of the Jewish and Christian tradition in the context of its divergences from either or both. No matter in how far the Qur'ān can arguably be portrayed as being “influenced” by the rabbinic and Christian tradition, what matters is its own literary agency: what the Qur'ān shares and holds in common with *Genesis Rabbah* and the *Cave of Treasures*, we will see, is only a preliminary step to identifying how it deals with the traditions contained therein. I hold that, with very few exceptions, no sign of direct *textual* influence can be found anywhere in the Qur'ān.<sup>34</sup> It does retell very similar biblical and postbiblical stories as do rabbis and Christians. Yet it retells its stories without copying a single phrase from any known previous works in its entirety: it always reconfigures tradition and message in ways that fully stand in line with its own doctrines. It is the Qur'ān's combination of affinity to and divergence from the Jewish and Christian tradition that

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the literary study of Syriac texts remains in need of more attention, but see Hans J.W. Drijvers et al., (eds.), *IV Symposium Syriacum, 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987); and Gerrit J. Reinink, and Herman L.J. Vanstiphou (eds.) *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures* (Louvain: Peeters, 1991).

<sup>33</sup> For the Qur'ān, this technique has been considered most thoroughly by Michel Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), see also Marianna Klar, “Through the Lens of the Adam Narrative: A Re-consideration of Sūrat al-Baqara,” *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 17 (2015): 24-56 and Zellentin, *The Synchronic and the Diachronic Qur'ān*.

<sup>34</sup> The case of the Qur'ān's legal affinity with part of the Christian tradition may serve as a guidance for its narrative affinities as well. The overlap between legal and narrative material is often undisputable, and the relevant concepts are often expressed using cognate lexemes, yet there are hardly any cases in which the wording of the Qur'ān evokes that of any of its predecessors; see Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture*, e.g. 32-41 and 175-203.



generates its corrective message by partially fulfilling and partially frustrating the expectations of its audience. Often, the subtlety of its message can be illustrated by the triological way in which the text simultaneously integrates and juxtaposes the narratives of both parties of the sons of Israel to each other. We can identify three levels of the Qur'ān's engagement with its audience's expectations: some of the narrative elements it simply shares tacitly, some it introduces to the part of the audience which was not or insufficiently familiar with them, and some it recasts in a way that fulfils the audience's expectations partially while simultaneously dismissing Christological and rabbinic doctrines.

Thirdly, we should pay attention to the ways in which the rabbinic tradition relevant to the Qur'ān, from its onset, was already formulated as a polemical response to those arguing for an exalted role of Adam. As most recently illustrated by Peter Schäfer, the focus of these rabbinic polemics can be identified as Christian teachings with increasing clarity throughout the development of post-Constantinian rabbinic literature. Equally building on Peter Schäfer's study of the rabbinic Adam narrative, the present article will develop a proposal by Su-Min Ri that the rabbinic tradition about Adam and the angels shares narrative aspects with the respective Syriac one.<sup>35</sup> The *Cave of Treasures* may or may not have emerged in Palestine, and the redacted text as it has been preserved may or may not be contemporary with *Bereshit Rabbah*. Yet we will see that the Syriac tradition constitutes a secondary, yet demonstrably important source for the type of Christian oral Palestinian discourse known to the authors of the rabbinic one. The Qur'ān's triologue, therefore, joins, continues, and seeks to transcend a well-established inter-religious dialogue between the Jews and the Christians. The strategy of using only two or three Late Antique texts as sources for the oral traditions that constituted the most immediate focal points of the Qur'ān's rhetorical engagement, rather than seeking to recreate a much deeper intellectual history (as did previous studies), allows for a simplification of the Qur'ān's literary context and thereby for a complexification of its rhetorical analysis. The proof of the method will lie in the quality of the results.

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<sup>35</sup> See Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Andreas Su-Min Ri, *Commentaire de la Caverne Des Trésors: Étude sur l'histoire du texte et de ses sources* (Leuven: Peters, 2000); Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill 2013).

In order to present the Qur'ān's counterpointal engagement of the Jewish and the Christian tradition about the creation of Adam known to its implied audience, we will thus restrict our attention to the *Cave of Treasures*, *Bereshit Rabbah*, and the Qur'ān (all the while turning to the *Clementine Homilies* to elucidate the issue of Late Ancient demonology). Since all of these texts, and including the Qur'ān, remain in contact with the Biblical narrative, we will first briefly consider two key passages about the creation of Adam and his early actions in the Hebrew Bible itself. In a second step, we will consider the Christian reading of the relevant Biblical passages as well as that of the rabbis, pointing to the fact that the latter already polemically engages the former. We shall then analyse the Qur'ān's Meccan treatment of the story of Adam and Iblis, which introduces its audience to some rudimentary aspects of the Bible and of its Christian understanding, all the while correcting its Christological baggage. In the last part, we will consider the Medinan Qur'ān's continuation of its dialogue with the Christian tradition, and its equal embrace – and correction – of the rabbinic one, allowing us to trace the Medinan Qur'ān's mature trialogical anthropology. The precision of the transmission of narratives across several socio-linguistic boundaries, and across centuries, will suggest a vivid and learned debate not only among insiders, but also across multiple ethno-religious divides.

### **Adam and the Animals: the Biblical Verses of Creation**

The Biblical verses at the basis of the long Christian and rabbinic tradition to which the Qur'ān ultimately responds in its corrective retelling pertain to the two accounts of creation of the first human, and to his role in assigning names to the newly created animals.<sup>36</sup> The first passage, from Genesis 1, reads as follows:

26. And God (*'lhy*m) said, Let Us make (*n'sh*) man in Our image (*bšlmnw*), after Our likeness (*kdmwtnw*); and let them subdue (*wyrdw*) the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the cattle, and all the earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

27. So God created (*wybr' 'lhy*m) man (*h'dm*) in His own image (*bšlmw*), in the image of God (*bšlm 'lhy*m) He created him; male and female He created them.

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<sup>36</sup> For a detailed study of the Biblical creation account see Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). A helpful recent collection on the book of Genesis is Craig A. Evans et al. (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

28. And God blessed them (*wybrk 'tm*), and God said to them: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and conquer it (*wkbšwh*); and subdue (*wrdw*) the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and every living thing that moves upon the earth....

31. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good (*twb m'd*). And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.<sup>37</sup>

The narrative about the creation of the first human is remarkable in many ways, but especially so from the point of view of Biblical theology. Genesis 1:27, as if rectifying a false impression that could have arisen, depicts the creation of the human “in His likeness, in God’s likeness” (*bšlmw, bšlm 'lhym*) as carried out by God in the singular. Yet the action is, in the preceding verse Genesis 1:26, initially depicted as initiated by a grammatical plurality of beings: “Let Us make (*n'sh*) man in Our image (*bšlmnw*), after Our likeness (*kdmwtnw*).” The verse’s literal plural meaning implies a certain tension with the Bible’s general emphasis on the unity and uniqueness of God. On the one hand, as in Genesis 1:27 and throughout the Hebrew Bible, the name of God in Genesis 1:26 is expressed through the equally remarkable pluralitantum *'lhym* – which, while usually connected with singular verbs and used as singular form throughout much of the Hebrew Bible, happens to be the plural of Hebrew, *'l*, “God.” Yet in Genesis 1:26, the verse then carries the plural through to the end, offering a plural verb form and plural possessive endings! While the subsequent verse establishes the unity of God to a degree, the plural forms may actually indicate an intriguing religious history behind the text.

Biblical scholars have considered the background of the story in Ancient Near Eastern mythology, pointing to a likely process of the unification of a various deities into a single one in the course of the development of the Israelite religion and culture.<sup>38</sup> It has been suggested that the creation of man “in the likeness of God” in Genesis 1 recasts another, older story which saw the king as the image of God.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> All translations of the Hebrew Bible are slightly modified versions of the JPS translation.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1994); for a history of scholarship see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 147-55.

<sup>39</sup> See the helpful article by Carly L. Crouch, “Made in the Image of God: The Creation of מלך, the Commissioning of the King and the Chaoskampf of YHWH,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 16 (2016): 1–21; see also Dester

Intriguingly, the Christian and Muslim interpretation of the verse will eventually return to royal imagery when depicting Adam, whereas the rabbis explicitly reject it. Yet this is only one aspect of the verse's broad reception history throughout Late Antiquity. The idea that the first human – whose designation as *'dm*, “human,” was understood as the proper name *Adam* by many later sources – was created in the likeness of God (be He singular or triune), stands at the very foundation of Jewish and Christian anthropology, eventually safeguarding the sanctity of every human life at least in the religious theory not only of these two but of all Abrahamic traditions.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Jews and Christians, despite their divergent hermeneutics, recognized the fact that God had blessed Adam according to Genesis 1:28, and they likewise agreed that Adam is to rule over the entire creation. Yet the issue of the plural used in the creation narrative, in a myriad of ways, became part of a fundamental debate among Muslims, Jews, and Christians that anchored the respective theologies in views about the number of actors present during the creation of the first humans. The question whether any angels, a personification of wisdom, or even a persona of the trinity would have been present during the creation became a focus of inter-religious dispute – especially after some Christians increasingly understood Adam himself in a typological manner as worthy of Christ-like worship, a reading epitomized by the *Cave of Treasures*. The rabbis forcefully rejected such a typology by depicting Adam in positions clearly subordinate to God, at times in salaciously earthy tones. As we will see, already the Meccan Qur'ān carefully calibrates its image of Adam as worthy of prostration, in line with the Christian tradition, unsurprisingly siding firmly with the rabbis in their dismissal of any typological or even Trinitarian understanding of Adam.

The second biblical text whose history of interpretation proved of special importance for the Qur'ān – in this case the Medinan Qur'ān – is Genesis 2, concerning again the creation of the first human and that of the animals. While Genesis 1:27 depicts the creation of the first human simultaneously as “male and female,” the account in Genesis 2 involves

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Callender, *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), esp. 21-86.

<sup>40</sup> While the idea of man as the image of God is far less central in the Qur'ān and in later Islam as it is in Judaism and Christianity; see Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture* 70 note 16. On the “image of God” in the Islamic tradition see e.g. Josef van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006 [1998]), 45-78 and Daniel Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme: les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leur interprétation par les théologiens* (Paris: Les Édition du Cerf, 1997).

three steps: God first creates a man, then the animals whom the man names, and then a woman.<sup>41</sup> In Gen. 2:7, we learn that “God formed man of the dust of the ground (*’pr mn h’dm*), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man (*h’dm*) became a living soul.” Adam’s creation out of dust, of course, informed much of Late Antique teaching about mortality; especially in the *Cave of Treasures* and in the Qur’ān, the verse would also form the basis of the dispute between the fiery angels and the earthen Adam. Genesis 2:9 then relates the creation of “the tree of life” and of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil,” leading to Adam and Eve’s consumption of the fruit of the latter. Verses 19-20 then relate the creation of the animals, and the way in which Adam named them:

19. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field (*hyt hsdh*), and every bird (*’wp*) of the air; and brought them (*wyb’*) to Adam to see what he would call it (*mh yqr’ hw*); and whatever Adam called every living creature, that was its name (*šmw*).

20. And Adam gave names (*wyqr’ ’dm šmwt*) to all cattle (*hbhmh*), and to the bird (*l’wp*) of the air, and to every beast of the field (*hyt hsdh*); but for Adam there was not found a help to match him.

21. And the Lord God made Adam fall into a deep sleep, and he slept; and He took one from his ribs, and closed up the flesh.

22. And of the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, He made a woman, and brought her to Adam.

23. And Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (*’šh*), because she was taken out of man (*m’yš*).”

In this short passage, Adam gives the animals their definitive names. The narrative is thus open to be read in a way that gives Adam the authority to assign words to the animals, a fact which the rabbis would emphasize more than the Christian tradition – and which the Qur’ān would clearly reject. Subsequently, God causes Adam to fall asleep, here depicting the creation of a woman as secondary to Adam, and even to the animals. The pair is naked, but not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). After the snake tempts them into eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the pair is expelled from paradise, and ordered to live from agriculture, lest they also eat from the Tree of Life. We shall see that the Qur’ān, in its recasting of Jewish and Christian traditions, integrates both its pursuit to establish a doctrinal point of view in between, and above and beyond, that of the two factions among the Scripture people.

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<sup>41</sup> A helpful reconsideration of the divergent creation accounts is Jiří Moskala, “A Fresh Look at two Genesis Creation Accounts: Contradictions?,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 49 (2011), 45-65.

## Adam and the Angels in the *Cave of Treasures*

The long history of interpretation of Genesis began of course already within the Bible, and was carried on first by Israelites in the Second Temple period and finally by Hellenistic and rabbinic Jews, as well as by Christians, Samaritans, Mandeans, and many others throughout Late Antiquity.<sup>42</sup> It is not possible, in the context of this paper, to sketch the individual development even of specific motifs across many cultural and linguistic borders. Instead, as indicated above, we shall study the two texts that I argue are most relevant for the Qurʾān and arguably for each other, the Syriac *Cave of Treasures* and the rabbinic *Genesis Rabbah*.

We shall thus commence with a closer reading of the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, a history of the world from the creation to Christ's ascension, whose style stands closer to a "Rewritten Bible" (such as the *Book of Jubilees*) than to a Targum (an explanatory Jewish translation to be read along with the Hebrew original) – just like the Clementine Homilies, with which it shares much, the *Cave of Treasures* casts doubt about the integrity of the Biblical text.<sup>43</sup> The book's provenance is unclear, suggestions range from Palestine to Egypt and Mesopotamia. The final edition of the transmitted text likely occurred in the sixth century CE, yet the text shows signs of having integrated earlier traditions attested in second and third century writings.<sup>44</sup> I will seek to illustrate the exegetical

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<sup>42</sup> One among the many texts of special interest for the study of the late antique reception of Genesis that are often overlooked is the Samaritan *Tibat Marqe*, see Ze'ev Ben Hayyim, *Tibât Mârqe: A Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1988), J. E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), and Zellentin, "How Plutarch Gained his Place in the Tosefta," in *Zutot: Perspectives on Jewish Culture* 4 (2004): 19-28. Yet despite the "Samaritan" hypothesis put forward by Michael Cook and Patricia Crone, I have not found any particular affinities between Samaritan Midrash and the Qurʾān; cf. Michael Cook and Patricia Crone, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 29-30.

<sup>43</sup> See C. Leonhard, "Observations on the Date of the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*," in P. M. M. Daviau et al. (eds.), *The World of the Arameans* (Sheffield: 2001), 267-8.

<sup>44</sup> For a persuasive argument for a later dating of the *Cave of Treasures* see Clemens Leonhard, "Observations on the Date of the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*," in P. M. M. Daviau et al. (eds.), *The World of the Arameans* (Sheffield: 2001), III, 255-93; an earlier date is put forward by Andreas Su-Min Ri, "La Caverne des

strategy of the *Cave of Treasures* in some detail, in preparation of showing partial kinship and partial dismissal of many of its claims by the rabbis and later by the Qur'ān. Following the rules applicable to the oral recitation of late ancient literature, we will pay close attention to the text's repetition of central lexemes and locutions, some of which will be encountered again – for different ends – in the rabbinic Midrash as well as in the Qur'ān.

The *Cave of Treasures* is a typological work; its hermeneutical framework can be summarized in its own alliterative statement that “in all things, the Messiah resembled Adam (*'tdmy... l'dm*).”<sup>45</sup> As we will see in detail, the text begins with the account of the individual days of the creation, culminating in that of Adam on the sixth day, the details of which are told in anticipation of parallel moments during Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, with which the work as a whole eventually concludes. The work is named after the cave in which Adam was buried, surmising that Adam's body was eventually relocated to Golgotha after the flood, inscribing its typology into its sacred geography. The span from the first Adam to the second one thus constitutes the frame narrative for all of Israelite history. The opening of the second chapter of the *Cave of Treasures* reads as follows:

The creation of Adam occurred in the following way. On the sixth day, which is the Friday, in the first hour (*bš't' qdmyt*), as calmness reigned

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Trésors et Mar Ephrem,” in R. Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum VII* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1998), 71-83; see already Albrecht Götze, *Die Schatzhöhle: Überlieferung und Quellen* (Heidelberg: C. Winters, 1922).

<sup>45</sup> In the following, the *Cave of Treasures* will be quoted according to its earlier Eastern recension, mainly following manuscript Mingana 11, with slight emendations according to the majority of manuscripts, as edited by Andreas Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors: Les deux recensions syriacs* (Leuven: Peeters, 1987). I will indicate the chapter number and paragraph given by Su-Min Ri (in this case 49:1), as well as the page number in Su-Min Ri's edition, in this case 406, in the following format: 49:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 406. I have consulted Su-Min Ri's French translation of the text, as well as that of E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures: A history of the Patriarchs and the Kings, their Successors, from the Creation to the crucifixion of Christ. Translated from the Syriac text of the British Museum ms. Add. 25875* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1927); and that of Carl Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle, Syrisch und Deutsch* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1883). Note that Minov considers manuscript Br. Mus. Add. 25875 to be superior, see idem, *Syriac Christian Identity in Late Sasanian Mesopotamia: The Cave of Treasures in Context* (PhD Dissertation: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 21-86, but see note 61 below).

over all host of the powers of spirits (*hlywt' dtgm' drwhn'*), God said: “Come, let Us make (*n'bd*) a son of man (*brnš'*) in our image (*bšlmn*), in our likeness (*dmwtn*).” By *nūn* instead of *'alaf* [i.e. the plural instead of the singular] He meant the glorious essences (*qnmw' šbyh'*) of the Son and the Spirit (*br' wrwh'*). And when the angels (*ml'k'*) heard this (divine) voice (*brt ql'*), they were in fear, as they spoke to each other: “A great miracle shows itself to us today, the likeness of God (*dmwth d'lh'*), our maker!”<sup>46</sup>

The text here follows the Biblical narrative in Genesis 1:26, expanding the dramatic setting by introducing the spirits, namely the angels, as witnesses to the creation of Adam. The text, moreover, with a focus on the grammar of its Syriac Bible, understands the plural of the verb describing God’s creation as indicating the presence of the “glorious essences” (*qnmw' šbyh'*) of the entire trinity, of the Son and the Spirit along with the Father.<sup>47</sup> The text here for the first time uses its central lexeme *sbh* in order to describe Christ’s divine “glory” as the Son, as it will repeatedly in the sequel when describing Adam – the term glory, *tšbwht'*, is so common that the scribes occasionally began to abbreviate it.

The text, to reiterate, epitomizes the widespread Christian typology of portraying Christ as a second Adam, who then enters the scene (the Holy Spirit plays a much less central role). Based in turn on Genesis 2:7, the *Cave of Treasures* then relates how God uses his hands to create man from what it calls the four “weak” elements: cold, heat, dry, and humidity, arguing that the presence of these elements in Adam will ensure that the entire creation – made of these very same elements – will be subservient to him:<sup>48</sup>

And they (i.e. the angels) saw the right (hand) of God which took dust from the earth (*'pr' mn' dmt'*, cf. Gen. 2:7), that is from the four elements: cold and heat, dry and humidity. Why did God create Adam from these four weak elements? So that, through them, all that is in him would be submitted to him (*nšt'bd lh*). God formed Adam with His holy hands (*b'ydw'h' qdyšt'*), in His image (*bšlmh*), in his likeness (*dmwth*). And as the angels saw his glorious (*šbyht'*) appearance, they were moved by the beauty of his likeness (*ddmwth*). He stretched (*pšt' npšh*) and he stood (*wqm*) on the earth. He dressed in the dress of kingship (*dmlkwt'*), and put

<sup>46</sup> 2:1-6, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 12-14.

<sup>47</sup> On Western Christian views of the account of the creation of Adam see Andrew Louth, “The Fathers of Genesis,” in Evans et al. (eds.), *The Book of Genesis*, 561-78.

<sup>48</sup> On the Aristotelian theory of the four elements as expressed here, which the text shares with the early Christian fathers and the with the Clementine Homilies, see Su-Min Ri, *Commentaire*, 141-5.



the crown of glo(ry) (*klyl' dtšbw(ħt')*<sup>49</sup>) on his head. And God gave him authority (*'šlth*) over all creatures: the wild beasts (*hywt'*), the cattle (*wb yr'*), and the birds (*wprħt'*, cf. Gen. 2:20). And they passed (*w'brw*) before Adam and he gave names to them (*wsm lhwn šmh'*) while they bowed their heads and they prostrated before him (*wsgdyn lh*) him and worshipped before him (*wmšt'bdyn qdmwhy*).<sup>50</sup>

Using the lexemes *šltn* and, repeatedly, *šbh*, the text emphasizes Adam's glory and authority over all the creation; his role as king is here alluded to for the first time. Adam names the animals, which then "prostrate before" and "worship" him, clearly reflecting the text's Trinitarian theology: the lexeme *'bd*, in Syriac as well as in Aramaic (as well as in Hebrew and Arabic) clearly designate the "worship" of a divine being, an activity that in turn includes *sgd* "prostration." Pushing typology to its limits, the text thus destabilizes the border between the human Adam and the divine Christ. Standing closer to the poetic *memre* of the Syriac church than to the church fathers' often abstract debates on the topic, the text offers a narrative that often dwells on its symbolical rapprochement of Adam and Christ. In its depiction of Adam's creation in its opening, the *Cave of Treasures*, namely, anticipates the description of Christ's crucifixion towards the end of the work, which follows the chronology and dramaturgy of the creation very closely, as it is laid out in chapter 48:

On the first hour (*bš't'*) of Friday,<sup>51</sup> God formed Adam from dust, and, at the first hour (*bš't'*) of Friday, the Messiah received the sputum of the sons of Adam<sup>52</sup> of the cursed hanging.<sup>53</sup> On the second hour (*š'yn*) of Friday, the cattle, the birds, and the wild beasts assembled before Adam, and he gave names to them (*wsm lhwn šmh'*), while they bowed their heads before him, and on Friday, on the second hour (*š'yn*), the Jews assembled against the Messiah.... At the third hour (*š'yn*) of Friday, the crown of glory (*klyl' dšbwh'*)<sup>54</sup> was placed on Adam's head. And at the third hour (*š'yn*) of Friday, the crown of thorns<sup>55</sup> was placed on the head of the Messiah.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Only the occidental manuscripts spell out *dtšbwħt'* in this case.

<sup>50</sup> 2:6-21, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 14-18.

<sup>51</sup> "Friday" is missing in Mingana 11, but attested in most other manuscripts.

<sup>52</sup> "Adam" is missing in Mingana 11, but attested in most other manuscripts.

<sup>53</sup> The meaning here is not clear; Su-Min Ri translates "des fils maudits de ceux qui le crucifiaint," yet the text seems to allude to the curse of the one hanging in Dtn. 21:23, cf. Gal. 3:13.

<sup>54</sup> "Glory" is missing in Mingana 11, but attested in most other manuscripts.

<sup>55</sup> "Thorns" is missing in Mingana 11, but attested in most other manuscripts.

The image of Adam in the *Cave of Treasures* is the typological image of a Christ who in turn is part of the Trinitarian divinity: the creation of Adam is a symbol of the crucifixion of the Son, and Adam himself becomes not only a symbol of Christ, but rather a participant in his divinity, and himself worthy of worship by all creatures. Already “dressed in the dress of kingship” in the previous paragraph, Adam is later identified explicitly as “priest, king (*mlk*’), and prophet (*wby*’).”<sup>57</sup> (The moment of the coronation, of course, is where things go wrong in the Christian account of the creation, in a way the Meccan as well as the Medinan Qur’ān, and to a degree also the rabbis, will equally reflect.) After the naming and the worship of the animals, in Chapter 2 of the *Cave of Treasures*, the angels hear the voice of God saying to Adam: “Everything (*klhwn*) that has been made and created (*’byd’ wbyr*’) shall worship you (*lk nšt’ bdown*) and they shall be yours alone, and to you I have given authority (*šwltn*’) over everything that is under the heavens.”<sup>58</sup> Now the angels were themselves “created” on the first day – even if they are not technically “under the heavens,” and even if they are not made of the weak elements but of fire, they are still instructed by God to worship Adam, setting the stage for the rebellion of one order of angels in chapter three of the *Cave of Treasures*:

And when the rebelling order (*dtgm’ mrwd*’), that is one of the orders of spirits (*tgm’ drwhn*’), saw what greatness (*rbwt*’) had been given to Adam, it was jealous of him (*hsm bh*) from that day, and one said to the other: “We do not want this because we are of fire (*nwrn*); and prostrating (*wnsgwd*) before dust (*’pr*’) – that has been made of fine dust (*dhyh*’) – we cannot do.” And the rebel (*mrwd*’) thought thus and would not obey, of his own will (*mn hd’ bšbyn nšh*) he separated himself from God (*mn rbwt*’).<sup>59</sup> But he was overthrown and fell (*wnpl*), he and all his host (*tgm*’) on the Friday, at the second hour they fell from heaven (*mn šmy’ nplw*). And their glory (*tšbwḥthwn*) was stripped off them. And his name was called (*w’tqry šmh*) *štn*’ (“Satan”) because he turned aside (*dšt*’), and *dyw*’ (“Demon”)

<sup>56</sup> 48:12-15, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 399-400, see also Grypeou and Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*, 64f.

<sup>57</sup> 4:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 28.

<sup>58</sup> 2:22-24, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 18-20.

<sup>59</sup> The word *rbwt*’ designates “greatness” or “majesty,” yet the term can designate God himself; see Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Dictionary: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 1236. Manuscript Br. Mus. Add. 25875, as well as the Western tradition, substitute *’lh*’, “God,” for “greatness”, eliminating any ambiguity. Note that the term here parallels the “greatness” bestowed on Adam in the same passage. Su-Min Ri translates the term as “myriads” of angels.

because they were miserable (*ddwyw*) and lost (*d'wbdw*) the apparel of their glory (*dtšbwhthwn*). And from that time until the present day, they have been stripped (of their apparel) and are trembling, and they go naked, terrible to see.<sup>60</sup>

Adam's creation of dust and the "four weak elements," related in the passage discussed above, has a troublesome consequence. One order of angels (arguably supported by the first commandment) rejects the order to prostrate (again using the root *sgd*) before Adam, a being made of dust, since they themselves, as fiery creatures, are superior.<sup>61</sup> The very presence of angels, of course, is a post-biblical tradition: the only angels in all of Genesis according to the Hebrew Bible are those that appear to Abraham, Sarah, Jacob and Joseph.<sup>62</sup> The presence of the angels during creation forms the backdrop of the Christian narrative of the fall of some of them. Simply referred to as the "rebellious order," these angels seem to be endowed with moral autonomy: their leader "by his own will" thus separates himself from God. He, along with his host, is cast out and falls, whereupon he is, based on a double folk-etymology, renamed as Satan and Demon.<sup>63</sup> (This particular narrative, along with the angel's objection to Adam's creation as related by the rabbis, will figure prominently in the Medinan Qur'ān as well.) With Adam's elevation into paradise, finally,

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<sup>60</sup> 3:1-7, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 20-22.

<sup>61</sup> Adam's earthen nature troubled some readers of the text, who rectified Adam's consistence in the Western tradition by adding "water," "fire" and "spirit" to the materials out of which he was made (2:11, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 17). At this point, an inconsistency emerges in the Western tradition of the text: if Adam were made partially of fire, as this text relates, then the angels' claim to superiority based on their substance would be baseless, as Minov has aptly remarked, see idem, "Satan's Refusal to Worship Adam," 246. The issue, however, does not arise in the Eastern manuscript tradition here reproduced.

<sup>62</sup> On the Jewish-Christian debate regarding the time of the creation of the angels see Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 160-4; see also Matthias Köckert, "Divine Messengers and Mysterious Men in the Patriarchal Narratives of the Book of Genesis," in Pancratius Cornelis Beentjes et al. (eds.), *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 51-78.

<sup>63</sup> See Cave of Treasures 3:3, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22. On the tradition of the fallen angels more broadly see Annette Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity. The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), see also James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs, and Enoch in Early Christian Literature," in idem et al. (eds.) *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 33-101; see also note 116 below.

the *Cave of Treasures* brings to a climax the symbolical elevation of the first human as worthy of divine honours in the Syriac narrative:

And when Satan was cast out (*'štdy*) from heaven, Adam was raised up (*'t'ly*) so that he ascended (*dnsq*) to paradise in great honour (*b'qr' rb'*) when the angels declared (his) holiness before him (*mqdšyn qdmwhy ml'k'*) and the Seraphim blessed him (*wmbrkyn*) and the Cherubim honoured (*wmyqryn*) him; amid hymns (*wbhwill'*) and glorification (*wbtšbwht'*) by all the powers Adam ascended to paradise. As soon as he ascended, he was commanded not to eat from the tree. At the third hour, on Friday, his ascension took place. God brought sleep (*šnt'*) upon Adam, and he fell asleep (*wdmk*).<sup>64</sup>

The text here describes Adam's entry into heaven in a way that spatially balances the fall of Satan and his army. The latter descends, the former ascends; Satan is punished, Adam is blessed and the angels sanctify him, and sing him the type of praises usually reserved to God Himself alone – at which point the text, somewhat abruptly, reverts to the Biblical storyline of Genesis 2:16 and 21, according to which Adam is prohibited to eat the fruit, and then falls asleep, allowing for the creation of Eve. When the pair is placed in paradise, they were “clothed in clothing of splendour and glory” (*lbyšyn lbwš' wmprgyn btšbwht'*), evoking the garment that Adam initially received during his coronation. Yet when Eve and Adam eat of the tree, they are both stripped naked (*'tprsy/w'tprsy*) just like the fallen angels were stripped of their garments, and Eve perceives the “ugliness of her nakedness” (*škyrwt pwrsyh*), just like the naked demons are “terrible to see.”<sup>65</sup> Yet just when they leave paradise, we learn that God turns to Adam clemently, as related in the following passage:

At the third hour, Adam entered paradise, during three hours he enjoyed the good things thereof, and during three hours they were naked (*mprsyn*). And at the ninth hour, they left paradise. As they went out in misery (*bkrywt'*), God spoke (*mll*) to Adam and said to him: “Do not be miserable (*l' tkr' lk*) Adam, that you have left paradise because of the sentence, for I will return your heritage to you. See how much I have loved you (*rhmtk*), since I cursed the earth because of you, but I have preserved you from the curse.... Inasmuch as you have transgressed my commandments, leave, but do not be miserable (*wl'*

<sup>64</sup> 3:8-11, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22-24.

<sup>65</sup> 4:15-16, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 34, see also 5:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 36. Note that the vocabulary used for the stripping, nakedness, and ugliness of the demons in 3:6-7 (Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22) does not correspond to that used for Adam and Eve, lexically distancing the primordial couple from the evil one even in their disgrace.

*tkr' lk*). For after the accomplishment of a period, which I have fixed for you (pl., *btr mwly' dzbn' hlyn dpsqt 'lykwn*), during which you (pl.) shall be in a foreign abode on the earth (*b'ksny' b'r'*), which is under the curse, I will send my Son. He shall go down for your redemption, and He shall sojourn in a Virgin, and by my son I will bring about your redemption.”<sup>66</sup>

By promising the coming of the Son at the moment of the expulsion from paradise, the *Cave of Treasures* firmly integrates the Scriptural story into its typological framework. We should note that the fact that the primordial couple is here portrayed as clothed in paradise, yet stripped naked as result of the fall, inverts the sequence of the Biblical story according to Genesis 2:25. In the Bible, the pair is initially naked, and no clothing of glory of course appears (see Gen. 2:24), and they simply realize their nakedness upon eating of the fruit (Gen 3:7). The story is thus sanitized, and placed in a strict typological framework that links the creation of Adam and his fall to the promise of the coming of the Son. With this in mind, we can turn to the Palestinian rabbinic retelling of the very same events: the rabbis, we will see, retell the very same biblical and extra-biblical events from a very different perspective.

### The Rabbinic Responses to a Christian Narrative

*Bereshit Rabbah*, redacted in Palestine in the first half of the fifth century CE and written in Aramaic alongside various forms of Hebrew, constitutes a Midrashic exploration of the Book of Genesis. Unlike the *Cave of Treasures*, this rabbinic work does not present a complete narrative ark to its audience; it can be understood only alongside with, but not in the place of the Bible. The rabbinic text takes it for granted that its rabbinic audience would have memorized the Hebrew text, which it probes for the deeper meanings that can be teased out of the literary intricacies of the original.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, Schäfer and others (myself included) have previously sought to establish that this rabbinic composition in particular often reacts to the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the period during which it was composed.<sup>68</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* is certainly of a less

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<sup>66</sup> 5:1-9, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 36-8.

<sup>67</sup> On the dating and nature of *Bereshit Rabbah* see H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 276-82.

<sup>68</sup> On the Christian context of *Bereshit Rabbah* see for example Burton L. Visotzky, “Genesis in Rabbinic Interpretation,” in Evans et al. (eds.), *The Book of*

typological nature than the *Cave of Treasures*, yet just like the Christian text depicted God as announcing to Adam the coming of the Son, the Jewish text depicts God as announcing to Adam the coming of the sages: “R. Judah b. R. Simon said: While Adam lay a shapeless mass (*gwlm*) before Him at whose word the world came into existence, He showed him every generation and its sages, every generation and its judges, scribes, interpreters, and leaders.”<sup>69</sup> I hold that *Bereshit Rabbah* responds to Christian typological discourse, especially as preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*.

The final redaction of *Bereshit Rabbah* predates that of the *Cave of Treasures* considerably, yet it coincides with earlier oral traditions the Syriac text integrates, and perhaps even with the original version of the *Cave of Treasures* plausibly surmised by Götze, Su-Min Ri, and others.<sup>70</sup> Weary of exposing their own historical context, the rabbis never name the targets of their hidden polemics, including the identity and the teachings of their politically increasingly affirmative Christian neighbours. Instead, the rabbis engage in corrective retellings of very much the same Biblical material on which their “heretical” neighbours and overlords sought to lay their hands. In my view, these retellings are best understood not only vis-à-vis patristic discourse, but with an echo of popular Christian discourse in mind.<sup>71</sup> The rabbis reading of the verse “let us make man” (*n’sh adam*, Genesis 1:26), so central in the Cave of Treasures, illustrates this well:

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*Genesis*, 579-608, Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, and Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, esp. 167-212.

<sup>69</sup> In the following, *Bereshit Rabbah* will be quoted according to London Add. 27169, with slight emendations according to the majority of manuscripts, as edited by Theodor and Ch. Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Shalem Books, 1996 [1912-36]). I will indicate the chapter number and paragraph given by Theodor and Albeck (in this case 22:2), as well as the page number in their edition, in this case 231, in the following format: 22:2, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 231. The translation, with minor modifications, is that of H. Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah, Translated into English, with Notes, Glossary and Indices* (Hertford, UK: Stephen Austin and Sons, 1961).

<sup>70</sup> See note 44 above. *Bereshit Rabbah*, of course, is itself redacted using previous sources, yet its engagement with Christianity often coincides with the presence of the redactional layer, see esp. Visotzky, “Trinitarian Testimonies,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 42 (1988): 73-85.

<sup>71</sup> Schäfer offers some important corrections to the readings of Visotzky, and includes popular Christian literature such as the *Life of Adam and Eve* in his readings of some of the same passages to be discussed in the following, see Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 21-55 and 197-213. The evidence of the *Cave of*

R. Hoshaya said: “At the hour (*bš’h*) when the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, the ministering angels erred in him (*t’w bw*) and wanted to say ‘holy’ before him (*lpnyw qdwš*). What does this resemble? A king (*lmlk*) and a governor (*w’prkws*) sat in a state carriage (*bqrwkyn*), and his subjects wished to say hymns (*lwmr ... hymnwn*) to the king,<sup>72</sup> but they did not know which (of the two men) it was. What did the king (*hmlk*) do? He pushed him (i.e. the governor) and shoved him out of the carriage, and so they knew who was the king (*hmlk*). Similarly, at the hour (*bš’*) when the Lord created Adam, the angels erred in him (*t’w bw*).<sup>73</sup> What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He caused sleep (*šyn’*) to fall upon him, and so all knew that he was a man; thus it is written, *Cease from Adam (h’dm), in whose nostrils is a breath, for in what is he to be accounted for?* (Isa. 2:22)<sup>74</sup>

As Schäfer and others have shown, the rabbinic text here reacts to the Christian tradition that Adam’s “likeness” of God prepared Christ’s union with Him.<sup>75</sup> Yet while previous studies have resorted to patristic debates in order to clarify the target of the rabbis’ polemics, the tradition preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*, in this case and in many others illustrates more clearly with what genre of Christian narrative Palestinian Jews would have been at least rudimentarily familiarized – again more likely through oral than written form. Wherever the *Cave of Treasures* as we have it may have found its redacted form, it will become clear that the redactors of *Bereshit Rabbah* know many of its traditions.<sup>76</sup>

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*Treasures* provides further evidence for many of Schäfer’s readings, especially in light of its tendency to de-emphasize the trinity as noted above.

<sup>72</sup> Following the majority of manuscripts; manuscript London Add. 27169 has *dwmyny*, i.e. “domine,” “master.”

<sup>73</sup> Manuscripts Oxford adds that the angels want to sing “a song” (*šyrh*) for Adam.

<sup>74</sup> 8:10, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 63-64.

<sup>75</sup> Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 205.

<sup>76</sup> One could argue that the narrative and lexical overlaps between *Bereshit Rabbah* and the *Cave of Treasures* may merely point to affinity, allowing for an inverse flow of information from the rabbinic to the Christian text. The core of my argument for the opposite direction in the following will be that the literary evidence rather suggests that the rabbinic text is a corrective retelling of material close to the one preserved in the Christian text. Time and again, the rabbis respond to issues that cannot be explained based on the Bible or previous Jewish interpretation; the Christian reading of the verse, by contrast, makes perfect sense without assuming knowledge of Palestinian or Babylonian rabbinic traditions. The proof of my conjecture – on which the subsequent reading of the Qur’ān depends only indirectly – will lie in the persuasiveness of individual readings. On the issue

- Both the Syriac text and the rabbinic one, we should first note, read the same Biblical text Genesis. While this may seem obvious, it is not self-evident; earlier rabbinic texts focused on other parts of the Torah. More specifically, however, both texts focus on what happened during each “hour” of the creation, both using, in diverging ways, the same lexeme ܫ׳ as a basic structuring device. Moreover, *Bereshit Rabbah* concurs with the *Cave of Treasures* that Adam rested exactly six hours in paradise – intriguingly derived from the verse stating that Adam was “naked, but not ashamed,” for whose Syriac interpretation the rabbis equally show some sympathy.<sup>77</sup>
- The angels in the Midrash – absent, of course, from the Bible – then seek to declare “before” Adam” that he is “holy” (*lḥnyw qdws*) exactly as they did “declared (his) holiness before him (*mqdšyn qdmwhy ml’k*)” in the Syriac texts.<sup>78</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* here uses the shared (and common) lexemes *ml’k* and *qdš*, and the spatial specification “before him” in order to describe the very same idea we found in the *Cave of Treasures* – which the rabbis essentially dismiss as heretical error on the part of the angels.
- In the parable, the subjects cannot distinguish between the king and his governor, which is the very mistake the Midrash attributes to the angels’ confusion of God and Adam. More specifically reminiscent of the *Cave of Treasures*, in which the powers greet Adam “with hymns (*wbhwill*) and glorification (*wbtšbwht*),” the mistaken subjects in the rabbinic parable “wish to say hymns (*lwmr ... hymnwn*)” to the king, but are in danger of addressing them to the governor by mistake.<sup>79</sup>

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of rabbinic texts and their Christian parallels see also Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, esp. 137-227.

<sup>77</sup> See *Bereshit Rabbah* 18:6, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 168-9 and *Cave of Treasures* 3:15-18, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 34. Note the rabbis, without elaborating on the nakedness of the primordial couple, understand the nakedness as “having stripped themselves” of the one commandment they were to obey in paradise, namely not to eat from the tree, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:6. Furthermore, one of the interpretations of the clothes God makes for Adam and Eve suggests that they were made of “light,” rather than “leather,” reminiscent of the apparel of glory they wear, before the fall, in the *Cave of Treasures*, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:12, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 196.

<sup>78</sup> 3:8, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22.

<sup>79</sup> See *Cave of Treasures* 3:8, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22.



- By agreeing that Adam and God were indistinguishable for the angels, the rabbinic parable, moreover, compares Adam's relationship to God with that of a governor to his king (*mlk*), implicitly rectifying the image of Adam as "king" (*mlk*) and as dressed in royal garments in the Syriac text, which of course here again uses the same (common) lexeme *mlk*.<sup>80</sup>
- The rabbis, finally, in their explanation of Gen. 1:26, resort to Gen. 2:21, the verse explaining that God caused sleep (*šyn'*) to fall on Adam, just as the Syriac text does (equally using the same root *šn'* already found in the Hebrew Bible).<sup>81</sup> The rabbis thus use the same imagery as the *Cave of Treasures* does, with a parodically inverted outcome: whereas the Syriac text reverts to narrative about Adam's sleep quite abruptly, without any elaboration, simply following the sequence in Genesis, the Midrash uses the very same second Biblical verse in order to undermine precisely the Christian elaboration of the first one. Adam, they insist, is a mere human, as shown by his breath as much as by his sleep, equally corroborated in the rabbis' creative reading of "Adam" in Isaiah 2:22.

There is nothing in Genesis 1:26 and not much in pre-Constantinian Judaism that would require such a corrective retelling as we find in *Bereshit Rabbah*. There is no mention in the Bible of Adam's holiness, kingship, or, for that matter, mistaken angels or hours. The topics of Adam's holiness and kingship serve the Christian agenda; they conflict with the rabbinic one and are dismissed. Since rabbis do not tend to invent readings serving Christianity without clear Biblical foundation, it is therefore the simplest explanation that the rabbis here seek to undermine the Christian tradition, and more likely even the one preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*.<sup>82</sup> A *vice versa* explanation cannot hold water.

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<sup>80</sup> See *Cave of Treasures*, 2:17, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 18 and 4:1, *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>81</sup> See *Cave of Treasures* 3:11, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 24.

<sup>82</sup> This is not to exclude the broad Christian tradition of depicting Jesus as king; the argument is simply that the *Cave of Treasures* contains the most relevant Christian tradition. One could also consider the archaeological evidence of Christ in the guise of Helios, riding his chariot. Manuscript Br. Mus. Add. 25875, as well as the entire Western tradition of the Syriac text, depicts Adam's ascension to paradise as having taken place "in a chariot of fire" (*bmrkbt' dnwr'*, *Cave of Treasures* 3:8, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 23). The rabbinic image featuring Adam in a state carriage (*qrwkyn*) out of which he is pushed would effectively demote both the Christian Christ and the Christian Adam in their carriages; see Tom Devonshire

There are several other examples of narrative overlap that suggest that we should privilege the *Cave of Treasures* over other Christian sources when contextualizing *Bereshit Rabbah*. It seems that the rabbis even evoke the identity of the target of their polemics, as they do in the following well-known explanation of the same verse Genesis 1:26:

R. Samuel b. Nahman said in the name of R. Jonathan: At the hour (*bš'*) when Moses was engaged in writing the Torah, he wrote the story of each day (*kl ywm wywm*). When he came to the verse, *and God ('lhym) said: "let us make (n'sh) man in our image (bšlmnw) in our likeness (kdmwtnw)"*, he (i.e. Moses) said: "Lord of the Worlds! Why do you give an excuse to the heretics (*lmynym*)? He (i.e. God) said to him: "Write, whoever wishes to err may err (*hrwsh l't wt y't 'h*)."<sup>83</sup>

Moses is here depicted as writing the Book of Genesis as dictated directly by God. Just as the *Cave of Treasures*, the rabbis now focus very precisely on the plural forms of the verb and personal pronouns in Genesis 1:26, which Moses points out to be dangerously ambiguous. The identity of the "heretics" – a much debated term which the Palestinian Talmud associates with the Christianized Roman government after Constantine – becomes clear when considering that these heretics, like the angels, are prone to "err" by following, again, a teaching recorded in the *Cave of Treasures*. In the famous passage which follows in *Bereshit Rabbah*, the text depicts the erring heretics (the same verb *t'y* is used here) as reading the plural verb forms as an invitation to contemplate "how many divine entities (*'lwhwt*) created the world." While there is no need to revisit the story, it does remind us of the claim made in the *Cave of Treasures* that use of "*nūn* instead of '*alaf*,'" i.e. of the plural instead of the singular, would indicate "the glorious essences (*qnwm' šbyh'*) of the Son and the Spirit (*br' wrwh'*)."<sup>84</sup> It seems, once again, that the popular Christian discourse preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* is a voice in the contextualization of *Bereshit Rabbah* that is at least as important as the rich patristic evidence emphasized by previous studies of the same passage.<sup>85</sup> The Midrash thus

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et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 569-70.

<sup>83</sup> 8:8, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* 61.

<sup>84</sup> 2:3, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 12.

<sup>85</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:9, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* 62. See also Yerushalmi *Berakhot* 9:1, 12d-13a and the detailed analysis of relevant patristic material in Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 27-37, Visotzky, "Genesis in Rabbinic Interpretation," and Menahem Kister, "Some Early Jewish and Christian

does not deny either the philological basis or the basic outline of the Christian narrative, but correctively retells it. The plural in Genesis 1:26 is truly ambiguous, and the angels may indeed have exclaimed Adam's holiness as he entered paradise. Yet the rabbis hasten to point to the real truth behind the matter, assuring their audience that God immediately rectified the angels' misconception by abruptly putting Adam to sleep.<sup>86</sup>

There are numerous other instances in *Bereshit Rabbah* that show a general tendency, in the rabbinic corpus, to diminish the status of Adam, all the while grappling with the Bible's ambiguities. These responses should be understood as a response to Christian typology more broadly, yet they also function very well as a riposte to the traditions preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*.

- The rabbis, for example, combine the two accounts of Adam's creation in Genesis 1 and 2 as indicating that he first was created a hermaphrodite, or as two-headed and subsequently split – a grotesque image in great contrast to the angels' being moved by Adam's "glorious (*šbyht*) appearance" and "the beauty of his likeness" in the Syriac text.<sup>87</sup>
- Likewise, the rabbis emphasize that Adam's praise (*qylws*) comes only *after* that of the animals, just as Adam was created only after them, following Genesis 1, and strategically ignoring the variant sequence in Genesis 2 – an interpretation which again functions well as a rejoinder the animals' worship of Adam in the Syriac text, and the focus on Genesis 2 chosen there.<sup>88</sup>
- Finally, both traditions place Adam upright on the earth, where he was created, namely in Jerusalem. *Bereshit Rabbah* states that Adam "was created (*nbr*) from the place of his atonement" (*mmqwm kprtw*)," that is from the place of the "altar of Adam" (*mzbh 'dmh*, cf. Ex 20:24), which is where God then "placed [Adam] upright (*šh 'mydw*), as a lifeless mass that reaches from the

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Exegetical Problems and the Dynamics of Monotheism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 37 (2006): 548-93.

<sup>86</sup> A similar strategy is pursued in Bavli *Hagiga* 15a, see Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 103–49.

<sup>87</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* 55; and *Cave of Treasures* 2:13, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* 55; and *Cave of Treasures* 2:21, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 18.

earth (*h'rs*) to the firmament.<sup>89</sup> The rabbis, of course, understand the place of Adam's altar to be Jerusalem.<sup>90</sup> While Schäfer already entertains the intriguing notion that even the rabbinic depiction of Adam's size may be polemical, a turn to the popular Christian literature again enhances our understanding of the rabbis' literary strategy in the passage under consideration.<sup>91</sup> The *Cave of Treasures*, like the rabbis, stated that God "stood (*wqm*) him (i.e. Adam) on the earth (*r'*) in Jerusalem, because this is where Adam was created (*'tbr*)."<sup>92</sup> The implication in the Christian text is of course that God placed Adam "on the spot where the cross of our saviour would be placed," as the later manuscripts of the Syriac text spell it out; Adam is thereby placed right at the geographical centre identified by the Christian doctrine of salvation.<sup>93</sup> The rabbinic text, in its reading of Genesis, once more seems to eclipse the Christian narrative by substituting the Temple for Christ, just as earlier Christians had substituted Christ for the Temple.

While these rabbinic interpretations point to a corrective recasting of the Christian tradition more broadly, reading them in dialogue with the *Cave of Treasures*, and thereby broadening the narrative horizon of the implied audience of *Bereshit Rabbah*, would add precisely the type of discursive depth one would expect in light of the more explicit polemical engagements we have seen above.

Rabbinic anthropology, as it transpires through the reading of Adam, thus gains a new urgency when understood as corrective retellings. While *Bereshit Rabbah* should be understood in the context of Palestinian Greco-Roman culture more broadly, the *Cave of Treasures* should nevertheless be used as a prominent source to reconstruct the type of Christian discourse to which the rabbis reacted. To give but two further examples of

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<sup>89</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:8, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* 132, see also 8:1, Theodor and Albeck, *ibid.* 55, and 24:2, Theodor and Albeck, *ibid.*, 230, see also Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 38b.

<sup>90</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 34:9, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* 317.

<sup>91</sup> Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 203, cf. Su-Min Ri, *Commentaire de la Caverne Des Trésors* 139-40.

<sup>92</sup> See *Cave of Treasures* 2:15-16, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 16-8; the placement of Adam in Jerusalem is missing in manuscript Mingana 11, but attested in the majority of eastern manuscripts. On Adam's burial site at the centre of the earth, the site of the later Temple, see Grypeou and Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*, 50-3 and 71-9.

<sup>93</sup> The addition of the "cross" features equally in manuscript Br. Mus. Add. 25875, see *Cave of Treasures* 2:15-6, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 16-19.

a possibly closer literary relationship (both of which will equally prove essential for the Medinan Qur'ān), in another comment on Gen. 1:26, the rabbinic authors of *Bereshit Rabbah* initially follow the Christian narrative pattern – only in order to divert from it in a corrective way. Here, as in the opening of chapter two of the *Cave of Treasures*, we learn what happened just before Adam's creation, when God was about to create the first human being:

R. Simon said: In the hour (*bš*<sup>4</sup>) when the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels (*ml'ky hšrt*) formed sects and parties. Some of them said "Let him not be created," whilst others said "let him be created." Thus it is written, *Kindness and Truth met (hsd w'mt npgšw)*, *Righteousness and Peace kissed (šdq wšlwm nšqw*, Ps. 85:11). Kindness said: "Let him be created, because he will commit acts of kindness." And Truth said: "Let him not be created, because he is full of lies." Righteousness (*šdq*) said: "Let him be created, because he will commit acts of righteousness (*šdqwt*)." Peace (*šlym*) said: "Let him not be created, because he is full of strife (*qtt*)." ... All our Rabbis say the following in the name of R. Hanina, while R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiyah say it in the name of R. Simon: "*m'd* ("very") means "Adam" (*'dm*), thus it is written, *and God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good (twb m'd)* (Gen. 1: 31), namely, Adam was good (*twb 'dm*)." R. Huna the master (*rbh*) of Sepphoris, said: "While the ministering angels were arguing with each other and disputing with each other, the Holy One, blessed be He, created him. He said to them: 'What are you arguing? Adam has already been made!'"<sup>94</sup>

The Christian angels, we have seen, break out in fear and amazement upon hearing God's intention to create man, and expect a great miracle.<sup>95</sup> The very presence of the angels during the creation also in the rabbinic text, to reiterate, is of course a broader motif in post-biblical literature, yet the fact that the angels react to God's intention to create Adam in both traditions strongly points to a shared discourse – and again to the corrective nature of the rabbinic retelling. In clear contrast to the Christian narrative, again, some of the rabbinic angels are very judicious in their role as God's councillors, and instead of reverently expecting a miracle, they simply warn God of the corruption which humans will cause – especially the warning by "peace" that humans will cause "strive," using a term often

<sup>94</sup> 8:5 Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 60.

<sup>95</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 2:5, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 14.

used to describe marital disputes, sounds ominous.<sup>96</sup> A similar warning about humanity will recur in the Qur'ān as well.

In effect, the rabbinic story of God's interaction with the angels prior to Adam's creation may be a corrective retelling of the Christian narrative, yet here, it strikes a middle ground: in addition to warning God about human strife, the text also emphasizes the good deeds of which humans are capable. The rabbinic narrative thus illustrates not only what the rabbis did and did not share with the Christians, but also the rabbis' view of the human being as free moral agent, capable of choosing good or evil, just as the angels – here hypostasized as moral qualities – illustrate in great detail. While the *Cave of Treasures* sees the Christ-like Adam as a heavenly being, the rabbis show a somewhat more earthen view of the first human. Simultaneously, instead of having to wait for the redemption of mankind through the crucifixion of the second Adam, the Midrash pre-empts the possibility for Adam's salvation based on the semantic affinity between *'dm* and the lexeme *m'd*, "very," in Gen. 1:31. Despite our shortcomings, the rabbis conclude that humans, overall, are essentially good – therefore, God side-lines the angels in their dispute and simply creates Adam.

The rabbinic Adam is thus less heavenly than the Christian one, yet he is not without his own – rather rabbinic – qualities. *Bereshit Rabbah* then emphasizes Adam's superiority over the angels regarding the one quality which features especially high in their own anthropology, namely in wisdom:

R. Aha said: "At the hour (*bš'*) when the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, He took advice (*nymlk*) from the ministering angels (*bml'ky hšrt*). He said to them: "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26). They said to him: "What will be his nature (*mh tybw*)?" He said to them: "His wisdom (*hkmtw*) will exceed yours." What did the Holy one, blessed by He, do? He brought (*hby'*) before them the cattle (*bhmfh*) and wild beasts (*whyh*) and birds (*w'p'*). He said to them: "This, what is its name?" And they did not know. "And this, what is its name?" And they did not know. Then He let them pass (*h'byrm*) by Adam. He said to him: "This, what is its name?" "Bull." "And this, what is its name?" "And this, what is its name?" "Camel." "And this, what is its name?" "Donkey." "And this, what is its name?" "Horse." Thus it is written, *and the man gave names to all cattle*, etc. (Gen. 2:20). He said to him: "And you, what is your name

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<sup>96</sup> Note that the term *qtt(h)* is more widespread in Babylonian Jewish Aramaic; see e.g. Bavli *Berakhot* 18b. On the role of the rabbinic angels as forces of opposition see also Joseph P. Schultz, "Angelic Opposition to the Ascension of Moses and the Revelation of the Law," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 61 (1971): 282-307; see also note 62 above.

(šmk)?” He said to Him: “It is fitting that I be called (*lhyqr’wt*) Adam, because I was created from the ground (*h’dmh*).” “And I, what is My name (*šmy*)?” He said to Him: “It is fitting for You to be called (*lhyqr’wt*) *y’y* [i.e. the Tetragrammaton, pronounced as “our Lord,” *adonay*, by the rabbis], since You are Lord (*’dwn*) over all Your creatures (*lkl brywtk*). R. Hiyya said: “*I am y’y, that is My name* (cf. Isa. 42:8),” that is My name by which Adam called Me (*šmy šqr’ly*).”<sup>97</sup>

The rabbinic text here tells the story of the naming of the animals in a way that is remarkably similar to the Christian narrative in its deviance from the Biblical text, yet in a very different way. Whereas God simply creates the animals collectively in the Bible, and Adam then names them individually, the procedure is dramatized in both the Christian and the rabbinic account. In the Christian text, the animals “passed (*w’brw*) before Adam,”<sup>98</sup> which they do not in Genesis 20:2, where God brings them to Adam. The rabbis equally have the animals “pass” before Adam individually, also using the lexeme *’br*. The end to which this parade is used, however, could not be more different in the two similar interpretations of the Bible.

In the Christian text, after the naming of the animals, these themselves and subsequently the angels worship Adam, leading in turn to their partial revolt – and to the narrator’s etymological revelation of why Satan “is called his name” (*’tqry šmh*) from the moment of his rebellion: Satan and Demon.<sup>99</sup> The rabbis equally extend the tradition of the naming to go beyond the animals. Yet rather than intimating Adam’s worthiness of being worshipped and the devil’s name, the rabbis, by contrast, take the occasion of the naming of the animals to demonstrate that Adam’s wisdom is superior to that of the angels. It is he who has the power to name the animals, and, in a climax of the triumph of the human intellect, Adam, based on its etymology, can even deduce his own name (“your name,” *šmk*) and how he himself “is to be called” (*lhyqr’wt*), again using the same (common) lexemes *šm* and *qr’* the Syriac text applied to the devil.

Through this simple transfer, in a parallel narrative addition to the Bible’s story about the naming of the animals, *Bereshit Rabbah* eclipses the entire revolt of the angels and the creation of Satan we saw in the *Cave of Treasures*. And this eclipse is accompanied by another precise corrective retelling of the Syriac tradition. In the climax of the rabbinic paragraph (in a second naming structurally paralleling the second

<sup>97</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:4 Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 155-6.

<sup>98</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 2:21, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> See *Cave of Treasures* 3:3, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22.

etymological naming in the Christian text), Adam also deduces how God Himself “is to be called,” since *He* is the “Lord” over all His creatures. The rabbinic text here once more uses the same (common) lexemes found in the Christian one in order fully to invert and to eclipse the respective climax of the Christian narrative: there, God gives Adam authority over “everything” (*dklhwn*) that has been “made and created (*‘byd’ wbry*),”<sup>100</sup> the rabbinic Adam in turn emphasizes to God that he is Lord “over all your creatures” (*lkl brywtk*). Both texts thus use the naming to highlight their respective theologies. Yet the rabbis clearly respond to the Christian tradition: from a rabbinic or a purely “Biblical” perspective, there is absolutely no reason to emphasize what is self-evident, if it were not to counter the Christian claim about Adam’s (and thereby Christ’s) lordship.

At this point the rabbinic counter-narrative embeds its corrective retelling of the Christian myth in a way that illustrates the divergence not only of shared stories but also of shared values especially well: whereas the *Cave of Treasures* sees the fulfilment of the human in the adoration of the Word of God as incarnated in Christ, *Bereshit Rabbah* sees it in the engagement with the Word of God as incarnated in the Torah. Christ himself, of course, is of a dual nature, both divine and human, in most Christian doctrines, just as the rabbis, at least past the fourth century, increasingly emphasize the human participation in the production of the Living Torah – the text that also is of dual nature, constituted by God’s Written Torah and by the rabbis’ own Oral Torah.<sup>101</sup> The holiest symbol of the rabbis is God’s ineffable name, the Tetragrammaton, pronounced simply as “Lord”: *Bereshit Rabbah* here attributes even this name to Adam’s genius, making the humans part of God’s creation at least on a linguistic level. There is not much in the Christian narrative that would suggest familiarity with the specific traditions preserved in *Bereshit Rabbah*, and in turn not much in the rabbinic text that would suggest unfamiliarity with these traditions preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* (as much as the text may share with other Jewish or Christian works). Whether or not the familiarity of the rabbis that produced *Bereshit Rabbah* with the specific Adam traditions contained in the Syriac texts suggests a knowledge of further material will need to be assessed. Yet whatever the textual history may reveal in future research, the two texts are clear evidence of an ongoing debate among rabbis and among Christians, and of a shared polemical discourse on Adam and the angels. With this in mind, we can now turn to the Qur’ān, which, in Mecca and Medina, establishes

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<sup>100</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 2:22-24, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 18-20.

<sup>101</sup> On the Oral Torah see e.g. Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, esp. 84-99.



Christ as clearly human and, in Medina, language as clearly divine – all the while, perhaps more surprisingly, engaging in yet another round of a corrective retelling of the Christian and rabbinic narratives hitherto discussed.

### Adam and the Angels in the Meccan Qur'ān

The later Islamic tradition engages with many aspects of book of Genesis more broadly, and with the creation of Adam more specifically.<sup>102</sup> The focus of the present study, however, is on the Qur'ān itself and on its relationship to the narratives of its own time. As mentioned before, the Meccan Qur'ān relates the story of Iblis' refusal to worship Adam several times, in Q 7:10-28, Q 15:26-48, Q 17:61-65, Q 18:50-53, Q 20:116-23 and Q 38:71-85. The function of these passages within their respective surahs, as well as their sequence, has discussed in detail by Neuwirth;<sup>103</sup> the most comprehensive studies of the relationship of the material to the Jewish and Christian tradition have been presented by Speyer and Reynolds.<sup>104</sup> The elements the Qur'ān shares with the *Cave of Treasures*

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<sup>102</sup> On Genesis in the Qur'ān and in later tradition see e.g. Carol Bakhos, "Genesis, the Qur'ān and Islamic Interpretation," in Evans et al. (eds.), *The Book of Genesis*, 607-34. On the role of Adam see e.g. M. J. Kister, "Legends in tafsīr and hadīth Literature: The Creation of Ādam and Related Stories," in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 82-114; and Cornelia Schöck, *Adam im Islam. Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Sunna* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1993), see also note 40 above.

<sup>103</sup> See Angelika Neuwirth, "Negotiating Justice: A Pre-canonical Reading of the Qur'anic Creation Accounts (Part 1)," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2:1 (2000): 25-41; and eadem, "Negotiating Justice: A Pre-canonical Reading of the Qur'anic Creation Accounts (Part 2)," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2:2: 1-18.

<sup>104</sup> See Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, 39-53; and Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, 41-83, and note 30 above. Another noteworthy study is that of Whitney S. Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs: Narrative Theology in the Qur'ān* (Cambridge, MSS: Harvard University Press, 2011). Bodman briefly mentions the *Cave of Treasures* (ibid. 81-2 citing Budge's translation), but does not consider the material any further; he does offer a useful overview and discussion of relevant Biblical and post-Biblical (ibid., 59-96) as well as Qur'anic materials (ibid., 97-236). Bodman's work has its undisputable merits and remains thought-provoking, it is also beset by a number of unsettling methodological and technical issues; see the extensive review by Marianna Klar, "Review Article: 'The Poetics of Iblīs: Narrative Theology in the Qur'an.' By Whitney S. Bodman. Harvard Theological Studies, 62. Cambridge, MSS: Harvard University Press, 2011," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 15 (2013): 102-146.

are spread out throughout each of the versions, yet their distribution is uneven. We will begin with a brief but full consideration of the passages in Q 18:50-53 and in Q 17:61-65, whose overlaps are the least palpable (and therefore need a more careful analysis), and then move to a two sets of parallel versions in Q 15:26-48 and Q 38:71-85 as well as in Q 7:10-28 and Q 20:116-23, the last of which will again be considered in full. In these latter two sets of narratives, the affinities are more numerous and more apparent – especially so in Q 7 and in Q 20. These two passages have the closest affinity with both the Syriac text and with the Medinan version, crucially so at times in disagreement with the narrative of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>105</sup> The novelty of the present study, to reiterate, is its deep focus on two specific texts from among the Christian and the rabbinic tradition that are considered as especially relevant, and an in-depth reading of these source made possibly by the exclusive focus, and a consistent consideration of the Qur’ān’s intended audience.

Each time it tells the story, especially the Meccan Qur’ān provides just enough information for its key message to be intelligible for its entire audience, for the purposes of each surah’s respective emphases. It never fails to recast the essential elements of the story, and its basic intelligibility does not generally rely on any knowledge previous tradition, or the Qur’ān itself, would have imparted on the audience. Part of the implied audience of the Meccan surahs was thus completely ignorant of either the Qur’ān, of the Syriac narratives, or of both. Yet at the same time, the richness of the text’s message often grows exponentially if one surmises that some among the implied audience *were* familiar with the story of Adam and the angels, and especially with its Christian iteration as found in the *Cave of Treasures*.

The key theme of the Meccan passages, for example, is epitomized in the frequent and ubiquitous recurrence of the root *sġd*, which expresses Iblis’ refusal “to prostrate” before Adam: the very motif at the centre of the Syriac narrative, there expressed through the cognate Syriac lexeme *sgd*. While previous scholars have convincingly argued that the Qur’ān’s telling of the story is in many ways a retelling, we shall here explore in how far it is a corrective one. The veneration of the first man certainly made sense within the framework of the Christian typology of Adam and Christ, yet the Qur’ān’s use of the same stark image, especially employing

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<sup>105</sup> Note that Neuwirth, with good reason, considers Q 7 to be a surah composed of both Meccan and Medinan materials, see eadem, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren: die literarische Form des Koran, ein Zeugnis seiner Historizität?* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), ad loc., see also *ibid.*, 290-314.

such a religiously charged lexeme as *sġd*, may surprise at first.<sup>106</sup> The traditional literature, accordingly, discusses the issue of prostration before Adam in great detail, seeking to disperse the possible impression of anthropolatry.<sup>107</sup> Yet the Qur'ān's language in such matters is, as usual, exceedingly precise: it depicts prostration before Adam, and in the same passage it depicts "worshippers" – employing the same lexeme 'b-d we saw used to describe the worship of Adam in the *Cave of Treasures* – yet in the Qur'ānic versions of the story, worship is reserved for God alone.

Moreover, if one contextualizes the issue not only in the light of the Christian tradition, as we will presently do, but first and foremost in the context of the Qur'ān's broader battle against the perceived ongoing worship of angels among its contemporaries, then its depiction of the veneration of Adam becomes somewhat less startling.<sup>108</sup> Relegating the angels to a status subservient to Adam, namely, makes it quite clear that the expanse between humans and God is absolutely devoid of any beings. Leaving the status of the angels above Adam, the Qur'ān implies, would inversely lead to possible *širk*, to associating something else, in this case the angels, with God. The prostration before Adam therefore becomes a weapon in the Meccan Qur'ān's battle for the unity and uniqueness of God, as for example in Q 18 *Sūrat al-Kahf*, the most concise of the versions. This is also the passage whose parallels with the *Cave of Treasures* are the least striking; as we will see, it arguably constitutes the last of the Meccan retellings:

Q 18:50 When We said to the angels (*wa- 'id qulnā li-l-malā'ikati*):  
 "Prostrate (*sġudū*) before Adam,"  
 they prostrated (*fa-saġadū*), but not Iblis.  
 He was one of the jinn,  
 so he transgressed against his Lord's command ('an 'amri rabbihī).  
 Will you then take him and his offspring (*wa-durriyyatahū*)  
 for guardians ('auliyā'a) in My stead,  
 though they are your enemies?  
 How evil a substitute for the wrongdoers!  
 Q 18:51 I did not make them a witness to the creation

<sup>106</sup> The root *sġd*, to the best of my knowledge, has always a positive and pious connotation in the Qur'ān; it is only the sinners who refuse to prostrate, see e.g. Q 25:60. The same root also describes the holiest of sites, adding to its solemnity, see e.g. Q 9:18-9.

<sup>107</sup> See note 102 above, see also Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and its Biblical Subtext*, 40-46.

<sup>108</sup> On the worship of angels in the Qur'ān see e.g. Crone, *The Qur'ānic Pagans and Related Matters*, 102-24; see also note 63 above.

of the heavens and the earth,  
 nor to their own creation,  
 nor do I take those who mislead as assistants (‘*aḍudan*).

Q 18:52 The day He (i.e. God) will say:  
 “Call those whom you maintained to be My partners (*šurakā’iya*),”  
 they will call them,  
 but they will not respond to them,  
 for We shall place an abyss between them.

Q 18:53 The guilty will sight the Fire  
 and know that they will fall into it,  
 for they will find no means to circumvent it.<sup>109</sup>

The Qur’ān here retells part of the story known from the *Cave of Treasures*: in both texts, God commands the angels to prostrate before the newly created Adam, using the cognate lexeme *sgd/sġd*; in both texts, one of the spiritual beings disobeys, and in both texts, this figure belongs to one sub-group of spiritual beings. These elements are what I would designate as the narrative core of the Qur’ān’s teaching on Adam and the angels; it is repeated in each of the further retellings.<sup>110</sup> Yet despite the affinities of this core narrative with the *Cave of Treasures*, the Qur’ān’s use of the story of Iblis’ fall in *Sūrat al-Kahf* is quite different from the Syriac tradition: it is squarely focused on the inappropriateness of making the jinn the “partners” of God (Q 18:52), evoking the danger of *širk*. The text thus emphasizes the impossibility of their intercession on behalf of humans – themes central not to *Cave of Treasures*, but to the Qur’ān.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> The vocalized text of the *Qur’ān* is that of ‘Āšim (transmitted by Ḥaḥṣ), i.e. the Cairo text. All translation are based on Sayyid ‘Ali Quli Qara’i, *The Qur’an* (New York, Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, 2006), with minor modifications.

<sup>110</sup> The question to be asked is whether and how the retellings depend on the genre of the Qur’ān, on the historical circumstances of its dissemination, or on both. While timelessness and universality are inscribed into its content and form, so are historical specificities. For a very different – yet certainly no less valid – approach to the Qur’ān’s “synoptic problem,” see Witztum, “Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology and the Study of Intra-Quranic Parallels,” see also the important study by Neuwirth, “Vom Rezitationstext ueber die Liturgie zum Kanon: Zur Entstehung und Wiederauflösung der Surenkomposition im Verlauf der Entwicklung eines islamischen Kultus,” in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur’an as Text* (Brill: Leiden, 1996), 69-106.

<sup>111</sup> While a main study of the topic of intercession in the Qur’ān remains a desideratum, the possibility of any intervention is made clear enough, see e.g. Q36:21. On the later, more open attitude in classical Islam see e.g. Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 77-98.

We can thus immediately state that the Qur'ān's retelling does not "depend" on the Syriac tradition of Adam and the angels. Yet the specific way in which the Qur'ān tells the story still utilizes – for its own narrative ends and in its own doctrinal framework – several further aspects of the Christian tradition as epitomized in the *Cave of Treasures* as well as in the *Clementine Homilies*, a text that shares much with both the Syriac tradition and with the Qur'ān.<sup>112</sup>

The Qur'ān, namely, relates God's command to the angels to prostrate before Adam in order to illustrate the foolishness of taking Iblis, or any of "his offspring" as a *walī* as a "guardian." In this, the Qur'ān's story largely overlaps with Late Antique Christian teaching.<sup>113</sup> The concept of human worship of the devil is a staple of Late Ancient heresiology, and the fact that they are "those who mislead" (Q 18:51) constitutes the very nature of the devil and the demons already in the Gospels.<sup>114</sup> Yet the more specific idea that the devil has "offspring" (Q 18:50), while explicitly denied in the *Cave of Treasures*, is well attested in the *Clementine Homilies*: here, we learn that specifically the demons constitute a special class of beings, being the offspring of "spirits who inhabit the heaven, the angels who dwell in the lowest region."<sup>115</sup> These demons then deceive the humans, and cause them to worship them.<sup>116</sup>

The question how exactly the jinn relate to the angels in the Qur'ān has been discussed for centuries; tradition holds that they constitute a different class of beings, while recent scholarship suggests a closer relationship.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> See note 28 above.

<sup>113</sup> See Crone, *The Qur'ānic Pagans and Related Matters*, 183-218, and note 63 above.

<sup>114</sup> See e.g. Matt. 4:1-11; on the role of demons in ancient Christianity see e.g. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten (eds.), *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), and see already Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics* (New York: Vintage, 1996), see also note 139 below.

<sup>115</sup> See Clementine Homilies 8:12:1 cited according to Bernhard Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I: Homilien* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1969), 126; translation according to Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Volume XVII: The Clementine Homilies* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1870), ad loc.

<sup>116</sup> See Clementine Homilies, 8:18-22, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 128-30.

<sup>117</sup> See e.g. Mehdi Azaiez et al. (eds.) *The Qur'an Seminar Commentary: A Collaborative Study of 50 Qur'anic Passages*, 382-94; Dimitri Meeks et al. *Génies, anges et demons* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971), vol. 8, and Amira El-Zein, *The Evolution of the Concept of the Jinn from Pre-Islam to Islam* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Georgetown University, 1995).

Yet regardless of this debate, it is clear that even if the teachings preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* do not fully correspond to the discourse the Qur'ān shares with its implied audience, the former text still contains crucial information that allows us to approach the latter. For Iblis' moral autonomy to defy God's order places him and thereby all jinn in close affinity both to the *Homilies'* "lower angels" and to the "order of spirits" (*tgm' drwhn'*) called "the rebelling order" (*tgm' mrwd'*) in the *Cave of Treasures*, whose chief is referred to precisely by the fact that he separated himself from the Lord "by his own will" (*mn hd' bšbyn npšh*).<sup>118</sup> In the margins of the simple overlap of the Qur'ān's core narrative of Adam and the angels with the *Clementine Homilies* and with the *Cave of Treasures*, a broader, unspoken consensus about the nature of the jinn thus resides, which the Qur'ān does not need to introduce to its audience: instead, it challenges the audience to consider the possible consequences of a teaching with which they are already familiar.

The Qur'ān's version again partially overlaps with the Christian tradition when stating, in Q 18:51, that the angels, while present during the creation of Adam, were created after the creation of the world – a statement again in line with the *Cave of Treasures*, which stipulate that the angels were created on the first day, immediately after the heavens and the earth.<sup>119</sup> Yet the Qur'ān's statement that God's creations were not witness to the creation reverberates deeper. For in the Syriac tradition, God may be alone, but He is not entirely by Himself – rather, it is the "revered persona of the Holy Trinity" (*qywm' sgyd' dtlytyw' qdyšt'*) who first create the heavens and the earth, then the angels, and finally Adam.<sup>120</sup> By emphasizing that the jinn were not witness to the creation, does the Qur'ān also engage in a corrective retelling of other accounts of the creation that ascribe partners, or offspring, to God? And does it imply parts of the audience to be familiar with such accounts?

The Qur'ān's anti-Trinitarian discourse in this Meccan surah ranges from implicit to explicit, yet it emerges more fully when placing the story of Adam and Iblis in the broader rhetorical framework of *Sūrat al-Kahf*.<sup>121</sup> As mentioned above, the first part of the surah stands in particularly close dialogue with the Syriac Christian tradition about the Sleepers of Ephesus. This dialogue, I have previously argued, constitutes an astute anti-Trinitarian corrective retelling of the narrative.<sup>122</sup> In the Syriac tradition,

<sup>118</sup> See *Cave of Treasures* 3:3, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22.

<sup>119</sup> On the Christian and rabbinic parallels see also note 62 above.

<sup>120</sup> 1:4, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 4

<sup>121</sup> See note 22 above.

<sup>122</sup> See Azaiez et al. (eds.), *The Qur'an Seminar Commentary*, 119-20.

the “guardian” who wakes over the sleepers is Christ, whereas the surah warns those who say “God has taken a Son,” in verse Q 18:4, and repeatedly emphasizes that those who err will not find a guardian, a *wali* (the same term that is used to describe the false guardians in Q 18:50, see also Q 18:17 and 26). In this context, Iblis’ fall becomes a warning not to take any angel as such a guardian, thereby reinforcing the common Qur’ānic theme of the unification of God, which is the main goal also of the ways in which the Qur’ān describes the relation of humans to their maker.<sup>123</sup>

In *Sūrat al-Kahf*, the Meccan Qur’ān thus uses several aspects of the Christian tradition of an angel’s refusal to worship Adam in a context that emphasizes the unification of God in the first instance and seems anti-Christological in the second. It seems likely that its implied audience is already familiar with some aspects of the Syriac Christian tradition – at least about the Sleepers of Ephesus. There would be no reason to present a corrective, anti-Christological retelling of the Sleepers tradition if both were foreign to the audience. Yet how about the familiarity of the Qur’ān’s audience with the story of Adam and Iblis? The partially precise overlap between this particular Meccan surah and the *Cave of Treasures* is set amidst puzzling lacunae: the audience here learns nothing about the reasons Iblis has for his actions, and nothing about any of the further events known from the Syriac text, without which Iblis’ rebellion may make sense in the context of the surah’s broader purpose – but not so much in and of itself. Is the audience implied to know the respective traditions already, does the Qur’ān introduce them in a sequential way, or has it already done so in case this surah should post-date any others?

Any attempt to establish absolute certainty about these questions would need to rely on a more secure chronology of the Qur’ān’s Meccan surahs, which has not yet been firmly established. I do, however, almost fully concur with Neuwirth’s sequentialization of the relevant surahs, and with her subtle reading of the figure of Iblis in terms of the societal challenges facing the nascent community of believers.<sup>124</sup> In the present case, it would

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<sup>123</sup> See e.g. Zellentin, “The Rise of Monotheism in Arabia,” in Nicholas Baker-Brian and Josef Lössl (eds.), *Blackwell Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell), forthcoming.

<sup>124</sup> See Angelika Neuwirth, “Negotiating Justice: A Pre-canonical Reading of the Qur’anic Creation Accounts (Part 1),” and eadem, “Negotiating Justice: A Pre-canonical Reading of the Qur’anic Creation Accounts (Part 2).” The order of surahs defended by Neuwirth is Q 15, Q 38, Q 20, Q 17, Q 18, and Q 7; see already Theodor Nöldeke, Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträßer and Otto

seem that Q 18 indeed presupposes its audience's familiarity with specific inner-Qur'ānic parallels. While the narrative is intelligible on its own, its persuasive force is much enhanced if other aspects one finds in other Meccan retellings, such as Iblis' reason for his rebellion, were known to the intended audience. While a more secure relative dating in this case would remain an over-reach, we should note that the various Meccan versions of the narrative of Adam and the Angels step by step introduce a variety of other motifs we have seen in the *Cave of Treasures* (yet not a single rabbinic one; these will occur only in the Medinan Qur'ān). Yet even these earlier versions, we will see, presuppose that at least *part* of its audience at least recognized the narrative of Adam and the angels as a Scriptural one, and were at least rudimentarily familiar with its broad outline.

This familiarity is indicated by a single word in the Arabic text in the passage in *Sūrat al-Kahf*, which is equally found in almost all of the retellings of the story (with the exception of Q 7:11): the conjunction *'id* in Q 18:50, inconspicuously translated above as "when." This term, as Sidney Griffith has nicely illustrated, is one of the Qur'ān's expressions with which the Qur'ān often indicates that it is about to relate an event known from "Biblical history," that is, from the largely oral repository of Biblical narratives, which, along with their Jewish and Christian interpretations, formed part of Arabic discourse.<sup>125</sup> The Qur'ān thus indicates that the story of Adam and the angels forms part of this Biblical history, and the surah's effective appeal to the authority of this tradition implies its audience's capacity to corroborate the claim. The question in how far this implied audience was familiar with the Syriac tradition about Adam and Eve can thus tentatively be answered.

If all versions introduce the narrative as a Scriptural one, yet always restate the core narrative, then it seems very likely that the Qur'ān, on the one hand, introduces some of the themes known from the tradition preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* to an audience unfamiliar with it. On the other hand, however, it is clear that it employs the previous knowledge about the same tradition by at least some of those it addresses in order to correct the story's Christological implications even when it does so indirectly, by denouncing *širk* in general. The similarity of narratives thus effectively shows three levels of discourse: the Qur'ān sequentially introduces the tradition of Adam and the angels to those parts of the

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Pretzl, *History of the Qur'ān* (Brill: Leiden 2013 [1919]); Nöldeke's sequence is largely similar yet places Q 20 before Q 15 and Q 38.

<sup>125</sup> The word *lammā* often serves a similar function, as do various verbal forms of the root *dkr*, "remember," see Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 62.



formative Muslim community who are not yet sufficiently familiar with it, it evokes the narrative authority of this tradition by appealing to those in the audience who have heard it before, and then it redirects the religious sensibilities especially of the latter ones in its own direction, in this case away from the worship of angels and of Adam – and typologically thereby of Christ – and towards the unique and unified God.

In other words, we will see that the Qur'ān, in addition to relying on its audience's rudimentary familiarity with aspects of the Syriac tradition, introduces at least part of this audience sequentially to the very same Christian and rabbinic narratives we have hitherto studied – as a corrective retelling, within its own doctrinal framework, and in line with the varying emphases of each individual surah. Tracing the ways in which the Qur'ān introduces other aspects known from the *Cave of Treasures* allows us to grasp the surgical precision of its corrective retellings. *Sūrat al-'Isrā'* (Q 17) for example, seems to be the version that is among the Qur'ān's earlier versions of the story, and it shows much closer affinity with the Syriac tradition than *Sūrat al-Kahf*. In Q 17, Iblis specifies his refusal to prostrate before Adam in a way that directs its audience to worship God alone:

- Q 17:61 When We said (*wa-'id qulnā*) to the angels,  
 “Prostrate (*sğudū*) before Adam,”  
 They prostrated (*fa-sağadū*), but not Iblis:  
 He said: “Shall I prostrate (*'a-'asğudu*) before someone  
 Whom You have created from clay (*īnan*)?”
- Q 17:62 He said: “Do you see this one whom  
 You have honoured (*karramta*) above me?  
 If you respite me until the Day of Resurrection,  
 I will surely destroy his progeny (*durriyyatahū*),  
 Except a few.
- Q 17:63 He said: “Begone!  
 Whoever of them follows you,  
 Indeed the hell shall be your requital,  
 An ample reward.
- Q17:64 Instigate whomever of them you can (*wa-stafiz man istaṭa'ta minhum*)  
 With your voice (*bi-ṣautika*).  
 And rally against them your horses (*bi-ḥailika*)  
 And your infantry (*wa-rağilika*),  
 And share with them in wealth and children,  
 And make promises to them.  
 But Satan (*al-šaitānu*) promises them nothing but delusion.
- Q 17:65 As for my servants (*'ibādī*),  
 You shall have no authority (*sulṭānun*) over them.”  
 And your Lord (*bi-rabbika*) suffices as trustee.

The surah here retells the same core narrative of Adam and the angels we have already encountered in Q 18 *Sūrat al-Kahf*, using very similar language and almost the same Arabic language expressions in order to remind its audience of the key motif of Iblis' refusal to prostrate before Adam, or to familiarize them with it. The fact that this language marks each one of its Meccan retellings strongly suggests that the Qur'ān's implied audience remains to include people insufficiently familiar with the narrative. At the same time, each of the subsequent retellings expands the narrative dramatically and builds on themes known from previous Qur'ānic versions – and from the *Cave of Treasures*, in the framework of a corrective retelling of concrete narrative elements (whose lexical overlaps are infrequent and often indirect):

- In verse Q 17:61, as in Q 18, Iblis is portrayed as rebelling against God's command, yet in Q 17, he partially explicates his reason: he will not prostrate before someone made from clay, just as we learned, in the *Cave of Treasures*, that the rebelling angels cannot prostrate before dust (without lexical overlap).<sup>126</sup>
- In verse Q 17:62, Iblis evokes how God has honoured Adam, evoking the great honour with which Adam was introduced into paradise in the *Cave of Treasures* (here again using different lexemes).<sup>127</sup>
- The Qur'ān then, in Q 17:64, after the fall, calls Iblis by the name Satan (*al-šaiṭān*), just as he receives the name Satan (*šṭn*) in the Syriac tradition at precisely the same moment. The fact that a similar sequence between "Iblis" before the refusal to worship and "Satan" thereafter is also preserved consistently in Q 7:11 and Q 7:20, 22, and 27 as well as in Q 2:34 and 36 makes it unlikely that this sequence in the shift from Iblis to Satan is coincidental.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> 3:1-2, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 20, see also Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and its Biblical Subtext*, 50-1.

<sup>127</sup> 3:8, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22. On the development of the motif of Satan's rebellion, honour or jealousy, see Minov, "Satan's Refusal to Worship Adam."

<sup>128</sup> 3:7, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22, see also Reynolds, "A Reflection on Two Qur'ānic Words (Iblīs and Jūdī), with Attention to the Theories of A. Mingana," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 4 (2004): 675-689. While the name *al-šaiṭān* is never explained in the Qur'ān, we should note that a lexeme closely related to *šin-ṭā-nūn* can be found in the rare geminate root *šṭṭ*, which is in turn related to Syriac *šṭ*, "turning aside" (the very verb by which the *Cave of Treasures* explains Satan's new name). The root *šṭṭ* designates an "enormous

- Finally, in Q 17:64 we equally learn that Satan rules over “your horses and an infantry” (*bi-ḥailika wa-raḡilika*), in line with the sense of the “army of Iblis” (*ḡunūd ’iblis*) in Q 26:95. While the imagery of the devil’s army is firmly established in post-biblical literature, we should note that the Qur’ān here evokes the military language used to describe Satan’s “battalion” (*tgm*) in the *Cave of Treasures*.<sup>129</sup>

The affinities between the Qur’ān’s corrective retelling and the tradition as preserved in the Syriac texts thus permeate this Meccan version as much as it will permeate each of the other ones, and each of them can be shown to share new details with its audience that were equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*. It is against the backdrop of its precise narrative overlaps with the *Cave of Treasures* that we should evaluate the Qur’ān’s *different* employment of the *same* lexemes in the passage’s climax. Through its similarities, the Qur’ān has built up the expectation of *narrative sameness*, at least for those familiar with the Syriac tradition. Then, it moves to frustrate this expectation in order to generate its message through corrective *narrative difference*. When stating, in Q 17:65, that over those who serve “your Lord” (*rabbika*), those who God himself calls, “My servants” (*’ibādī*), Satan will not have “authority,” (*sultān*), namely, the part of the Qur’ān’s audience familiar with the tradition as preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* will remember that the Christian God had “given” Adam, and thereby Christ, “authority” (*’šlth*) that he had been given “greatness,” or, or precisely, “Lordship” (*rbwt*), and that all beings indeed worshipped before him (*wmšt ’bdyn qdmwhy*), repeatedly using the cognate Syriac lexemes *šlt*, *rb* and *’bd*.<sup>130</sup> In a way that is doctrinally as simple as it is literarily complex, the Qur’ān employs these very same terms and

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injustice” – and while it is not used here in Q 17, it is used twice in other Meccan surahs in order to designate a “Christological” infringement on God’s uniqueness and unity. It describes the sin of which the Christian overlords of the Companions of the Cave are accused in Q 18:14, namely of praying to a deity besides God (*min dūniḥī ’ilāhan*, on the identity of the overlords see note 122 above). In Q 72:3-4 the same term describes the sin committed by the jinn who had declared that God has a consort (*ṣāhibah*) or a son (*walad*), which is comparable to, yet different from the error that the angels commit in *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:10 (Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 63-64) as laid out on page 85 above.

<sup>129</sup> 3:1 and 3:4, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 20 and 22), cf. the Greek *τάγμα* and the expression “host of the battalion of spirits” (*ḥylwt ’dtgm ’drwhn*) in 2:2 Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 12, see also Q 17:67 and 103.

<sup>130</sup> 2:19-3:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 14-20.

concept in order to redirect worship towards the unique and unified God, using the Arabic cognates of the Syriac lexemes with which its intended audience may well have been at least partially familiar.

At the same time, the Qur'ān, in Q 17:64-5, voices a doctrine previously attested in the *Clementine Homilies* (in turn build on the temptation of Christ in the Gospels and devil's role in Job and in the prophetic literature<sup>131</sup>), namely that the devil, here called “the king of the present time” (ὁ πρόσκαιρος βασιλεύς),<sup>132</sup> and his demons, “have no authority” (ὅτι οὐδενὸς οἱ δαίμονες ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν)<sup>133</sup> over “those who are devoted to” (τινες ... προσκειμένων)<sup>134</sup> to God, and who follow the command to “serve Him” (αὐτῷ λατρεύσεις).<sup>135</sup> All Satan can do is “inducing and persuading” (προτρέπων καὶ ἀναπειθῶν) to win over humanity,<sup>136</sup> and promise wealth, i.e. “gold and silver and all the luxuries of the world” (ὁ χρυσὸς καὶ ὁ ἄργυρος καὶ πᾶσα ἡ τρυφή τοῦ κόσμου).<sup>137</sup> The demons, in other words, have power only over those who sin (ἐξαμάρτωσιν) and worship Satan, or follow him otherwise.<sup>138</sup>

This doctrine, is, of course, not unique to the *Clementine Homilies*, yet the large amount of overlapping doctrinal details regarding the role of the devil, along with a stark discrepancy in language, corroborates my previous findings on the relationship between the Qur'ān and the *Clementine Homilies*.<sup>139</sup> The former shares a “legal culture” with the latter, but the relationship between the two text is a triangular one in which both illuminate part of a broader discourse (without indicating any form of literary dependence).<sup>140</sup> It seems again that part of the Qur'ān's Meccan audience is familiar with the shared discourse, while the surah introduces

<sup>131</sup> See e.g. Job, Zechariah 3:1-1, Matt. 4:1-11 and see the summary by Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 66-9.

<sup>132</sup> *Clementine Homilies* 8:21:1, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 129-30. The key passage is *Clementine Homilies* 8:19-21, but see also 7:3.

<sup>133</sup> *Clementine Homilies* 8:20:3, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 129.

<sup>134</sup> *Clementine Homilies* 8:19:3, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 129.

<sup>135</sup> *Clementine Homilies* 8:21:5, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 130.

<sup>136</sup> *Clementine Homilies* 8:21:1, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 130.

<sup>137</sup> *Clementine Homilies* 8:21:2, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 130.

<sup>138</sup> *Clementine Homilies* 8:19:3, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 129.

<sup>139</sup> See Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture*, 111-25; the devil of course persuades Eve to eat of the tree already in the Bible, see Gen. 2:1-5 and is depicted thus in the *Cave of Treasures* 4:13-14, see Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 32-4. For a good summary of Christian views of the Devil and the demons, especially in Lactantius, see e.g. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 80-185 and note 114 above.

<sup>140</sup> See Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture*, esp. 32-41.

others to it. At the same time, we see that the privileged relationship of the Qur'ān to witnesses such as the *Cave of Treasures* and of the *Clementine Homilies*, despite their prominence in our endeavour, is never an exclusive one.<sup>141</sup>

The Qur'ān thus shares the Syriac tradition of the angels prostrating before Adam, and retells it in order to drive home the point already made in *Sūrat al-Kahf*, that only worship of God alone will ensure one against Satan's slings. Part of the implied audience is thus keenly aware, and even attracted to Christian doctrines. We should be careful, however, to jump from what we can state about the implied audience to the historical one. It seems clear from our close hearing that the Meccan Qur'ān addresses those exposed to Christian ideas alongside other monotheists who may have had a high regard for angels – but this we knew all along.<sup>142</sup> What a careful reconstruction of the Qur'ān's implied audience allows for is a better understanding of which Christian narratives were known to part of the audience, and how exactly it seeks to persuade these people of its own point of view. We are not yet in a position, however, to identify the various parts of the nascent Islamic community in “Mecca” in confessional terms. What is striking is that the Meccan Qur'ān, while employing rabbinic teachings in other instances, does not engage in anti-rabbinic polemics in the same way as it engages in anti-Christological discourse – a picture drastically different from the well-known one that emerges in Medina, which will be corroborated below.<sup>143</sup>

Since we cannot here examine the remaining four Meccan versions of the story of Adam and Iblis, in Q 38:71-85, Q 15:26-48 and Q 7:11-18 in full detail, a few comments regarding their close and apparent relationship to the *Cave of Treasures*, and again to the *Clementine Homilies*, must suffice. The two versions of the story preserved in Q 38 and Q 15, to begin with, are closely related to each other, and they share a number of details known from the *Cave of Treasures* that are exclusive to them alone. Q 15:42, for example, emphasizes, like Q 17:65, that “Indeed as for My servants (*ibādī*), you (i.e. Iblīs) do not have any authority (*sulṭānun*) over them, except the sinners (*al-ḡāwīna*) who follow you,” in line with the

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<sup>141</sup> The theme of “respite” granted to Satan in Q 15:63 and in Q 17:62, for example, has great affinity with Jubilees 10:7-8, where we learn that a tenth of the demons is allowed to remain on the earth in order to tempt humans with their voice, as Tomasso Tesei argues in *idem*, “The Fall of Iblīs and its Enochic Background,” in A. Houtman et al. (eds.), *Stories and Traditions in Transformation* (Leiden: Brill), forthcoming.

<sup>142</sup> See notes 63 and 109 above.

<sup>143</sup> See notes 3 and 4 above.

teaching in the *Clementine Homilies* we saw above, and again using the same lexemes whose cognates feature centrally in the *Cave of Treasures*. Yet both Q 38:83 and Q 15:40 then go a bit further than Q 17 and congruently emphasize that “only Your exclusive servants among them” (‘illā ‘ibādaka minhumu l-muḥlašīna) are actually safe. The term *al-muḥlašīn* highlights in turn the high bar that needs to be passed in order to gain God’s protection – and thereby displaying an even closer relationship to the emphatic language used to describe the necessity to “to serve Him alone” (τὸ μόνον αὐτὸν σέβειν) in the *Clementine Homilies*.<sup>144</sup>

The versions of Q 38 and Q 15 furthermore introduce the audience to a number of further post-biblical details about the narrative about Adam and the angels equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*. The rebelling angels’ complaint that Adam is only made from “dust” (‘pr) in the *Cave of Treasures*, namely, is paralleled by his emphasis that he in turn is made “of fire” (nwrn).<sup>145</sup> While we saw above the Q 17:61 already focused on the former part of the complaint, namely Adam’s nature of clay, Q 38:76 provides the missing latter part (using a cognate lexeme), and explicitly has Iblis juxtapose his own creation “from fire” (min nārin) with that of Adam “from clay” (min ḫīnin). This juxtaposition will be equally preserved in Q 7:12, yet it is expanded even further in Q 15:33, which introduces the double-barrelled specification of the substance out of which Adam is created, namely as “dry clay from an aging mud” (min ṣalṣālin min ḥama in masnūnin, see already Q 15:26 and 28). The specification is lexically distinct yet structurally and semantically parallel to the similar specification of Adam’s substance as “dust (‘pr) . . . , that has been made of fine dust (dhyḥ)” in *Cave of Treasures* 3:2, as well as to the expression “dust from the earth” (‘pr mn h’dmh) in Genesis 2:7. In such instances, we cannot decide whether the Biblical text would continue to play a role in unmediated ways, as is often the case in Qur’ānic law.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>144</sup> See Clementine Homilies 7:8:1, Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I*, 120, see also note 135 above and Zellentin, *The Qur’ān’s Legal Culture*, 94-5. Note that the Arabic root ḥlṣ describes a broader deictic field than the Greek verse here, implying “exclusivity” along with “sincerity” and “purity,” see e.g. Q 38:46 and Q 39:3 and 14.

<sup>145</sup> 3:1-7, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 20-22.

<sup>146</sup> See Zellentin, *The Qur’ān’s Legal Culture*, e.g. 55-76. Note that Q 38:72 and Q 15:29 are the only passages that indicate that God states about Adam that He “will breathe into him my spirit (wa-nafaḥtu fthi min rūḥī),” evoking the Biblical expression that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (wyph b’pyw nšmt ḥyym, note the cognate Arabic and Hebrew roots nṣḥ and nḫ) we have seen in Genesis 2:7, introducing a Biblical detail not known from the *Cave of Treasures*. The issue of God breathing life into Adam is of course central in other

Again another aspect shared by the Qur'ān and the two surahs Q 38 and Q 15 is easier to miss yet consequential in its evidence. It concerns the precise sequence of events of Adam's creation. Whereas God commands the angels to prostrate before Adam *after* his creation in Q 7, in Q 17, and in Q 18, both Q 15:28 and Q 38:71 additionally have God *announce* his action with the words "when your Lord said to the angels (*'id qāla rabbuka li-l-malā'ikati*), followed by *hāliq*, a participle describing the impending creation.<sup>147</sup> The story in these two surahs now also includes additional information what happened *before* Adam's creation, not mentioned either in Q 7, Q 17, or in Q 18: namely that God vocally *announces* His creative action to the angels, apparently simultaneously carrying it out. This sequence is thus even more in line with the way in which the key phrase of the Biblical narrative (see Gen. 1:26, where no angels appear) is dramatized by the *Cave of Treasures*.<sup>148</sup> God's announcement to the angels, of course, had already drawn the attention of the rabbis who, as we have seen, also stage a dialogue between God and the angels at this point.<sup>149</sup> Whereas the Christian text noted the angels' excitement upon hearing the news, the rabbis' highlighted their initial resistance (in a way that in turn is emphasized in the Medinan retelling of the story, as we will see below).

The passages in Q 38 and Q 15 each introduce to the audience one detail known from the Syriac texts exclusively, without sharing it with any other Meccan version or with each other. The *Cave of Treasures* in some detail relates that God formed Adam with his hand, referred to initially in the singular as His "right" hand and then as "His holy hands" (*b'ydwh' qdyšt'*) with which He creates.<sup>150</sup> Q 38:75 is the only text that makes use of this anthropomorphism when God demands what keeps Iblis from "prostrating before that which I have created with My two hands (*bi-yadayya*)?" While the image of God's hand is pervasive in both the Meccan and the Medinan Qur'ān, there is, to the best of my knowledge, only one other surah that relates His creative act to the use of "hands," namely the Meccan surah Q 36:71.<sup>151</sup> Inversely, while Iblis refers to his creation out of fire in his complaint to God in various passages (i.e. Q

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Christian and Jewish interpretations, see e.g. *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:8, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 106.

<sup>147</sup> Also note that both surahs employ the participle *'id*, "when," which introduces a Scriptural narrative, see note 125 above.

<sup>148</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 2:1-6, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 12-14.

<sup>149</sup> 8:5 Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 60.

<sup>150</sup> 2:6-21, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 14-18.

<sup>151</sup> For the broader image see e.g. Q 3:73, Q 48:10 and Q 57:29, cf. also Q 51:47.

38:76, Q 7:12, and again in Q 15:33), only Q 15:27 opens the narrative with a general explanatory statement that the jinn were created “before” (*min qablu*) Adam, namely “out of a piercing fire,” (*min nāri l-samūmi*), very much in line with the sequence and the nature of the spirits in the *Cave of Treasures*.<sup>152</sup> A structurally parallel phrase, in turn, appears in the Medinan passage Q 55:14-15, where Adam’s creation is equally opposed to that of the jinn “out of a flame of fire” (*min māriġin min nārin*). Both Q 38 and Q 15 thus share *individual* elements with other Qur’ānic passages. The scarcity of evidence, however, does not allow us to establish a relative chronology between these two surahs and Q 17 – *Sūrat al-’A’rāf* and *Sūrat Tā-hā*, by contrast, have the strongest affinity to Medinan material and should therefore be placed, along with Q 18, latest among the Meccan surahs.

*Sūrat al-’A’rāf* – placed very early among the passages under consideration in the traditional chronology and as the last version by Neuwirth, who considers much of it of Medinan origin – offers several details from the *Cave of Treasures* that it does not share with any of the Meccan, but with only one Meccan (Q 20) and one Medinan parallel (Q 2). It is the version that has the closest affinities with the Syriac text, some of which, crucially, divert from the Biblical narrative, allowing us to determine discursive overlap with even greater clarity.

- Q 7:13 indicates the downward movement of Satan after his rebellion: God’s utterance to him to “get down from it” (*fa-hbiṭ minhā*) evokes the high location of Paradise in the *Cave of Treasures* and the fact that Satan and his host here fell (*nplw*) from it.<sup>153</sup> The usage of the imagery of the fall in Q 7, expressed with the verb *habaṭā*, as well as the evocation of paradise in this context is paralleled once in the Meccan surah Q 20:123 and once in the Medinan version of the narrative of Adam and the angels in Q 2:36 and 38.

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<sup>152</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 1:1 and 2:3, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 2 and 12, see also note 62 above.

<sup>153</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 3:8-11 and 15, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 20-24 and 24. Note that the Qur’ān, in Q 7:19, after introducing Adam and Eve, immediately indicates that they are not to eat of the tree. Both Genesis 2:16-17 and the *Cave of Treasures* 3:9 (Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 24) thus have God address the prohibition only to Adam, but not to Eve, an imbalance the Qur’ān rectifies.



- Likewise, Q 7:19 then relates that Adam and Eve were placed in paradise, followed by the immediate prohibition of the tree, a sequence of events following the *Cave of Treasures* and, again, the Bible to a degree – yet, crucially, diverting from the latter and siding with the former. For in the Syriac narrative, we only find one tree, the tree of life (‘yln’ dhy’) known from Genesis 2:9 and 3:22, whereas the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, known from Genesis 2:9 and 3:5, does not appear. Eve and Adam, in the Bible, eat from the tree of knowledge, and are banished from paradise lest they also eat from the tree of life. In the *Cave of Treasures*, the tree of knowledge does not appear, and Adam and Eve eat from the tree of life. It is to this tree alone that *Sūrat al-’A’rāf* refers as the tree ensures that one would become “like the angels” (*malakaini*) namely, “from the immortal ones” (*mina l-ḥālīdīna*), a term we will also encounter in Q 20:120.<sup>154</sup> It is, of course, Satan who makes this promise here, who in 7:20 is described as having “whispered” (*fa-waswasa*) to Adam and Eve, using a rare verb (that will equally be used in Q 20:120).
- The surah, in Q 7:27, specifies that the expulsion of Adam and Eve led to their “stripping them of their garments to expose their nakedness” (*yanzi’u ‘anhumā libāsumā li-yuriyahumā sau’ātihimā*). Already in paradise yet before the fall, in other words, Adam and Eve were clothed according to the Qur’ān, and the eating of the fruit showed them their *sau’ah*, using a term that can denote “nakedness,” “shame,” as well as, most often, an “evil deed” or, in the Medinan Qur’ān, even a “corpse.”<sup>155</sup> Likewise, in the *Cave of Treasures*, Adam and Eve were initially “clothed in clothing of splendour and glory” (*lbyšyn lbwš’ wmprgyn btšbwḥt*), twice using a lexeme cognate to the (relatively rare) Arabic *libās* “garments,” which we find found in Q 7:27.<sup>156</sup>
- When Eve and Adam eat of the tree, they are both stripped naked (‘tprsy/w’ tprsy), and Eve perceives the “ugliness of her nakedness”

<sup>154</sup> 4.2, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 28. Note that another tree, “accursed tree,” appears in Q 17:60, just before the story of Adam.

<sup>155</sup> See e.g. Q 21:77, Q 5:31, and Q 20:121.

<sup>156</sup> 3:14, Su-Min Ri 24, *La Caverne des trésors*. On the role of the garments see also Klar, “Through the Lens of the Adam Narrative,” and her discussion of F. V. Greifenhagen, “The *qamīš* in *Sūrat Yūsuf*: A Prolegomenon to the Material Culture of Garments in the Formative Islamic Period,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 11 (2009): 72-92.

(*škyrwt pwršyh*).<sup>157</sup> The Syriac lexeme *prs*, just like the distinct Arabic term *sau'ah*, can equally denote “nakedness” and “shame.” In the Bible, by contrast, according to Genesis 2:25, Adam and Eve are “naked” in paradise, and did not “feel shame,” another point in which the Qur’ān and the *Cave of Treasures* jointly diverge from the Hebrew Bible (in a way that Q 20:118 will amplify).

- After the fall, in Q 7:23, Adam begs God to “have mercy on us” (*tarḥamnā*), using the same lexeme describing God’s statement to Adam “how much I loved you” (*rḥmtk*) in the *Cave of Treasures*, using a cognate (common) lexeme.<sup>158</sup> (The theme will equally appear, in an amplified form, in the Medinan passage, Q 2:37).
- When God announces his punishment to Adam, in Q 7:24, He decrees that “on the earth shall be an abode and a sustenance” (*fi l-’arḍi mustaqarrun wa-matā’un*). The Qur’ān here introduces the concept of “abode,” which has great affinity with the “foreign abode on the earth” (*’ksny’ b’r’*) in which Adam must dwell in the *Cave of Treasures*, but not in the Bible.<sup>159</sup> The connotation of the Arabic term *mustaqarr* is far more positive than the Syriac *’ksny’*, which connotes exile, showing again that the Qur’ān’s corrective retellings consistently reflect its rejection of strict asceticism.<sup>160</sup> (The entire phase Q 7:24, once again, is recast in the Medinan passage Q 2:36, using the same Arabic phrase).
- More specifically, in Q 7:24, Adam’s sojourn is specified as being fixed “for a time” (*ilā hīnin*), equally recorded in Q 2:36, just as it is limited until “the accomplishment of a period, which I have fixed for you” (*btr mwly’ dzbn’ hlyn dpsqt ’lykwn*) in the Syriac text.<sup>161</sup> No such limitation, of course, occurs in the Bible – yet the surah

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<sup>157</sup> 4:15-16, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 34, see also 5:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 36.

<sup>158</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 5.2, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 36.

<sup>159</sup> God, of course, also sends Adam to gain “sustenance” from the earth in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 3:17-9), offering another instance of affinity between the two Scriptural texts not shared by the Syriac retelling – even if the connotation of the Arabic term *matā’* is a pleasant one, in contrast to Adam’s toil in the Bible. In the Bible, however, the earth is not called an “abode,” and it is here described with the term *h’dm’*, whereas both the *Cave of Treasures* and the Qur’ān here use the related lexemes *’ardl’r’*, in line with the Aramaic versions of the Bible (which equally have *’r’*).

<sup>160</sup> 5:7, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 38. Note that the term *’ksny’*, denoting “a guest-house” or a “foreign country,” can also denote “exile,” a term for which the spelling *’kswny’* is more common, see Sokoloff, *A Syriac Dictionary* 44-5.

<sup>161</sup> 5:7, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 38.

then recasts the fact that Adam is to live and die on the earth (according to Genesis 3:19), adding the eschatological coda that he shall be resurrected.

The Qur'ān here relates the story of Adam and the angels in a way that introduces many of the details known from the *Cave of Treasures*. Most of these shared elements do not show many signs of corrections of the latter by the former, which makes it likely that they are here introduced to a Meccan audience unfamiliar with them. At the same time, we should note that the highlight of the Syriac passage with which the Qur'ān stands in such intimate dialogue is God's promise that He will send his son to redeem Adam. The Qur'ānic silence here may well be a corrective one, yet only in the Medinan retelling of the story will this come closer to the textual surface. The strong affinity between Q 7 and the Medinan versions, in the meantime, make it very likely that Q 7, along with Q 18, may well be among the last of the Meccan versions of the story.

Before turning to the Medinan Qur'ān, we will briefly consider the evidence of one further Meccan passages, namely *Sūrat Ṭā-hā*. While we cannot be certain about the chronological relationship between *Sūrat al-'A'rāf* and *Sūrat Ṭā-hā* (the latter may contain as much Medina material as the former), their affinity is self-evident, and the latter one develops several of the themes already shared between the former one and the *Cave of Treasures* in ever finer nuance:

- Q 20:116 When We said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam,' they prostrated, but not Iblis: he refused.
- Q 20:117 We said, 'O Adam! This is indeed an enemy of yours and your mate's. So do not let him expel you from paradise, or you will be miserable (*fa-taṣqā*).
- Q 20:118 Indeed you will neither be hungry in it nor naked (*wa-lā ta 'rā*).
- Q 20:119 Indeed you will neither be thirsty in it, nor suffer from the sun.'
- Q 20:120 Then Satan whispered (*fā-waswasa*) to him.  
He said, "O Adam! Shall I show you the tree of immortality (*'alā ṣağarati al-ḥuldi*), and an imperishable kingdom (*wa-mulkin lā yablā*)?"
- Q 20:121 So they both ate of it,  
and their nakedness (*sau'ātuhumā*) became evident to them,  
and they began to stitch over themselves with the leaves of paradise.  
Adam disobeyed his Lord, and went amiss.
- Q 20:122 Then his Lord chose him (*ğtabāhu*), and turned to him clemently (*fa-tāba 'alaihi*), and guided him (*wa-hadā*).
- Q 20:123 He said, 'Get down from it (*hbiṭā minhā*) both of you, all together, being enemies of one another!  
Yet, should any guidance (*hudan*) come to you from Me,  
those who follow My guidance (*hudāya*) will not go astray,

nor will they be miserable (*wa-lā yašqā*).

The short passage shows how closely this surah is related to *Sūrat al-ʿA rāf* (we will also see the recurrence of many of its motifs in the Medinan *Sūrat al-Baqarah*). Many of the elements shared with the *Cave of Treasures* by Q 7, and using the same Arabic lexemes, Q 20 reiterates: Adam and Satan are ordered to “descend” from paradise, the “tree” is now directly depicted as bestowing “immortality,” Satan again “whispers,” and the “nakedness” of Adam and Eve becomes evident to them after consuming the fruit (see Q 7:17, 19, 20 and 24). The surah, in Q 20:118, also explicitly states what Q 7 had already indicated: just as in the *Cave of Treasures*, Adam and Eve would “not be naked” (*lā ta ʿrā*) in paradise before the fall, now directly contradicting Genesis 2:25 all the while introducing an Arabic lexeme – in its sense here as a hapax – cognate to the Hebrew term *ʿrwm* employed there.<sup>162</sup>

Building on what at least part of its audience has heard before – either in a previous Qurʾānic iteration or in a tradition such as that preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* – the text integrates the core narrative of Adam and the angels in a framework constructed by the repetition of the notion that Adam, once expelled, would be “miserable,” twice using the root *šqw*: first in the warning in Q 20:117, and then again in the promise that he will eschew this fate, in *ibid.* verse 123. This narrative frame simultaneously emphasizes what is necessary in order to gain God’s forgiveness, namely following his “guidance” (*huda*), a term emphasized by its repetition in verse 123.

While it seems clear that part of the audience is by now familiar with many aspects of the Meccan versions of the story of Adam and the angels, we should note that this surah, in its emphasis on Adam’s misery, introduces a theme equally repeated in the *Cave of Treasures*: just as God, in the Qurʾān, promises to Adam that he will not be miserable (Q 20:123), God consoles Adam, who is “in misery” (*bkrywt*) by stating that he ought not to be “miserable” (*lʿ tkrʿ lk*) in the Syriac text.<sup>163</sup> While no cognate root is used in the Qurʾān, we can nevertheless understand the surah as a corrective retelling. Given the affinity of both Q 7 and Q 20 with the *Cave of Treasures*, we should note that the very reason for Adam not to be

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<sup>162</sup> On the clothing of Adam and Eve see *Cave of Treasures* e.g. 3:14, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 24; the couple is stripped naked only after eating the fruit, see 4:15-16, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 34, see also 5:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 36.

<sup>163</sup> 5:2-3 and 6, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 36-8. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Dictionary* 652, translates *krywt* as “grief” and “sickness.”

miserable is that, after the “fulfilment of time” mentioned above, God will send his son, who will bring salvation.<sup>164</sup> In the Qur’ān, by contrast, God sends his salvific guidance right away, again dispensing with the need for the crucifixion.<sup>165</sup> In order fully to comprehend the Qur’ān, it seems necessary to hear its silences as well as its locutions, and it is texts such as the *Cave of Treasures* that allow us for a glimpse into the ways in which the Qur’ān employs the expectations of its audience, redirecting them doctrinally.

We have thus seen that the Meccan versions sequentially introduce a large number of details into their retellings of the story of Adam and the angels that are equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*. The analysis thus confirms that the Syriac narrative represents a privileged perspective on Christian narrative traditions which are shared with the Qur’ān – while many of the elements related also appear in other Jewish and Christian literature, the overlap is never as crisp and as clear as it is between the two main texts under consideration. If the scope of research is broadened to include the *Clementine Homilies* as well, one may even go as far as saying that, in the case of the narrative of Adam and the angels, almost the entirety of the Jewish and Christian tradition accepted or reflected by the Meccan Qur’ān could have been channelled by the tradition of which one form was preserved in the two Christian texts under consideration.<sup>166</sup> The Qur’ān thus presupposes some knowledge of *and* teaches the very same traditions equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*, allowing us a rare glimpse into the Meccan worldview.

The Adam narrative, in other words, is known in some form to part of the Meccan audience, on whose confirmation of the story as part of the Biblical tradition the Qur’ān relies. Yet the sequential introduction of ever more details in subsequent surahs, apart from illuminating parts of the story that are important in the respective thematic contexts of the surahs in which they appear, also suggests that many in the audience would not have been expected to be sufficiently familiar even with the core narrative. No clear sequence of surahs, it is true, can be established based on their relative dating to each other, yet the materials can be placed in two groups. In Q 18, the audience is expected to be familiar with the materials, and a

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<sup>164</sup> 5:7-9, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 38.

<sup>165</sup> The text here clearly dislodges the typological framework of the *Cave of Treasures* described above. The issue needs further study; I am currently preparing a study of Qur’ānic reactions to Christian and rabbinic forms of typology.

<sup>166</sup> The Bible, of course, also plays a direct role for the Qur’ān’s form and content, the importance of specific traditions should not be seen exclusively; see notes 140 and 146 above.

very late dating seems likely. Q 7 and Q 20 seem closest to the Medinan materials, and should therefore also be placed late. Q 17, as well as Q 15 and Q 38, seem to belong to an earlier group.<sup>167</sup> While the method of a relative dating of Meccan surahs in their relationship to the Medinan material is not new, there is one fundamental quality of the texts' relative chronology that the detailed relationship of the *Cave of Treasures* and the Qur'ān can clarify. The near complete absence of rabbinic materials in these Meccan narratives, and their strong presence in *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, allows for a chronology of the Qur'ānic narratives of Adam and the angels relative to this late surah. Inversely, the quantity and clarity of elements known from the *Cave of Treasures* positively correlates with those elements in the Meccan passages that are shared with the Medinan passage, supporting a general model of a sequential introduction of these materials to the Qur'ānic audience, previously advocated by myself and many others.<sup>168</sup> Having illustrated that the Syriac tradition constitutes a key to understanding the Meccan Qur'ān's Adam's narratives, we can turn to the Medinan retellings of the story.

### Adam, the Angels and the Animals in the Medinan Qur'ān

While some of the previously discussed surahs may already contain some "Medinan" material, the Qur'ān's purely Medinan surahs only offer one single retelling of the story of Adam and the angels, in Q 2:28-39.<sup>169</sup> The Medinan Qur'ān, to reiterate, reflects a broadened audience. It addresses not only the Muslims and the *muṣṛikūn* directly, but also directly and explicitly names two marginal groups: the *munāfiqūn*, the "hypocrites" or insincere believers, and the two groups that constitute the sons of Israel in its present, the Jews and the Christians.<sup>170</sup> "Medina" was part of the same broader Syriac Christian culture that seems to have permeated "Mecca" and all of Arabia in various degrees of intensity, and the Medinan retelling

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<sup>167</sup> A sequence of two blocks, (Q 15 - Q 17 - Q 38) and (Q 7 - Q 18 - Q 20) (with no clear sequence of the surahs in parenthesis) is thus likely, confirming Neuwirth's much more detailed sequencing of Q 15, Q 38, Q 20, Q 17, Q 18, and Q 7, except for the stipulated lateness of Q 20, see note 124 above.

<sup>168</sup> See note 18 above.

<sup>169</sup> See note 105. On this narrative in Q 2 see most recently Klar, "Through the Lens of the Adam Narrative;" cf. Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 219-34. Note that Bodman, in his analysis, does not consult any rabbinic literature directly offering instead a single reference to Ginzburg's *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society 1909-38); see Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 226.

<sup>170</sup> See notes 2 and 5 above.

engages in a corrective retelling of further details equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*. Moreover, an emerging consensus in the field allows us to identify the Medinan Jews as largely belonging to the rabbinic movement; I have argued elsewhere that the Jews as reflected by the Qur'ān are predominantly influenced by the teachings of Palestinian rabbinic Judaism, and only the Medinan Jews show occasional affinity with Mesopotamian teachings (or “Babylonia,” in rabbinic parlance), as noted above.<sup>171</sup> The importance of the traditions preserved in the Palestinian Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* for the entire Qur'ān, we will see, can also be corroborated in the case of the narrative of Adam and the angels, which we will see, is a text of utmost importance the story's Medinan retellings.

The implied audience of the Medinan Qur'ān, in turn, reflects a more mature form of nascent Islam, which has already been thoroughly familiarized with the text's Meccan teachings. In its interpretation and elaboration of Meccan themes, however, the Medinan Qur'ān continues to summarize its key teachings, suggesting that it never fully relies on previous lessons – a fact carried over from its Meccan retellings.<sup>172</sup> This holds true for the Qur'ān's story of Adam and the Angels in Q 2 *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, which retells the story in a way that briefly recasts its core narrative along with several of the details we saw above. Yet the Qur'ān integrates these “Meccan” details into a way that now fully engages in a triological model. Namely, the Qur'ān perfects its anti-Christological pitch of the story by employing further key themes and lexemes equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* at the same time as presenting a corrective retelling of the interpretations we have seen in *Bereshit Rabbah*, again reflecting an oral mode of previous transmission of these narratives to its audience. The surah relates the following:

Q 2:28 How can you be unfaithful (pl., *takfurūna*) to God?

You were lifeless  
and He gave you life,  
then He will make you die,  
and then He shall bring you to life,  
and then you will be brought back to Him!

Q 2:29 It is He who created for you

all that is in the earth,  
then He turned to the heaven,  
and fashioned it into seven heavens,  
and He has knowledge (*alīmun*) of all things.

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<sup>171</sup> See Zellentin, “Qur'ānic Evidence for Rabbinic Judaism.”

<sup>172</sup> See page 69 above.

- Q 2:30 When your Lord said (*wa- 'id qāla rabbuka*) to the angels:  
 “Indeed I am going to set a viceroy (*halīfatan*) on the earth,”  
 they said, “Will You set in it someone who will cause corruption  
 (*yufsidu*) in it, and shed blood (*wa-yasfiku l-dimā 'a*),  
 while we glorify Your praise (*nusabbiḥu bi-ḥamdika*)  
 and sanctify you (*wa-nuqaddisu laka*)?”  
 He said, ‘Indeed I know what you do not know (*'innī 'a 'lamu mā lā ta 'lamūna*).’
- Q 2:31 And He taught Adam the names (*wa- 'allama 'ādama l- 'asmā 'a*), all of  
 them (f., *kullahā*);  
 then He presented them (m., *'araḍahum*) to the angels  
 and said, “Prophecy to me (*'anbi 'ūnī*) the names (*bi- 'asmā 'i*) of these  
 (m. or f., *hā 'ulā 'i*),  
 if you are truthful (*'in kuntum ṣādiqīna*).”
- Q 2:32 They said, “Glorified are You (*subḥānaka*)!  
 We have no knowledge (*lā 'ilma lanā*)  
 except what You have taught us (*'illā mā 'allamtanā*).  
 Indeed You are the Knowing (*al- 'alīmu*), the Wise (*al-ḥakīmu*).”
- Q 2:33 He said, “O Adam,  
 Prophecy to them their names (*'anbi 'hum bi- 'asmā 'ihim*),”  
 and when he had prophesied their names to them (*'anba 'ahum bi- 'asmā 'ihim*),  
 He said, “Did I not tell you  
 that I indeed know (*'a 'lamu*) the Unseen in the heavens and the earth,  
 and that I know (*wa- 'a 'lamu*) whatever you disclose  
 and whatever you were concealing?”
- Q 2:34 And when We said (*wa- 'id qulnā*) to the angels,  
 “Prostrate (*sḡudū*) before Adam,”  
 they prostrated (*fa-saḡadū*), but not Iblis:  
 he refused and acted arrogantly,  
 and he was one of the faithless (*wa-kāna mina l-kāfirīna*).
- Q 2:35 We said, “O Adam,  
 dwell with your mate in the garden (*al-ḡannata*),  
 and eat thereof freely when you wish;  
 but do not approach this tree,  
 lest you should be among the wrongdoers.”
- Q 2:36 Then Satan (*al-ṣaiḡānu*) caused them to stumble from it,  
 and he dislodged them from what they were in;  
 and We said, “Get down (*hbīṡū*), being enemies of one another!  
 On the earth shall be your abode and sustenance for a time.”
- Q 2:37 Then Adam received certain words from his Lord (*min rabbiḥī kalimātin*),  
 and He returned to him (clemently, *fa-tāba 'alaihi*).  
 Indeed He is the One who Returns (clemently), the Merciful (*huwa t-tawwābu l-raḥīmu*).



- Q 2:38 We said, “Get down from it (*hbiṭū*), all together!  
 Yet, should any guidance (*hudan*) come to you from Me,  
 those who follow My guidance (*tabi’ a hudāya*)  
 shall have no fear (*fa-lā ḥaufun ‘alaihim*),  
 nor shall they grieve (*wa-lā hum yahzanūna*).
- Q 2:39 But those who are faithless (*kafarū*) and deny Our signs,  
 they shall be the inmates of the Fire  
 and they shall remain in it.”

*Sūrat al-Baqarah* retells the Meccan story in close dialogue with the Christian and the rabbinic tradition. Yet the Qur’ān here also presents its own doctrinal views in a more fully self-referential way than the Meccan versions of the story did – as one would expect from a text that can rely on a larger corpus known to its implied audience and on its growing sense of canonicity. The key theme in which it embeds this particular retelling is that of unfaithfulness, expressed with the root *kfr* in its opening line Q 2:28, in its closing line Q 2:39, and in its narrative centre, in which Iblis is called faithless in Q 2:34; the repetition creates a frame structure that emphasizes its centre.<sup>173</sup> In a simplistic way, one can summarize the passage’s message to an uninitiated audience to be that the rejection of God’s signs amounts to the same type of faithlessness of which Iblis himself was guilty. Yet at least part of the Medinan audience is a more Biblically informed one than that of Mecca, as can be seen by a number of factors.

The Medinan text only briefly restates a broad number of key themes it had developed in the Meccan corrective retellings of the Christian story equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* – prominently, but not exclusively, those we saw in Q 7 and Q 20.<sup>174</sup> The story itself is, in Q 2:30

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<sup>173</sup> See note 33 above.

<sup>174</sup> In the Medinan Qur’ān, it is of course impossible, and perhaps superfluous to decide whether the audience had been familiarized through the Meccan narratives or the Syriac tradition. In detail, in Q 2, the Qur’ān relates Iblis’ refusal to prostrate as briefly as only Q 18 did, among the previous versions, twice using the key theme of “prostration” (*sġd*, in Q 2:34), equally found in all Meccan surahs. Just as Q 18, Q 2 does not indicate Iblis’ reason for his refusal, the audience, by now, is expected to know the story – Q 2:34 here merely restates the reason given already in Q 38:74, that Iblis’ was arrogant, using the same Arabic phrase. The audience then is reminded of Adam’s short sojourn in paradise, and of the tree (yet not of its promise for eternal life we saw in Q 7:19 and Q 20:120). Equally, we learn of the “descent” thereafter, emphasizing the themes that were central in Q 7 and Q 20, twice (in Q 2:36 and 38) using the same Arabic root *hbt* employed there. Likewise, the surah, in Q 2:36, repeats the phrase about Adam’s dwelling on earth for a specific time we had encountered in Q 7:24 rather verbatim, as well as, in verse Q

and 34, twice introduced with the conjunctive statement “when,” *’id*, again indicating a scriptural narrative.<sup>175</sup> The text here uses both forms of the introductory clause we have seen throughout the Meccan surahs: first, in Q 2:30, it relates God’s announcement to create Adam with the expression “when your Lord said to the angels,” as in Q 15:28 and Q 38:71, and then, in Q 2:34, relates God’s command to the angels to prostrate with the expression “when We said to the angels,” as in Q 17:61 and Q 18:50. The Medinan story thus incorporates, and presupposes the entirety of Meccan versions as known to parts of its audience.

At the same time, the Medinan Qur’ān effectively reiterates and refines Adam’s subservient status to God in the way in which it portrays God as expressing His mercy to Adam. The text here may continue its Meccan correction implicitly to dismiss the Christological typology found in the *Cave of Treasures*. We already mentioned the affinity of the theme of Adam’s request for God’s mercy in Q 7:23, which corresponds to the statement that God “had mercy” in the *Cave of Treasures*, both times expressed by the prominent cognate lexeme *rḥmn*, and the differently phrased emphasis on God’s mercy in Q 20:122-23.<sup>176</sup> When the Medinan Qur’ān, in Q 2:37, again emphasizes God’s mercy it uses the same terms as found in Q 20 and refers to God with His common name *al-rahīm*. It thereby focuses on God’s mercy for Adam in a way that may make a more specific reference to the one theme *left out* by the Arabic text, and central to the Syriac one, namely Christ.

In Q 2:37, we learn that “Adam received certain words from his Lord” (*min rabbihī kalimātin*). It is tempting to understand the expression of God’s “word” given to Adam in Q 2:37 as evoking the similar epithet of God’s “word” applied to Jesus in Q 3:39 and 45 and Q 4:171, where the same Arabic term *kalimah* is equally used (see also Q 19:34). The term *kalimah*, however, occurs dozens of times in the Qur’ān, and one must of course be careful not to read Jesus *into* the Muslim Scripture at gratuitous moments. I would, however, suggest countenancing that the Medinan Qur’ān may well seek to read Christ *out* of the minds of its audiences at this point.

My argument for this is based on the prominence of the narrative as preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* for the audience of the Qur’ān as

2:38, the promise that God will give Adam “guidance,” using the same concept and term we had already seen in Q 20:123. The promise that Adam will not be “miserable,” one of the key themes in Q 20:117 and 123, is recast with different lexemes when Q 2:38 states that Adam will have no fear, nor grieve.

<sup>175</sup> See note 125 above.

<sup>176</sup> See page 112 above.

illustrate up to this point. A key scene known from this narrative, which occurs exactly at the same corresponding moment in the narrative of Adam's fall, emphasizes that "God spoke with Adam, and said" (*mll ...w'mr lh*).<sup>177</sup> God, of course, already speaks with Adam in the Hebrew Bible (in Gen. 3:17, where the Hebrew lexeme *'mr* is used). When the Qur'ān uses the word *kalimah* at the same time as emphasizing God's address to Adam, it may evoke in its audience the memory of what follows in the Syriac narrative only to substitute it: after the appointed time, the Son is crucified in the *Cave of Treasures*,<sup>178</sup> whereas in the Qur'ān, Adam and his children, equally placed on earth for a certain time, can always already follow God's guidance.

While such an argument from silence cannot be verified, we should still consider the possible effect the silence would have on the "Christian" part of the audience. For anyone in the Qur'ān's audience familiar with the Syriac narrative in whatever form, God's word would substitute *huda*, "guidance" (Q 2:38), for the coming of Christ they would expect. *Sūrat al-Baqarah* may very well seek to dislodge much of the Christian teaching about Adam that forms the narrative frame of the *Cave of Treasures*. As we have seen, it is not only that Christ is announced to Adam at this point in the Syriac narrative; Adam here also functions as type of the Christ whose crucifixion takes sin away from the world. In the Medinan Qur'ān, by contrast, the crucifixion is entirely dispensed with (see Q 4:157), and if God now immediately forgives Adam, as he does in *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, then Christ's salvific role – according to the Christian tradition – is also islamicized. This is true whether *kalimah* here evokes Christ or not, yet what would change if it did would be that the Medinan Qur'ān would not entirely dismiss typology altogether: by giving God's word to Adam in a form that may well evoke the epithet used for its Messiah, the Medinan Qur'ān may well corroborate its teaching in Q 3:59 that highlights the affinity of Jesus and Adam: as it emphasizes there, only these two figures were *directly* created by God's speech; when Adam now receives God's word as part of His clemency, then the Qur'ān may well prepare the coming of Jesus through an Islamic typology. The matter, however, does need further consideration.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 5:2, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 36, see note 66 above.

<sup>178</sup> See *Cave of Treasures* 5:9, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 38.

<sup>179</sup> A number of relevant studies has been presented at the workshop titled *Typology – Strategies of Reenactment and Fulfillment in the Milieu of the Qur'an and its Exegesis*, held at the Free University Berlin on July 15, 2015.

The Medinan version of the story of Adam and the Angels thus uses a variety of Meccan elements and calibrates the Qur'ān's corrective Christology even more finely for those in its audience who are familiar with the Syriac tradition, and it continues to introduce elements equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures*. The Medinan Qur'ān, in other words, continues to address this part of its audience in the way the Christian tradition expresses itself, yet it transfers the object of veneration. The Medinan passage emphasizes that the angels proclaim the “glory” of God (Q 2:32) and declare his “holiness” (Q 2:30), just as the angels repeatedly proclaim the “glory” and “holiness” of Adam in the *Cave of Treasures*; both texts here employ the cognate lexemes *sbh/šbh* and *qds/qdš* that resonates throughout both texts, and of course throughout Syriac literature, as a whole – there in the praise of Christ, here in the praise of God alone.<sup>180</sup> By transferring the “glory” and “holiness” from Christ to God in the context of its corrective retelling of a shared story, the Medinan Qur'ān, here and in parallel verses about Jesus and God's “glory” (see Q 4:171 and Q 5:116) completes the message of the Meccan one.

In transferring the subject of divine glory and especially of holiness, the angels in the Medinan Qur'ān, of course, effectively concur with the tradition in *Bereshit Rabbah*, which equally calls for the same transfer – there, the angels had erroneously applied the same term depicting “holiness” to Adam and were corrected in a way that may help us understand the Medinan Qur'ān.<sup>181</sup> Yet before assessing in how far the Qur'ān expects at least part of its audience to be familiar enough with this tradition in order to appreciate the correction of the angel's “Christian” error, we first need to assess the Medinan passage's wider message, and its relationship with other rabbinic traditions about Adam and the angels. At the same time as reiterating, to a Biblically more sophisticated audience, what it already related to its Meccan audience, the Medinan Qur'ān, namely, introduces an aspect of the story that has not at all occurred in its previous versions, and that is the theme of *ilm*, of divine knowledge and teaching. Appearing nine times in the short narrative (once in Q 2 verses 29, and 31, twice in verses 30 and 33, and three times in verse 32), this narrative, whose frame emphasizes the unfaithfulness of Iblis and of those rejecting God's signs, also highlights the divine knowledge that God chooses to impart on Adam. The angels, by contrast, are lacking this knowledge, as epitomized in their ignorance of “the names of all things” –

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<sup>180</sup> See e.g. *Cave of Treasures* 3:8-11, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 22-24.

<sup>181</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:10, Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 63-64.

the key theme not of the Christian, but of the rabbinic version of the story of Adam and the angels, as Nicolai Sinai has briefly noted.<sup>182</sup>

In its story of the naming, the Medinan Qur'ān states that God “taught Adam the names (*wa-‘allama ‘ādama l-‘asmā’ a*), all of them (f., *kullahā*); then he presented them (*‘araḍahum*) to the angels” (Q 2:31). This verse expands the Biblical narrative, in which Adam simply names the animals (Gen. 2:20). The Qur'ān here expands not only the Biblical narrative, in which God brings the animals to Adam, but also the rabbinic one, in which God first brings the animals to the angels.<sup>183</sup> In the Qur'ān, however, it seems that the naming involves more than just the animals: while it is not clear what the referent or the plural (masculine) plural suffix in *‘araḍahum*, “he presented them,” designates, we can deduce the identity of what is being presented by tracing the Qur'ān’s surprisingly specific use of the term *kullahā*, “all of them.”<sup>184</sup> In two of the three instances in which the term is used elsewhere in the Qur'ān, it describes the “pairs” of things God has created, such as plants, animals, or boats.<sup>185</sup> The term employed in Q 2:38 to describe God’s action, *‘araḍa* is, in turn, used in the neutral sense of “presenting” something only in two contexts elsewhere in the Qur'ān. Either it can describe an eschatological presentation, which is not relevant for our passage, or it can describe the way in which animals are presented to a human being.<sup>186</sup> An audience familiar with the Qur'ān’s usage of language, hence, would have most likely understood the verse as a reference to God presenting mainly the pairs of animals to the angels and

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<sup>182</sup> See Nicolai Sinai, *Die Heilige Schrift des Islams: Die wichtigsten Fakten zum Koran* (Freiburg: Herder, 2012), 76-78.

<sup>183</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:4 Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 155-6, see also *Cave of Treasures* 2:21, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 18 and note 97 above.

<sup>184</sup> The term *kullahā*, intriguingly, appears nearly at the same place in the narrative in which the *Cave of Treasures* presents God as making “everything” (*klhwn*) that has been made to worship Adam, just after the naming of the animals. 2:22-24, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 18-20.

<sup>185</sup> While the root *kl* is extremely common, the phrase *kullahā*, “all of them,” with an effectively self-referential female possessive pronoun, occurs only three more times in the Qur'ān; once in 20:56 to describe God’s signs, and twice in conjunction with *al-‘azwāġ*, the “pairs” (or “species”) God created, namely in Q 36:36 and Q 43:12. In both these cases, the compound term denotes specifically “all” that God has created, which is then in both passages specified as the “pairs.” (This corresponds to the teaching that God created everything “in pairs”, Q 51:49).

<sup>186</sup> The root *‘rḍ* describes the way in which humans are presented to God, or hell in turn to the unbelievers on judgment day, in Q 11:18, Q 18:48 and Q 69:18, and in Q 18:100. It describes the horses that are presented to David in Q 38:31.

to Adam, as He does in *Bereshit Rabbah*. Yet just as the Qur'ān here expands the item presented to Adam to include “everything,” so it seeks to expand and correct rabbinic doctrine.

The rabbinic story about the moment when God made the animals pass before Adam, of course, was itself already a corrective retelling of the Christian tradition, which is in turn retold in a corrective way in the Qur'ān – constituting yet another turn of the hermeneutical screw. The rabbinic story, we have seen, emphasizes that Adam's wisdom (*ḥkmh*) is greater than that of the angels. The term *Bereshit Rabbah* uses to designate Adam's wisdom, *ḥkmh*, equally evokes the preferred rabbinic self-designation of *ḥkmym*, “the sages” (of which the Medinan Qur'ān seems aware, as I have argued elsewhere).<sup>187</sup> In the Midrash, God asks the angels about the names of the animals, they do not know them, whereas Adam here excels in naming not only the animals, but also himself and even God – by His holiest name. The rabbinic Adam is thus a sage who dislodges the divine glory of the Christian Adam at the same time as participating linguistically in God's work. The Qur'ān, in turn, tells very much the same story as the rabbis did, yet it does so in order to indicate that neither the angels nor Adam have the *divine* knowledge, the *'ilm*, that would be necessary to name the animals, or anything. In clear contrast to the rabbinic text, God in the Qur'ān *teaches* the names to Adam before he then relates them to the angels, employing the very same root *'lm* that constitutes the passage's central lexeme.

We can thus see that the Qur'ān, in one instance, retells one of the rabbinic teachings preserved in *Bereshit Rabbah* in a corrective way, in turn employing part of the Christian tradition. Adam, in the rabbinic story, effectively becomes a proto-rabbi who, by his wisdom, participates in the linguistic aspects of the act of creation, just as the rabbis themselves participate in God's Torah by contributing the Oral to God's Written Torah.<sup>188</sup> In the Christian tradition, Adam serves as type of Christ, yet he is also a “priest, a king (*mlk'*), and prophet (*wnby'*).”<sup>189</sup> The Qur'ān, in its trialogue, combines aspects of both traditions: God teaches the names to Adam, and he then “prophesies” them to the ignorant angels, as he does in the rabbinic tradition. Yet the Qur'ān, by using the verb *naba'a* in Q 2:31

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<sup>187</sup> Zellentin, “*Aḥbār* and *Ruhbān*,” 267-8.

<sup>188</sup> See note 101 above.

<sup>189</sup> *Cave of Treasures* 4:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 28; Adam of course is central in many other Christian narratives that may have been known to the Qur'ān's audience, see e.g. Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, 52-53.

and 33 – a cognate to Syriac *nby* – concurs with part of the Christian tradition in addition to offering its corrections to it.<sup>190</sup>

This sort of triologue is not a singular occurrence in the Medinan passage. In its corrective retelling of the story of the way in which Adam names the newly created animals (or other created pairs), the Medinan Qur'ān effectively combines three rabbinic narratives that have been preserved separately in *Bereshit Rabbah*: the story of the angels' failure to name the animals, the story of the angels' opposition to Adam's creation, and the story of the angel's heretical error of mistaking Adam for a divinity. In the story about the angels' opposition, we had learned that when God was about to create Adam, the ministering angels argued with each other, some warning about the strife he would cause.<sup>191</sup> In the Medinan Qur'ān, the angels likewise warns that Adam will "cause corruption (*yufsidu*) ... , and shed blood (*wa-yasfiku l-dimā'a*)," opposing to this teaching their own qualities of "praising" God and "sanctifying" him. We had discussed the motif of the angels' heretical error first in the Jewish-Christian debate and then in the Qur'ān's corrective retelling of the *Cave of Treasures*.<sup>192</sup> Now, we can see that the Qur'ān engaged not in a dialogue but in a triologue: it effectively accepts the rabbinic criticism of the Christian angelology and their sanctification of Adam, and portrays the angels as sanctifying God, not Christ. The Qur'ān here has the angels use a lexeme of the (common) Arabic root *qds* to sanctify God, just as they used the cognate Aramaic and Syriac *qdš* in order to seek to sanctify Adam in the rabbinic text as well as in the Christian one. The angels both in *Bereshit Rabbah* and in the Qur'ān seek to prevent Adam's creation on the very same ground, yet the latter clears the angels from "the error" with which they were charged by the former: mistaking Adam for a divinity. This then prepares the Qur'ān's usage of the third rabbinic story, that of the naming of the animals, which it again relates in a corrective way.

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<sup>190</sup> Adam, of course, is never explicitly named a prophet in the Qur'ān, perhaps because he had sinned.

<sup>191</sup> *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:5 Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 60, see note 94 above.

<sup>192</sup> See pages 85-89 above; see also Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, 46-8; Reynolds quotes parallel to *Bereshit Rabbah* in the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 38b. See also the suggestion by John Reeves, who understands the motif of "strife" Adam will cause in the context of Gen. 6:11-13 (where the generation of the flood "corrupted the earth" and causes violence. Reeves seems unaware of the passage in *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:5 and states that the angel's response would not "specify any particular failings or crimes" on the part of Adam, see idem, "Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qur'ān," 53.

The combination of the three narratives in such an artful way leave open the possibility that the text here imparts on its audience aspects of the narrative equally preserved in the rabbinic tradition. Yet it seems just as likely that at least part of the audience was well acquainted with the rabbinic stories, and could appreciate the Qur'ān's rhetorical mastery inherent in combining several rabbinic stories for a very different message – whether or not they would have accepted its message, of course, is a different question altogether.<sup>193</sup>

While some of the linguistic and thematic overlaps between the Qur'ān and *Bereshit Rabbah* may well be the result of the natural affinities of two different Semitic languages and cultures, it seems highly unlikely that all of them are. We can thus be more confident that the Qur'ānic passage, when describing the angels as sanctifying God rather than Adam, expects part of its audience to understand that it does, indeed, agree with the rabbinic criticism of the respective tradition preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* that the angels would sanctify Adam, and that it shares the rabbinic tradition that God announced his plan to the angels, some of whom objected. In excising the angels' heretical error, the Qur'ān's corrective retelling engages in a challenging dialogue with both its Christian and its Jewish audience – at the same time as effectively eclipsing the memory of the late antique dialogue between these two traditions as laid out above.

This dialogue, then, also constitutes the context in which we should place the Medinan Qur'ān's most famous, and most marked innovation when compared with the Meccan stories about Adam and the angels: we had already learned in the Meccan Qur'ān that God informed the angels about Adam's impending creation (as in Q 15:28 and Q 38:71), yet in the Medinan retelling the text now names him a *ḥalīfah*, a much-discussed

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<sup>193</sup> In a most intriguing, yet possibly coincidental overlap the Qur'ān then seems to challenge one specific detail of the angel's description in the rabbinic story about the angels' opposition to Adam's creation. In the Midrash, some angels praised Adam's qualities, and an angel hypostasized as "righteousness" (*ṣdq*) predicted Adam's righteousness (*ṣdqwt*). In the Qur'ān, God responds to the critical angels, by asking them "if you are truthful" (*'in kuntum ṣādiqīna*), using a cognate Arabic lexeme with a slightly different Arabic meaning. It is thus possible that the Qur'ān here responds to a very specific aspect of the rabbinic tradition questioning the way in which *Bereshit Rabbah* describes the angels, directly questioning their truthfulness or righteousness. Given the common use of the phrase "if you are truthful" in the Qur'ān, as well as our ignorance of the precise version of the rabbinic story circulating in Arabia, however, it seems just as likely that the lexical overlap here is coincidental. For the eschatological use of the phrase "if you are truthful" see e.g. Mehdi Azaiez, *Le contre-discours coranique* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 136.



term whose root *hlf* designates “to take one’s place” or to “install as a successor” that has been rendered by most scholars, with good reason, as “viceroy,” “governor,” or “successor.”<sup>194</sup> Elsewhere, of course, the Qur’ān equally names human beings by the same term, yet almost always in the plural – only Adam and King David are called “governor” on their own.<sup>195</sup> Yet by applying the term *ḥalīfah* to Adam, the Qur’ān evokes more than just the royal imagery already inherent in Genesis: it also redefines Adam’s alleged kingship, as did the rabbis.<sup>196</sup>

In the *Cave of Treasures*, Adam is likewise called “priest, king and prophet,” a list, we have seen, with which the Qur’ān partially agrees when it comes to prophethood.<sup>197</sup> Yet for the Medinan Qur’ān, Adam is precisely not a king – rather, it presents Adam as the earth’s legitimate ruler appointed by the true king, namely by God. The term the Qur’ān uses is conceptually very close, if not identical, to the one used in the rabbinic story that equally compared Adam to a “governor,” (*ḥrkws*), using an Aramaized form of the Greek term ὑπαρχος, which designates precisely a “subordinate governor” – God’s governor on earth, whom he can depose at any moment, as the rabbis had impressively illustrated by having the king push the governor out of the royal chariot.<sup>198</sup> The Qur’ān, like *Bereshit Rabbah*, describes the relationship between God and Adam in terms of a sovereign to that of a governor, yet only after having thoroughly defused any notion of the possibility that anyone mistake Adam, or Christ, for a deity.

We can thus conclude our inquiry by stating that the Medinan Qur’ān recalibrates its Meccan teachings on Adam in light of the Jewish narratives known to its Medinan audience. The Medinan Qur’ān continues its corrective retelling of narrative elements equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* it begun in Mecca, and presents Adam as standing above the

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<sup>194</sup> Current translations of the term *ḥalīfah* vary slightly, Pickthall and Arberry translate it as “viceroy,” Yusuf Ali as “vicegerent,” and Abdel Haleem as “successor.”

<sup>195</sup> See e.g. Q 6:165, Q 7:69 and 74, and Q 38:26. The first form of the root *hlf* denotes “succeeding” someone, the tenth form “granting succession.” For a study of classical Islamic usages of the term see e.g. M. J. Kister, *Concepts and Ideas at the Dawn of Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 113-74.

<sup>196</sup> On Adam’s kingship in Genesis see note 39 above.

<sup>197</sup> See *Cave of Treasures* 4:1, Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des trésors*, 28, and pages 79-80 and 124 above.

<sup>198</sup> See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon: Ninth Edition with Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1853.

angels, as worthy of “prostration,” but neither of the “worship” nor of the “glory” that belongs to God alone. The Medinan Qur’ān, unlike the Meccan one, also includes elements equally preserved in *Bereshit Rabbah*, yet harnesses them in order to emphasise that “knowledge,” likewise, belongs to the divine, and not the human realm.

The present inquiry has revealed a level of textual affinity between the *Cave of Treasures*, *Bereshit Rabbah*, and the Qur’ān that both qualitatively and quantitatively stands on a solid basis. The method of considering each of the Christian and Jewish central texts first on their own, then in its pre-Islamic setting, and finally in its Meccan and Medinan corrective retelling, though laborious, has shown how intimately the Qur’ānic narrative introduces part of its audience to the Jewish and Christian tradition – and how intimately familiar with these traditions part of its audience may already have been. While the study of the literary characteristics of each text, and especially of their lexical overlaps, proves difficult and may produce some “noise” (some of the overlaps may be coincidental), a careful comparative study can guide us to a better understanding of the ways in which each of the texts respond to their respective predecessors. The precision with which particular Qur’ānic elements equally recorded in the Jewish and Christian tradition could be identified allow for a clear differentiation between the Meccan and Medinan retellings, the former of which – in the case of this particular narrative – are predominantly dealing with Christian materials, whereas the latter continue the anti-Christological corrections all the while engaging the rabbinic tradition. The positive co-relation between the affinity of Meccan surahs to Medinan material with the increasing clarity and quantity of Meccan elements equally preserved in the *Cave of Treasures* also confirmed the basic sequence of the Meccan surahs as suggested by Neuwirth. A detailed confirmation of more specific chronological models of the Meccan surahs, however, did not prove possible.

The most intriguing result of the present study may pertain to the identity of the Qur’ān’s historical audience. I resisted a jump from the more secure grounds of the implied audience to the more speculative identity of the historical audience throughout the study, yet the accumulative evidence lets us hazard a few suggestions. The familiarity of some Meccans with Christian narratives seems clear enough, given the (few) explicit anti-Christological polemics throughout the Meccan surahs, and the prominent correction of Christian narratives. The present study confirms and refines our understanding of the Christian traditions circulating in Mecca, pointing to the presence of materials recorded in the *Cave of Treasures* in the oral discourse of Arabia in the late sixth century

CE. The Qur'ān follows a dual approach, familiarizing its audience with such materials at the same time as purging it of all Christological baggage. The same holds true for the Christian materials known to the audience in Medina, whose engagement is less prominent yet more pointed in the material we have examined. The Jewish materials relating the story of Adam and the angels known from *Bereshit Rabbah* are only introduced in Medina, in stark contrast to the importance of the very same text for many other Meccan surahs. The rejection of rabbinic doctrine in *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, combined with an artful combination of three rabbinic stories for a triologue that engages both Jewish and Christian contemporaries, may be a unique phenomenon. Yet it teaches us a lot about the Qur'ān's multi-layered audience, its message, and its way of conveying it.