

JEWS IN THE QUR'ĀN

Muzaffar Iqbal

The Qur'ān uses five terms to refer Jews, but regardless of the appellation used, it is ultimately concerned with the beliefs and deeds of Jews, both during their pre-Qur'ānic history as well as their response to its own invitation to believe in One God and all the Prophets and Books He has sent, including the last of them and the Book sent to him, that is, the Qur'ān which confirms all earlier Scriptures and is their guardian and protector (*muhaymin*).

The Qur'ān claims that it came from the same source as their own Books, belief in this final Revelation is a *sine qua non* for the true believers who recognize it *as they recognize their own children*. Most of the Jewish Madinan contemporaries of the Prophet Muḥammad refused to accept his prophethood, even though they knew his description in the Torah. Some of them were jealous and hostile, wishing the believers would forsake their faith.

The three Jewish tribes of Madina are indirectly mentioned. Recognizing their status as People of the Book, Islamic Law permits Muslims to eat their food and marry their women.

This study shows that the Qur'ān contains twenty-five specific transgressions of the Children of Isrā'īl; these are explored in some detail.

Keywords: Jews in the Qur'ān; Qur'ānic Studies; the Qur'ān and other faith communities; Early Jewish Reception of the Qur'ān; Jewish-Muslim relations.

Introduction

The Qur'ān uses five terms to refer to Jews:

- i. **Banū/Banī Isrā'īl:** It most frequently uses the possessive constructs *banū* and *banī Isrā'īl* (lit. sons, but more generally, children of Isrā'īl). The phrase appears 40 times in the oblique (*banī Isrā'īl*) and once (Q 10:90) in the nominative case (*banū Isrā'īl*) in twelve Makkan (Q 7, 10, 17, 20,

26, 27, 32, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46) and four (Q 2, 3, 5, 61) Madinan suras¹. One sura of the Qurʾān (Q 17) is called Sūrat Banī Isrāʾīl (also called Sūrat Isrāʾ and Sūrat Subhān, Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, Type 17, 1:193).

“Isrāʾīl”² is a compound word consisting of two parts: “isrā” (“slave”) and “īl” (“God”); thus the phrase means “slave of Allah” (*ʿabd Allah*; Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Samʿānī; Samarqandī; Māwardī; Ibn ʿĀdil; al-Qinnawjī, *Fath al-bayān*, sub Q 2:40; Abī Bakr al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, sub *s-r-ā*). It is also said that it was his agnomen (*laqab*), and means *ṣafwatul-Ilāh* (“the chosen one of Allah”) in Hebrew (Zamakhsharī; Bayḍāwī; Khāzin, sub Q 2:40).³ It is a non-Arabic (*aʿjamī*) word for which there is no Arabic etymology (Wāḥidī, *Basīṭ*, sub Q 2:40). Abū Manṣūr Mawḥūb b. Aḥmad al-Jawālīqī (460-540/1067-1145) mentions two other vocalizations for *Isrāʾīl*: (a) “*Isrāl*” on the pattern of *Mikāl*; and (b) “*Isrāʾīn*” with a final nūn. This is so because “when Arabs encounter a foreign word that does not belong to their language, they express it in different vocalizations, such as *Baghdādih* and *Baghdād* and also *Baghdān*” (*Muʿarrab*, entry No. 4, sub *wa ammā Isrāʾīl*; also see al-Khafājī, *Shifāʾ al-ghalīl*, sub *Isrāʾī*; Ibn al-Jawzī; sub Q 2:40). Other readings include: *Isrāīl* (*yāʾ* suppressed) read by Warsh from Nāfiʿ; *Isrāyīl* (with the transposition of the *hamza* into *yāʾ*), read by Abū Jaʿfar, al-Aʿmash, ʿIsā b. ʿUmar, al-Ḥasan, al-Zuhri, Ibn Abī Ishāq, ʿIsā, Nāfiʿ, al-Azraqī, and al-Muṭawwaʿī. Other variants include *Isrāʾal*, *Isrāʾill*, and *Israʾal* (al-Khaṭīb, *Muʿajam al-Qirʾāt*, sub Q 2:40).

- ii. **Yahūd:** While the terms *banū* and *banī Isrāʾīl* imply all the branches of children of Prophet Yaʿqūb, including those who believed in Prophet ʿĪsā (that is, Christians), *Yahūd* is exclusively used in the Qurʾān for

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1. ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *Muʿjam*.
 2. *Isrāʾīl* is one of the two Qurʾānic names of Prophet Yaʿqūb—the eponymous ancestor of the Children of Isrāʾīl—who was the son of Ishāq, the son of Ibrāhīm, upon them all peace (Ṭabarī; Māturīdī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Zamakhsharī, sub Q 3:93; Rāzī; Thaʿalibī, *Jawāhir*, sub Q 2:40). Yaʿqūb, upon him peace, is mentioned twice (Q 3:93; 19:58) as *Isrāʾīl* and is one of the five Prophets with two Qurʾānic names: Aḥmad—Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace; ʿĪsā—al-Masīḥ; Dhū-l-Kifl—Ilyās; *Isrāʾīl*—Yaʿqūb; Yūnus—Dhū-l-Nūn, upon them all peace (Farāhidī, sub *ḥ-d-m*; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil*, *Dhikr asmāʾ Rasūl Allāh ṣallā Allāh ʿalayh wa sallam*; cf. Rāzī, sub Q 21:86; Qurṭubī, sub Q 2:136; Ibn ʿĀdil, sub Q 2:40). This usage is also found in Prophetic Hadiths (Aḥmad, 4:277 §2471; Abū Dāwūd, 4:450 §2854; Ṭabarānī, *Muʿajam al-kabīr*, 12:246 §13012; also quoted by Ṭabarī; Makkī, sub Q 3:93; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Ibn Kathīr, sub Q 2:40).
 3. For bibliographical details, see Bibliography at the end of the article. All references are to the verse being discussed unless otherwise noted.

those who believed in Prophet Mūsā, who are also called Qawm Mūsā (see below).

Lexicographers and exegetes offer two explanations for the etymology of the noun *yahūd* (sing. *yahūdī*): (a) it comes from Yahūdha, the eldest son of Yaʿqūb, upon him peace, whose name was Arabicized and the letter “dhāl” was changed to “dāl” (Farāhīdī, *sub* bāb al-hāʾ wal-dāl; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, *sub* bāb al-dāl, faṣl al-hāʾ; Māwardī; Jurjānī, *Darj al-Durar*, *sub* Q 2:62); (b) it is derived from the verb *hāda* (“he repented”) (Jawharī, *Ṣiḥāḥ*; Fayrūzabādī, *Qāmūs*; Rāghib, *sub* h-w-d), because they returned to Allah and abandoned the worship of the Calf; or because of their saying *innā hudnā ilayka*—indeed we have returned to You (Q 7:156), as per Ibn Jurayj (d. ca.150/767) (Ṭabarī; Māwardī).

The verb *hāda* is used for a person who adopts the ways of the Jews (*ṭarīqat al-yahūd*) in his religion (Azharī, 6:206, *sub* bāb al-hāʾ wal-dāl); Rāghib, *sub* h-w-d), thus, the phrase *alladhīna hādū* denotes the Jews (*al-yahūd*) and “those who became Jews (*ṣārū yahūdan*)” (Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 2:62); *hādū* means “they repented” (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:62; cf. Baghawī; Samʿānī, *sub* Q 2:62). The Form I verb occurs eleven times (Q 2:62; 4:46, 160; 5:41, 44, 69; 6:146; 7:156; 16:118, 22:17; 62:6). The singular noun *yahūdī* is used once (Q 3:67) as *yahūdīyyan*: *Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian* and the nominal *hūdan* (Jews) appears three times (Q 2:111, 135, 140).

- iii. **qawm /aṣḥāb Mūsā (People of Mūsā):** Those children of Isrāʾīl, who were contemporaneous to Prophets Mūsā and Hārūn, upon them peace, are the obvious referent in verses where the expression “People of Mūsā” (*qawm Mūsā*; Q 7:148, 159; 28:76) is used as well as where they are ascribed to him as “his people” (*qawmihi/qawmahu*, e.g. Q 2:54, 60, 67; 5:20; 7:128, 150, 155, 160; 14:6); where he refers to them as “my people” (*qawmī*; Q 2:54, 5:20, 21; 7:142; 10:84; 20:86; 43:51; 61:5); once (Q 26:61) they are called *aṣḥābu Mūsā* (lit. Companions of Mūsā). In two verses (Q 23:47; 37:115), they are ascribed to both Mūsā and Hārūn as *their people* (*qawmahumā*). In Q 20:90, Hārūn, upon him peace, calls them *my people* and in four verses (Q 40:29, 30, 38, 39), *a believing man from the House of Firʿawn, who was concealing his belief* calls them *O my people*. Mūsā, upon him peace, the most-mentioned Prophet of the Children of Isrāʾīl in the Qurʾān, was the son of ʿImrān, the son of Yaṣḥar, the son of Qāhith (or Fāhit), the son of Lāwī, the son of Yaʿqūb (Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; *Tafsīr*; Māwardī; Thaʿlabī, *Kashf* *sub* Q 2:5; Baghawī, *sub* Q 6:84; for more on his name, see MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE).

- iv. **Asbāt (Descendants):** They are the referent of the noun *asbāt* (root s-b-ṭ; sing. *sibṭ*), which occurs five times (Q 2:136, 140; 3:84; 4:163; 7:160). Abū

‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (100-175/718-791) says “*al-sibt* is for the Children of Isrā’īl what *qabila* (“tribe”) is for the Arabs.” Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. al-Sirrī al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) says: “Some say the noun *al-sibt* means one generation succeeding the other; but the true meaning is... all those who were born from the lineage of Ya’qūb are called *sibt*. The descendants of Ismā’īl are called *qabā’il* (tribes); this different usage is for differentiation between the offspring of Ismā’īl and Ishāq... The noun *al-asbāt* is derived from *al-sabaṭ* and *al-subaṭ*, referring to a tree that is fed to camels, it is as if Ishāq is likened to one tree and Ismā’īl to another” (*sub* Q 7:160). Jār Allāh Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/ca.1074-1143) defines *al-sibt* as “grandson (*al-ḥāfid*)”. Thus, “*al-asbāt* means the grandsons of Ya’qūb, or in general the offspring of his twelve sons” (*sub* Q 2:136; for similar views, see: Samarqandī, *sub* Q 7:160, and Rāzī, *sub* 2:136).

v. ***Ahl al-kitāb (People of the Book)* / “those who have been given the Book”:**

Jews are the exclusive or inclusive referent of the three Qur’ānic terms referring to the “People of the Book” (*q.v.*):

- a. *ahl al-kitāb*, used thirty-one times in eight Madinan (Q 2:105, 109; 3:64, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 98, 99, 110, 113, 199; 4:123, 153, 159, 171; 5:15, 19, 59, 65, 68, 77; 33:26; 57:29 59:2, 11; 98:1, 6) and one Makkan (Q 29:46) sura. The technical usage of the term is reserved for the Jews (*al-yahūd*) and Christians (*al-naṣārā*), to the exclusion of the Majūs (Māturidī, *sub* Q 4: 47, Q 6:156; Jaṣṣās; al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī, *sub* 9:29), based on Q 6:156, where the dual noun *ṭā’ifatān* (“two groups”) is explained as such by Ibn ‘Abbās (3BH-68/620-688), Mujaḥid b. Jabr (d. ca.99/718), Qatāda (d. 117/735), and al-Suddī (d. 127/744) (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Baghawī; Rāzī; Ibn ‘Ashūr, *sub* Q 6:156);
- b. The phrase “*alladhīna ūtū-l-kitāb—those who have been given the Book*” appears fifteen times (Q 2:101, 144, 145; 3:19, 100, 186, 187; 4:47, 131; 5:5, 57; 9:29; 57:16; 74:31; 98:4); and
- c. a slightly different wording “*alladhīna ūtū naṣībān min al-kitāb—those who were given a portion of the Book*” is used thrice (Q 3:23; 4:44, 51).

The exegetes identify—sometimes with difference of opinion—verses where Jews are the exclusive referent (e.g., Muqātil, *sub* Q 2:101; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *sub* Q 3:23; Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 4:44), and where Jews and Christians are both included in the phrase. Examples of the latter include Q 4:131, where the phrase is glossed as “People of Torah and Injīl” by Ṭabarī and Samarqandī; Q 5:5, which makes lawful *the food of those who were given the*

Book (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Baghawī); Q 9:29, which imposes *jizya* on them (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Thaʿlabī); Q 57:16, which mentions those whose hearts have hardened (Ṭabarī); Q 74:31, which refers to the number of keepers of the gates of Hell, which the “People of Torah and Injīl” also find in their Books (Ṭabarī), and Q 98:4, as those who became divided *after clear evidence had come to them* (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Samarqandī).

Synopsis

The lineage of the Children of Isrāʾīl traces back to Prophet Ibrāhīm through his son Ishāq and grandson Yaʿqūb, who were also Prophets, upon them all peace. They arrived in Egypt after Yaʿqūb joined his son Yūsuf—upon them both peace—whose ascent to a position of power in Egypt is chronicled in Sūra Yūsuf (Q 12). After they settled in Egypt, the Children of Isrāʾīl initially flourished, but by the time Mūsā b. ʿImrān b. Qāhath b. Lāwī b. Yaʿqūb was born, their affluence had dwindled and Children of Isrāʾīl suffered under the tyranny of the ruling Pharaohs (Q 2:49-57; for the lineage of Mūsā, upon him peace, see Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:385), although some of them—such as Mūsā’s cousin Qārūn—were extremely wealthy (Q 28:76-79). Through Mūsā, upon him peace, they were rescued from the great oppression, granted a passage through the sea, and made inheritors of the land and wealth of Pharaoh and his people (Q 28:5), and they were granted *that which He gave unto no other in all the worlds* (Q 5:20).

Shortly after their freedom from the tyranny of Pharaoh, they came upon some idol worshippers and said, “*O Mūsā, make for us a god, as they have gods.*” Mūsā, upon him peace, rebuked them, “*surely you are an ignorant people*” (Q 7:138). When Mūsā, upon him peace, went to the Mountain for his meeting with Allah Most High, they started to worship the Calf (Q 2:51, 92, 93; 4:153; 7:148-154; 20:88-98; see CALF OF CHILDREN OF ISRĀʾĪL). When they were commanded to *enter the Holy Land which Allah has prescribed for you, and do not turn back, or you shall become losers*, they refused, saying *O Mūsā, in this land are domineering people; we shall not enter it until they depart*. Prophet Mūsā then supplicated for a separation for him and his brother (Prophet Hārūn) *from the iniquitous people* (Q 5:20-25). The Children of Isrāʾīl were thus forbidden to enter the Holy Land for forty years (Q 5:26), although they continued to receive other Divine favors, including *salwa* (quails) and *al-mann* which descended for them (Q 2:57; 7:160; 20:80; see BLESSINGS, BOUNTIES AND FAVORS OF ALLAH; FOOD AND DRINK).

During the forty years of wandering, Mūsā and Hārūn, upon them peace, died. Afterward, the prescribed land was granted to them under the leadership of Yūshaʿ ibn al-Nūn (*cf.* Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 5:26), who is not mentioned in the Qurʾān by name, but is recognized as a companion and disciple of Mūsā

and a prophet of the Children of Isrāʾīl in hadith and commentary literature (Bukhārī, *farḍ al-khumus*, *qawl al-nabī ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam: uḥillat lakum al-ghanāʾim*; Muslim, *al-Jihād wal-siyar*, *taḥlīl al-ghanāʾim li-hadha al-umma khāṣa* and Nawawī's *sharḥ* on this hadith; Aḥmad, *Musnad* 14/65 8315; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *al-Āḥād wa'l-mathānī* 1:150; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār* 3:96. Selective subsequent history of the Children of Isrāʾīl is chronicled through their interactions with some of their prophets (see below section "Prophets and Messengers") and one king, Ṭālūt.

The righteous among the Children of Isrāʾīl are praised and assured of their reward: *Those who believe, and those who are Jewish, and the Christians, and the Sabeans—any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and act righteously—will have their reward with their Lord; they have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve* (Q 2:62) and, more generally, *they are not all alike; among the People of the Book is a community who are upright and recite the verses of Allah during the night, prostrating. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous.* (Q 3:113-114; also see Q 3:199; 7:159; 7:168). According to most commentators, *those who believe* after the revelation of the Qurʾān only refers to those Children of Isrāʾīl who believed in all the Prophets, including the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Māturīdī; Māwardī; Baghawī, *sub* Q 2:62).

A number of false beliefs held by the Children of Isrāʾīl are refuted (Q 2:79-80; 3:23-24; Q 4:49; see below). As a guardian (*muhaymin*) of all previous Divine revelations (Q 5:48), the Qurʾān *recounts unto the Children of Isrāʾīl most of that concerning which they differ* (Q 27:76). They believed in some parts of the Book and disbelieved in other parts (Q 2:85); they altered their Book (Q 4:46; 5:13, 41-43) and distorted the Divine Word given to them (Q 2:58-59). As a result, some of them incurred Divine curse (Q 5:60), *wrath upon wrath* (*ghaḍābin ʿalā ghaḍābin*) (Q 2:90) and a *terrible punishment* (*sūʾa-l-ʿadhāb*) (Q 7:167). Those who went astray were cursed by their Prophets—Dāwūd and ʿĪsā, upon them both peace (Q 5:78). A painful punishment awaits those who take usury and unjustly consume the wealth of others (Q 4:161). For their disbelief in the signs of Allah and for the killing of the Prophets, *humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them and they earned Divine wrath* (Q 2:61; 3:112). For their saying, *Allah is poor and we are rich* and for their *slaying of the prophets without right*, they will be told on the Day of Resurrection, *Taste you the punishment of burning* (Q 3:181). Their hearts have been hardened for breaking the Covenant (Q 5:13); and those who violated the Sabbath were turned into apes (Q 2:65; 7:166); certain types of food were prohibited to them for their wrongdoings (Q 4:160; 6:146).

Regardless of the appellation used for them, the Qurʾān is ultimately concerned with the beliefs and deeds of the Children of Isrāʾīl, both during their pre-Qurʾānic history—chronicled primarily through their interactions with Prophets Mūsā, Hārūn, and ʿĪsā, upon them peace—as well as their response to its own invitation to believe in One God and all the Prophets and Books He has sent, including the last of them and the Book sent to him, a Book that confirms all earlier Scriptures (Q 2:41, 89, 91, 97, 101; 3:3, 81; 6:92; 35:31; 46:30) and is their guardian and protector (*muḥaymin*) (Q 5:48). Since the Qurʾān came from the same source as their own Books, belief in this final Revelation is a *sine qua non* for the true believers who recognize it as *they recognize their own children* (Q 2:146; 6:20; 19:58; 28:52-53); they are *those who were given knowledge before it, and when it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration and say, 'Glory be to our Lord! Truly, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled. And they fall down on their faces, weeping, and it increases their humility* (Q 17:107-9).

Most of the Jewish Madinan contemporaries of the Prophet Muḥammad refused to accept his prophethood, even though they knew his description in the Torah (Q 7:157). Some of them were jealous and hostile, wishing the believers would forsake their faith (Q 2:109; 3:69, 99-100; 4:54; 5:59). The three Jewish tribes of Madina are indirectly mentioned in the Qurʾān (see below, the section, “The Jews of Madina and their interactions with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and with the Muslims”). Recognizing their status as People of the Book, Islamic Law permits Muslims to eat their food and marry their women (Q 5:5).

Covenant

Certain aspects of what was enjoined upon the Children of Isrāʾīl in their Covenant are mentioned in Q 2:83-85: Worship of none other than Allah Most High, virtuous conduct, especially with parents, kinsfolk, orphans, and the needy, to speak kindly with people, observance of prayer, giving of alms (*ṣakāt*), not to shed blood, and not to expel their own from their homes. Another aspect of the Covenant is their recognition of Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace (Q 2:40; 3:81; 5:12). With regard to Q 2:40 (*O Children of Isrāʾīl, Remember My blessings which I bestowed upon you, and fulfill your Covenant with Me and I shall fulfill Me Covenant with you and be in awe only of Me*), al-Ṭabarī says: “This is the Covenant of Allah (*ʿahdu-llāhi*) and His testament (*wa waṣiyyatuhu*) that He made with the Children of Isrāʾīl in the Torah, that they will explain to people the status of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, that he is a Messenger, whose mention is found in their own Book, that he is the Prophet of Allah, and that they would believe in him and in all that

he brought from Allah; and for this, *I will fulfill My Covenant with you*—and His promise with them is that if they did this, He will grant them Paradise” (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:40; similarly explained by Rāghib, Rāzī, and Bayḍāwī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ibn al-Jawzī).

Chosen People

The Children of Isrāʾīl were given preference over all others (‘*alā al-‘ālamīn*), Q 2:47, 122; 45:16) *And We certainly chose (ikhtarnāhum) them over the people of the worlds (‘alā al-‘ālamīn; Q 44:32)*. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923) explains that “the noun ‘*ālamūn* is the plural of ‘*ālam*, which is itself a plural noun—like ‘cattle’, ‘group’, and ‘army’ (*al-an‘ām*, *al-raḥḥ*, and *al-jaysh*)—for which there is no singular. The noun ‘*ālam* denotes different kinds of communities—each kind is an ‘*ālam*. The members of each generation of each kind are the ‘*ālam* of that generation and that time. Thus, humankind is an ‘*ālam*, and all the people of an era are ‘*ālam* of that era. The jinn are an ‘*ālam* and so on with the other species of creation; each species is the ‘*ālam* of its time. This is our opinion and that of Ibn ‘Abbās and Saʿīd b. Jubayr and most of the commentators” (*sub* Q 1:1).

Thus the divine preference and selection of Children of Isrāʾīl was temporally restricted, “indicating their selection above other nations of their era (‘*alā ‘ālamī zamānihim*),” as per Qatāda (d. 117/735), and they were “chosen for the world of that era (‘*ālam dhālika l-zamān*),” and “preferred to everyone else who lived at that time,” as per Mujaḥid (d. ca.104/722) (Ṭabarī; Samʿanī, *sub* Q 44:32). Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm b. ‘Umar al-Biqāʾī (d. 885/1480) says, “they were chosen for the Books and the Messengers sent to them, and they were preferred over all others who lived amongst them at that time” (*sub* Q 2:47). The Baṣran Successor, jurist, and Qurʾān expert, Abū al-‘Āliya Rufayʿ b. Mihrān al-Riyālī (d. ca. 93/712) (see Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Juzʾ 4, No. 85), said, “this preference refers to the fact that they were given kingdom (*mulk*), Messengers (*rusul*), and Scriptures (*kutub*), to the exclusion of those who lived in the world (‘*ālam*) of that era, and for every era (*li-kulli zamānin*) is its own world” (in Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:47).

Blessings

My blessing in Q 2:40, *O Children of Isrāʾīl, remember My blessing which I bestowed upon you...*, means not just one, but all the blessings because the singular *niʿma* in this verse “is a noun of genus (*ism al-jins*)—a singular used in the meaning of a plural, as in Q 14:34, *...if you were to count the blessing (niʿma) of Allah, you would not be able to number them*” (Qurṭubī). These blessings included the mention and description (*sifa*) of the Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace, as per Ibn ‘Abbās; as well as numerous blessings bestowed upon

their forefathers (*ajdādihim*), as per al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21-110/642-728) and al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923); and all the other blessings distributed over time and granted according to their changing circumstances (Ibn al-Jawzī; Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 2:40). ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr (700-774/1300-1373) cites all the above-mentioned blessings and adds that the blessing mentioned here is similar to what is mentioned in Q 5:20 in the words of Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace: *And when Mūsā said to his people, 'O my people! Remember the blessing of Allah upon you, when He appointed prophets among you, and appointed for you kings, and gave you that which He gave unto no other in all the worlds.*

Elsewhere, specific blessings are mentioned: *And indeed, We gave the Children of Isrāʾīl the Book and judgment, and prophethood, and We provided them with good things, and We favored them above the worlds* (Q 45:16). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209) says, “blessings can be divided into two categories: blessings of religion (*niʿam al-dīn*) and blessings of the worldly kind (*niʿam al-dunyā*); blessings of religion are far better than those of the worldly life, and for this reason, Allah Most High began by mentioning “*the Scripture, judgment, and prophethood*”; these three are distinct from that which follows” (*Tafsīr*).

Clear Signs

In Q 2:211, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, is commanded to *Ask the Children of Isrāʾīl how many a clear sign We have granted to them! And whoever alters the blessing of Allah after it has come to him—then indeed, Allah is severe in punishment.* “This was not by way of inquiry (*ʿalā wajh al-istikhbār*), but rather, as a rebuke (*tarwīkh*)” (Māwardī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). The *clear signs* are the miracles brought by their Prophets, or proofs in their Books of the authenticity of Islam (*ṣiḥa dīn al-Islām*); they are blessings of Allah (*niʿmatu-llāhi*) because [the clear signs] are means to Guidance (*al-hudā*) and deliverance from misguidance (*al-najātu min al-ḍalāla*) (Zamakhsharī). The signs are called *clear* as they were a decisive proof (*ḥujja qāṭiʿa*) of truthfulness of Prophet Mūsā (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:211). Signs mentioned elsewhere include Mūsā’s hand (Q 27:12; 28:32), his staff (Q 7:117; 26:45; 27:10; 28:31), the splitting of the sea (Q 26:63), Mūsā’s striking of the rock which yielded twelve springs (Q 2:60; 7:160), shadowing of the Children of Isrāʾīl by clouds (Q 2:57; 7:160), and sending down of the *manna* and *salwa* (Q 2:57; 7:160; 20:80).

Prophets and Messengers

No number is specified in the Qurʾān for the Prophets and Messengers sent to the Children of Isrāʾīl. There are, however, implicit Qurʾānic references to three unnamed prophets of the Children of Isrāʾīl, who are identified in the exegetical sources as:

Ḥizqīl (in commentary on Q 2:243, as per Muqāṭil; Ṭabarī; Samarqandī;

Tha‘labī, *Kashf*; Makkī, *Hidāya*);

the prophet mentioned in Q 2:246 in the phrase, “*when they said to a prophet of theirs*”, is variously identified as Yūsha‘ b. Nūn b. Afrāyim b. Yūsuf b. Ya‘qūb as per Qatāda (d. 118) (in Tha‘labī, also by Ṭabarī as one of the names); Sham‘ūn as per al-Suddī (d. 127/744) (in Ṭabarī, Māwardī; *Nukat*; Zamakhsharī, *sub* Q 2:246); and Shamwīl [also known as Ishmawīl / Ashmawīl; cf. Baghawī, Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*, *sub* Q 2:246] b. Bālā b. ‘Alqama b. Yarkhām (Ṭabarī; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, *sub* qīṣṣat Shamwīl ‘alayhi-l-salām);

Shi‘yā b. Amṣiyā [variants: Sha‘yā, Ash‘iyā’ and Ish‘iyā’], who foretold the coming of ‘Īsā, upon him peace, referring to him as “the rider of the donkey (*rāḳib al-ḥimār*)” and that of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, referring to him as “the owner of the camel (*ṣāḥib al-ba‘īr*)”; Baghawī, *sub* Q 17:4, whom the Jews killed (Ṭabarī; Bayḍāwī; Ibn ‘Āshūr; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya; Ibn ‘Ajība, *sub* Q 17:4-5); he was a contemporary of Prophet Yūnus, upon him peace (Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 10:98).

The Prophet, upon him blessing and peace, said, “The affairs of the Children of Isrā‘īl were governed and ruled by Prophets, whenever one Prophet died, another took his place, but there is no Prophet after me; there will be Caliphs, who will increase in number” (Bukhārī, *Aḥādīṭh al-Anbiyā’*, Mā dhukira ‘an Banī Isrā‘īl; Muslim, *al-Imāra*, bāb al-amr bil-wafā’ bi-bay‘at al-khulafā’ al-awwal fa-l-awwal). A report (*athar*) from Ibn ‘Abbās, cited by the hadith master Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Bayyī‘ al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/ca.1014) as well as Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī (384-458/994-1066)—and quoted by many exegetes and classified as sound—states, “all but ten Prophets [mentioned in the Qur’ān by name] were sent to the Children of Isrā‘īl; [the ten exceptions are]: Nūḥ, Ṣāliḥ, Hūd, Lūṭ, Shu‘ayb, Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, Ishāq, Ya‘qūb and Muḥammad, upon them blessings and peace” (Ḥākim, *qawlihi ta‘ālā* “*wa-dhkur fī-l-kitāb...*” [Q 19:41], 2:373-374; Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-īmān*, al-īmān bi-l-rusul ṣalawātu-Llāhi ‘alayhim ‘ammatan; 1:279§132; Haythamī, *Majma’*, kitāb fihi dhikr al-anbiyā’, 8:210§13806; Sam‘ānī; Baghawī; Qurṭubī; Ibn Kathīr; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, *sub* Q 2: 128; al-Nasafī, *sub* Q 37:113).

Some exegetes say that between Mūsā and ‘Īsā, upon them peace, the Children of Isrā‘īl received one thousand prophets (Māwardī, *sub* Q 28:1; Zamakhsharī; Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 5:44; Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* 2: 253; for a detailed discussion see: Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*; Bāb dhikr jamā‘at min anbiyā’ Banī Isrā‘īl ba‘da Mūsā, ‘alayhi-l-salām). The final prophet sent to the Children of Isrā‘īl was ‘Īsā, upon him peace, who was a Messenger to the Children of Isrā‘īl (Q 3:49), who said, “O Children of Isrā‘īl! Truly I am the Messenger of Allah unto you,

confirming that which came before me in the Torah and bearing glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me whose name is *Aḥmad*” (Q 61:6). The believers are commanded to believe in all Prophets and make no distinction between them (Q 2:136, 285; 3:84).

The Book of Mūsā

The Book given to Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace, is explicitly mentioned 18 times as *al-Tawrāt*—the Torah (*q.v.*, for a list of verses see ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Muʿjam*, *sub* bāb al-tā’, al-tawrāt). According to Ibn ‘Abbās, the Torah was written on seven Tablets made of *zabarjad* (variously interpreted as topaz, aquamarine or chrysolite) and these contained the explanation of all things and moral teachings (*mawʿiẓa*) (Samarqandī), “that can save them from ignorance” (Muqātil) and “from going astray” (Samarqandī). It is simply called *the Book* in Q 17:2: *And We gave Mūsā the Book, and made it a guidance for the Children of Isrāʾīl, [saying] do not take anyone other than Me as the disposer of your affairs* (wakīlan). “It is *guidance* that leads to the truth and justice, and a *light* that enlightens all that was ambiguous for them regarding legal rulings” (Zamakhsharī, *sub* Q 5:44). The prohibition to take other than Allah as their *wakīl* is pure Monotheism (*tawḥīd*; Rāzī). The Book is described as containing a *detailed explanation* (tafṣīlan) of all things (Q 6:154)—a comprehensive iteration (*bayānan mufaṣṣalan*) of everything that is needed in matters of religion (Bayḍāwī, Nasafī), and containing all legal regulations of the religion (*jamīʿ al-sharāʾiʿ al-dīn*) (Khāzin).

Elsewhere, those Jews who did not act according to the Torah and did not obey its commandments, prescriptions, and laws are likened to a donkey carrying books, because donkeys cannot understand the meaning of the books they carry (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ibn al-Jawzī), or as Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. ca. 117/735-736) said, “A donkey does not know whether it is carrying books or a scuttle on its back”.

Deliverance from Firʿawn (Pharaoh)

At the time of Mūsā, upon him peace, the Children of Isrāʾīl were enslaved and tyrannized by the ruler of Egypt (Q 3:11; 7:103-4, 127; 8:52, 54; 14:6; 26:16; 28:4)—Firʿawn (Pharaoh)—who is characterized as *the one who transgressed* (innahu ṭaghā) (Q 20:24, 43; 79:17). The principal connotation of *ṭaghā* is “to disobey (*ʿaṣā*), to behave in an arrogant manner (*takabbara*), to disbelieve (*kafara*), and to haughtily tyrannize (*tajabbara*)” (Qurṭubī, al-Khāzin, *sub* Q 20:24). “Pharaoh divided the Children of Isrāʾīl into groups—one group was forced to build houses, the other plowed and harvested, and yet another served in the royal court” (Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 2:49). He killed the male Israelites

because his magicians told him that an Israelite boy would destroy his kingdom (Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 2:49) or he saw in a dream “flames of fire emerging from Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*), devouring the houses of the [ancient] Copts (*dūr al-qibt*) but not the houses of the Children of Isrāʾīl. He thus concluded that the undoing of his kingdom would be at the hand of a man from Banū Isrāʾīl” (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:49).

In time, Prophet Mūsā was commanded to ask Pharaoh to “*send with me the Children of Isrāʾīl*” (Q 7:105); elsewhere, both Mūsā and Hārūn, upon them peace, ask Pharaoh to “*send with us the Children of Isrāʾīl*” (Q 20:47; 26:17). That is, to “set them free from imprisonment and from your tyranny (*qahrika*) and permit them to worship your Lord and their Lord, for they are the descendants of a noble Prophet, Isrāʾīl, who is Yaʿqūb b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm,” and Ibrāhīm is *Khalīl al-Raḥmān* [the intimate friend of Allah]” (Ibn Kathīr). But Pharaoh would not let them go. Their eventual deliverance from his tyranny was through Divine intervention: *We revealed to Mūsā, ‘Set forth with My servants by night and strike for them a dry path through the sea. Be not afraid of being overtaken, and fear not* (Q 20:77).

The deliverance of the Children of Isrāʾīl from Pharaoh’s captivity (see e.g. Q 2:49; 7:105, 138, 141; 20:80; 44:30) is one of the greatest signs of Allah’s blessings upon them (see Q 14:6; 7:103-171; Q 28:3-6); *And the most beautiful Word of your Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Isrāʾīl because they were patient. And We destroyed all that Pharaoh and his people had wrought and that which they used to build* (Q 7:137). This was a reward for their patience (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*); the fulfillment of the Word was to “save them and to destroy their enemies” (Ibn al-Jawzī), “by providing them help and establishing them on earth, as also mentioned in His Words, *and We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors* (Q 28:5)” (Baghawī).

Many exegetes cite Ibn ʿAbbās and Qatāda (d.117/735), who said that Mūsā, upon him peace, left Egypt with six hundred (or six hundred and twenty) thousand able-bodied fighters, not counting those under the age of twenty due to their youth and those above the age of sixty, due to their old age (Mujāhid, Ṭabarī, Baghawī, *sub* Q 2:50), whereas when the Children of Isrāʾīl first came to Egypt at the time of Prophet Yūsuf, upon him peace, they numbered only seventy-two (Baghawī, *sub* Q 2:50).

Inherited and Promised Land

After their deliverance from the tyranny of Pharaoh, the Children of Isrāʾīl were told to “*Dwell in the land* (al-arḍ) *and when the promise of the Hereafter comes to pass, We shall bring you forth as a mixed assembly*” (Q 17:104). The exegetes

offer various opinions regarding *the land* where the Children of Isrāʾīl were to dwell: (i) it covered the territory of Jordan, Palestine and Egypt (Samarqandī; Māwardī; Baghawī, Qurṭubī, and Khāzin); (ii) Syro-Palestine (*al-Shām*) (Ṭabarī; Makkī; Ibn ʿAṭīyya); Syro-Palestine and Egypt (Thaʿālībī); (iii) “whichever part of the earth you desire, in the east and the west, dwell there in peace, without fear of being expelled” (Māturīdī); (iv) Muqāṭil bin Sulaymān (d. 150/767), whose exegesis of verses related to pre-Qurʾānic events often includes Israelite accounts, quoting from Ibn Jurayj (80-150/699-767), considers *the land* in this verse to mean a land “beyond China” (*warāʾ al-ṣīn*), to which one of their tribes was directed after the Children of Isrāʾīl killed their prophets.

This tribe sought to disavow the disbelief of the others and asked Allah Most High to separate them from the others. In response to their prayer, a way was opened up for them to go to the land beyond China (*sub* Q 17:104; also see below his exegetical remarks on Q 7:159). Several later commentators include Muqāṭil’s explanations in their works (*cf.* Ṭabarī; Samarqandī; *Ibn Kathīr*, *sub* Q 7:159).

In Q 28:5, the Children of Isrāʾīl are said to be the inheritors of the land: *We desired to confer blessing upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders (aʾimmatan) and make them inheritors (al-wārithīn).* By the consensus of the exegetes, the *oppressed* are the Children of Isrāʾīl (Ṭabarī; Makkī; Ibn Kathīr; Ibn al-Jawzī). They are called ‘inheritors’ in this verse, either because they literally possessed the lands previously held by Pharaoh and his people, or metaphorically, because they took with them jewelry from the Egyptians (Rāzī; Baghawī; Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 26:59). In either case, immense wealth came into their possession (Rāzī). Another passage (Q 44:17-34), however, specifically mentions that it was both the land and the wealth of Pharaoh that was bequeathed to them, when he and his people rejected the Message and Mūsā called unto his Lord, and his Lord commanded him to *set forth at night with My slaves; you will surely be pursued. And leave the sea behind becalmed; their army will be drowned. How many gardens and springs did they leave behind, and sown fields and a goodly dwelling, and prosperity they rejoiced? Thus it was. And We bequeathed it unto another people. Neither Heaven nor earth wept for them, nor were they granted respite. And We delivered the Children of Isrāʾīl from a humiliating punishment—from Pharaoh. Truly, he was the worst squanderer. And We chose them over all the worlds. And We gave them signs wherein was a manifest trial.* Al-Ṭabarī, citing Qatāda (d.117/735), and several later exegetes say this verse refers to the bequeathing of the land and wealth of the Egyptians to the Children of Isrāʾīl (*cf.* Ṭabarī; *cf.* Māwardī; Qurṭubī; Ibn Kathīr).

Q 10:93 refers to an excellent abode (*mubawwaʾa ṣidqin*) wherein they were established: *And indeed, We established the Children of Isrāʾīl in an excellent*

abode (mubawwa'a šidqin) and *We provided them pure sustenance. They did not differ among themselves until after the knowledge had come to them. Allah will judge their differences on the Day of Judgment.* Most exegetes cite the two early opinions about this abode: according to Qatāda, the excellent abode refers to the territory of Syro-Palestine and Jerusalem (*al-Shām wa Bayt al-Maqdis*); according to al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. ca. 102/721), it refers to Egypt and Syro-Palestine (cf. Ṭabarī; Sam'ānī; Māwardī; Makkī; Samarqandī; Ibn 'Aṭiyya). However, in a clear break with the majority, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī (d. 468/1075) interprets the verse to be a reference to the two Jewish tribes of Yathrib, that is, Banū Qurayza and Banū al-Naḍir; and he interprets *pure sustenance* to be dates and fruits, and their difference to be differences concerning their belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace (*Wajīz*).

Pure Sustenance, Provisions Declared Unlawful

The Children of Isrā'īl received two special foods (see FOOD AND DRINK): *al-mann* and *al-salwā*; both mentioned together three times (Q 2:57; 7:160; 20:80) as blessing, because these provisions required no work on their part, and they caused no fatigue or hardship (Zajjāj, Ma'ānī, sub Q 2:57). Commentaries explain *al-mann* variously as a snowflake-like substance which was sweet like honey and fell on the trees (Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz*; Farrā', *Ma'ānī*, sub Q 2:57; Rāzī, *Nasafī*); either called "*taranjīm*" (Zajjāj, *Ma'ānī*), or "*al-taranjabīn*, that we [Arabs] know well" (Farrā', *Ma'ānī*; a sweetish juice which exudes from the alhagi maurorum tree; as if it fell from the heaven). Al-Māwardī mentions seven different explanations for manna: (i) something that fell on trees and people ate it; (ii) *ṣamgha* [*samgh* and *samgha* denote, in the language, the sap that exudes from "*ṭalḥ*—Acacia gummifera" tree (a variety of acacia); here, a sweet fluid that falls on trees; cf. Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, Tha'ālibī, *Jawāhir*, sub Q 2:54-57; Samīn, *Umdat*, faṣl al-mīm wa-l-nūn]; (iii) a kind of drink which they drank by mixing it with water; (iv) honey (*'asal*), which came down [from the sky]; (v) flat loaves of bread; (vi) ginger (*zanjabīl*); and (vii) *al-turanjabīn* (*Nukat*; see also Ṭabarī; Ibn al-Jawzī, sub Q 2:57). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, "Truffles (*al-kam'a*) are from the *mann* and their juice is curative for the eye" (Bukhārī, sub Q 7:143; Muslim, Ashribā, faṣl al-kam'ati wa mudāwāt al-'ayn bihā).

Al-salwā is glossed as a bird (as per Mujāhid and Qatāda), a bird similar to quail (*al-sumānī*), but greater in size (as per Suddī) or quail itself (cf. Ibn Jurayj; Ṭabarī; Yaḥya b. Salām; Zajjāj, *Ma'ānī*; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). The *pure sustenance* (*al-ṭayyibāt*) in Q 10:93, and *We provided them pure sustenance*, is glossed as "permissible provisions" (*ḥalāl al-rizq*) (Makkī, *Hidāya*), which were "good and

useful (*al-nāfiʿ*) and delightful (*mustaṭāb*) by nature and Law” (Ibn Kathīr).

Certain types of food were declared unlawful *due to wrongdoing* (*fa-bi-zulmin*) *on the part of those who are Jews* (*alladhīna hādū*), *We made unlawful for them [certain] pure foods* (*tayyibāt*) *which had previously been lawful to them, and for their averting many [people] from the Way of Allah* (Q 4:160). Citing Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767), the Andalusian exegete Abū Muḥammad Makki b. Abī Ṭālib al-Qaysī (d. 437/1045) says this verse refers back to Q 6:146: *And to those who are Jews We prohibited every animal of [uncloven] hoof* (*kulla dhī zuḥur*), *and of cattle and sheep We prohibited for them their fat* (*shuḥūmahumā*), *except what adheres to their backs or the entrails or what is joined with bone. By that We repaid them for their injustice. And indeed, We are truthful* (*Hidāya*; see also: Samarqandī, *sub* Q 4:160). The *wrongdoing on the part of those who are Jews* refers to their violation of the Covenant; disbelief in the Signs of Allah (*bi-āyāti-llāh*); calumny against Maryam, upon her peace; turning away from the Way of Allah and diverting others from Truth; devouring unlawfully the wealth of the people; forging lies in the name of religion; accepting bribes; and falsifying the Scripture (Ṭabarī; Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 4:160). “They deserved this prohibition because of their infringement (*baghyihim*), oppression (*tughyānihim*), opposition to their Messenger and their disagreement with him” (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 4:160).

Another reference to dietary restrictions appears in Q 3:93: *All food was lawful for the Children of Isrāʾīl except for what Isrāʾīl had deemed unlawful for himself before the Torah was revealed; ask them to bring the Torah and recite it if they are true in their claim*. A hadith explains the circumstances leading to Prophet Isrāʾīl’s self-prohibition of certain food. A group of Jews came to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and asked certain questions, promising to believe in his prophethood if the answers were correct. Among other things, they asked, “Inform us about what Isrāʾīl had made unlawful for himself.” The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, answered: “He suffered from sciatica (*ʿirq al-nasā*) and when the disease prolonged and he could not find a cure for it, he took an oath to give up his favorite food if he was cured. He was cured and thus he gave up eating camel meat and its milk (Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, *abwāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān, wa min sūrat al-raʿd*; Ahmad, *Musnad*, 4:277 §2471; Ḥākim, *kitāb al-tafsīr, wa min sūrat Āl ʿImrān*; 2:292).

Prophet Yaʿqūb’s “sons and later descendants also accepted these prohibitions due to their respect for their forefather. They did that without having a Divine revelation for this and without having heard anything about [the prohibition] from the tongue of Prophet Isrāʾīl” (Ṭabarī, *sub* 3:93). Al-Rāzī adds more details: “A group of Jews said to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, “You claim to follow the religion of Ibrāhīm (*millat Ibrāhīm*); if it is so then how can you eat camel meat and drink camel milk, while all of these

were prohibited in the Religion of Ibrāhīm?” The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, responded: “These were permitted to Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, Ishāq and Ya‘qūb, upon them peace. But, Ya‘qūb made them unlawful for himself due to some reasons and this prohibition prevailed among his descendants.” The Jews rejected this. The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, asked them to bring forth the Torah and show where it mentions prohibition of the camel meat and milk for Ibrāhīm. The Jews could not find a line about this and their lies became evident” (*Tafsīr*, sub Q 3:93).

Twelve Guarantors (*Nuqabā’*)

Each of the twelve tribes of the Children of Isrā‘īl had a *naqīb*. The noun *naqīb* (pl. *nuqabā’*), a hapax legomenon used in Q 5:12, denotes someone “who investigates a nation (*al-bāḥith* ‘an *al-qawm*) and their condition” (Rāghib, sub *n-q-b*). Al-Wāḥidī explains *naqīb* as someone “chosen to be warrantor (*kafīl*) and guarantor (*ḍamīn*) and he guaranteed the fulfillment of the Covenant on behalf of their nation” (*Wajīz*). *Naqīb* is similar to *al-‘arīf*—the one who is fully familiar with a nation and is appointed in a legal capacity as their superior” (Ibn Manzūr; Zamakhsharī, sub Q 5:12). Al-Zajjāj says, “*al-naqīb* is linguistically on the same pattern as *al-amīr* and *al-kafīl*... [the nouns] *naqab* and *nuqb* mean a path in a mountain and *naqīb* is the one who is acquainted with the innermost state (*dakhīla*) of a nation and he knows their virtues (*manāqibuhum*)—and this is the way to the knowledge of their matters”.

The verse in which the *nuqabā’* are mentioned also refers to the Covenant established with the Children of Isrā‘īl: *Allah had made a Covenant with the Children of Isrā‘īl, and We raised among them twelve chieftains (naqīban). And Allah said, “I am with you! Surely, if you establish the prayer, give alms, and believe in My messengers and support them, and lend unto Allah a goodly loan, I shall surely absolve you of your evil deeds, and shall cause you to enter Gardens with rivers flowing below. But whosoever among you disbelieves thereafter, surely he has strayed from the right way.”* The exegetes explain that after the drowning of the Pharaoh, the Children of Isrā‘īl were commanded to go to Syro-Palestine, where tyrants ruled. One man from each tribe was selected as the *naqīb* of that tribe and these *naqībs* were sent ahead to the city of the tyrants (*al-jabbārīn*) to gather information about them and to inform their prophet, Mūsā, upon him be peace. All but two of the *nuqabā’* violated their promise by telling their tribes what they had seen, rather than reporting only to Mūsā. As a result of the news they heard from their *nuqabā’*, the Children of Isrā‘īl refused to fight the tyrants, and were thus punished with forty years of wandering (Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Ibn Kathīr. (For more on this incident, see below “Refusing to fight against the *Jabbārīn*”).

Believers and Disbelievers among them

The People of the Book are not all equal, among them is a group standing and reciting the verses of Allah during the night and prostrating. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good things. And those are among the righteous. “The meaning being that those who killed the prophets without right are not equal to those who recite the verses of Allah during the hours of the night; these latter are on the Straight Path (*dhawū ṭarīqa mustaqīma*)” (Zajjāj). The righteous among the *People of Mūsā* are praised in Q 7:159: *And among the people of Mūsā (min qawmi Mūsā), there is a community (umma) which guides by truth and by it establishes justice.* There is considerable diversity of views about the referent of this verse. Some exegetes understand it in relation to the verse that follows, which states that Allah Most High divided them into twelve tribes. Al-Ṭabarī takes it to refer to a tribe that refrained from killing the prophets and asked Allah to separate it from the transgressors. As already mentioned, Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī is of the opinion that the verse refers to “a small group (*‘iṣāba*)” from the People of Mūsā, “who live beyond China (*min warāʾ al-Ṣīn*). Several later exegetes repeat this, adding further details, including that this tribe worships Allah in a fair and appropriate way; they believe in Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace; they left the Jewish rite of Sabbath and face the *qibla*; and that the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, met them during his Night Journey (cf. Samarqandī, Qurṭubī; Thaʿlabī, *Kashf*; Zamakhsharī). According to al-Ṭabarī, the narration about them living beyond China is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās by Abū Khālid ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Ibn Jurayj (d. ca. 150/767) (Ṭabarī).

Al-Rāzī discounts these opinions, calling them weak. Other exegetes understand the verse as broadly referring to those Israelites who adhered to Truth when the rest erred; yet another opinion is that the verse refers to those Jews of Madina who believed in the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace (Māwardī; Wāḥidī, *Basīṭ*; Rāzī). A pious group among the Children of Isrāʾīl are called leaders in Q 32:24: *And We made from among them leaders (aʾimman) who guide by Our command, when they were patient and believed with certainty in Our Signs* (see also Q 28:5). Leaders here can either mean “chosen leaders (*ruʾasāʾ*)”, who guide to all kinds of good as devout followers of the Prophets do, or to Prophets themselves (Ṭabarī, Baghawī; Māwardī; Wāḥidī, *Basīṭ*).

Twenty-five Specific Transgressions

An eighty-four-verse passage of Sūrat al-Baqara (Q 2:40-123) lists a series of transgressions and acts of disobedience of the Children of Isrāʾīl; others are mentioned elsewhere. These include the following:

i. Breaking of the Covenant

The Covenant specifically established with the Children of Isrāʾil (Q 2:40, 63, 80-96, 100-101; 3:187; 4:154; 5:12, 70; 7:134, 33:8) was broken by them in many ways, including their denial of the Prophets sent to them after Mūsā, tempering the revelation, abandoning the sacred Law, rejecting the Signs of Allah, and slaying Prophets (Q 4:155; 5:13). The divine response to their claim that our hearts are enwrapped (*ghulf*)—also mentioned in Q 2:88—asserts that Allah Himself *has set a seal upon their hearts* (Q 4:155) which refers to their lack of receptivity to the divine Message (Ṭabarī). Their hesitation to slaughter the cow also constituted a breach of the Covenant because they disobeyed their prophet (Ṭabarī; Thaʿālibī, *sub* Q 2:67). As a consequence of breaking the Covenant, Allah Most High *hardened their hearts* (Q 5:13), that is, their receptivity for belief and obedience was taken away (Ṭabarī). Their hearts were hardened because they mixed belief and disbelief, like gold and silver—which in their natural state are malleable—become hard when mixed with other metals; a manifestation of their hardened hearts is their distortion of the divine Word, both by actual tempering of the text and through false interpretations (Zamakhsharī). Thus, *Because of their breaking of the Covenant, their rejecting the Signs of Allah, their slaying of the Prophets without right, and their saying, ‘Our hearts are wrapped’—nay, but Allah has set a seal upon their hearts because of their disbelief, so they believe not save a few* (Q 4:155).

ii. They Compromised the Unicity (*tawḥīd*)

Two verses (Q 9:30-31) charge the Jews and the Christians with attributing partners to Allah and taking their rabbis and monks as their lords, thus compromising belief in the Absolute Oneness of Allah Most High: *And the Jews say ‘Uzayr is the son of Allah, and the Christians say the Masīḥ is the son of Allah; that is their utterance from their mouths; they resemble the words of those who disbelieved before. Allah assail them! How they are perverted! They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords apart from Allah, as well as the Messiah, son of Maryam, though they were only commanded to worship one Allah. There is no god but He! Be He Glorified from all that they associate with Him.* The commentators differ about the specific Jews who made the statement about ‘Uzayr. Some say it was made by Finḥās, others say it was made by Salām b. Mishkam, al-Nuʿmān b. Awfā, Shās [variant form: Shaʿs] b. Qays and Mālik b. al-Ṣayf, who went to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and said, “How can we follow you? You have abandoned our prayer direction (*qibla*) and you do not think that ‘Uzayr is the son of Allah”. Then Allah revealed the verse (Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *Muḥarrar*; *sub* Q 9:30; see ‘Uzayr).

The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, explained the meaning of taking *their rabbis and monks as lords apart from Allah* to ‘Adiyy b. Ḥātim, a

Companion who was a Christian before accepting Islam, and who once heard the Prophet recite Q 9:31. When the Prophet finished reciting, ‘Adiyy said to him, “We do not worship them.” The Prophet said, “Do they not forbid what Allah has permitted, whereupon you consider it forbidden, and do they not permit what Allah has forbidden, whereupon you consider it permissible?” He said, “Yes.” The Prophet then said, “That is worshipping them (*fa-tilka ‘ibādaturhum*)” (Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, wa min Sūrat al-Tawba; hadith classed *ḥasan ḡharīb*; Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 17:98 § 218; Ṭabarī).

Divine Unicity was also compromised by the Children of Isrāʾīl soon after they were rescued from the tyranny of Pharaoh: *When We brought the Children of Isrāʾīl across the sea, and they came upon a people devoted to their idols, they said, ‘O Mūsā, make for us a god like they have gods.’ He said, ‘You are indeed an ignorant people. As for these people, what they practice shall perish, and vain is that which they do’* (Q 7:138-39). The idols they saw were statues of cows (*ṭamāthīl baqar*), which seemed pleasing to them and they demanded that Mūsā, upon him peace, should make similar gods for them because they considered these idols were a means for gaining closeness to Allah Most High, just as the idol worshippers claimed, “*We do not worship them, save to bring us closer to Allah*” (cf. Q 39:3; al-Ṭabarī, al-Baghawī, al-Rāzī; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *Muḥarrar*, sub Q 7:138). Their demand also shows that the reality of Divine Oneness had not yet firmly established in their hearts and they were inclined to worship “other than Allah” (*ghayr Allāh*) (Qushayrī).

This was followed by the incident of their worshipping of the Calf made by al-Sāmīrī which they took as their deity (Zajjāj; Samarqandī, sub Q 7:148; Rāzī, sub Q 2:54). (For details, see CALF OF CHILDREN OF ISRĀʾĪL).

iii. Killing of the Prophets

And We declared to the Children of Isrāʾīl in the Book: ‘Verily, twice you will cause corruption in the land and will commit great transgression. So, when the time for the first of the two arrived, We raised against you some of Our slaves, who were great in might, and they ravaged your land. This was a promise that was bound to be fulfilled. Then We granted you an upper hand against them, and strengthened you with wealth and children, and multiplied your numbers. If you do good, you do so for your own self, and if you do evil, that is for your own self as well. For when the time for the second promise comes, they will disfigure your faces and enter the Masjid as they had entered the first time, and utterly destroy whatever they come upon. Maybe your Lord will have mercy on you, but if you revert, We will revert. And We have made hell a prison for the faithless. (Q 17:4-8)

The corruption (*fasād*) mentioned in the passage is explained in the commentaries as the killing of two prophets, Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā, upon them both peace (Ṭabarī; also see Makkī); or that of Zakariyyā and Shīʿyā [b. Aṣṣfiyā]

(Māwardī; Ibn al-Jawzī). Abū al-Barakāt ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310) says the first mischief was the killing of Zakariyyā and the imprisonment of Irmīyā’ (with various vowelling: Armiyā, Mujaḥid, Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* 2:259), and the second was the killing of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā and their plan to kill ‘Īsā (also see Zamakhsharī). Al-Bayḍāwī counts the killing of Shi‘yā’ (or Irmīyā’) as the first mischief and the killing of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā’ as the second mischief; “and they also intended to kill ‘Īsā” (*Tafsīr*, *sub* Q 17:4). The punishment mentioned for the two mischiefs is variously understood by the exegetes: Wahlb b. Munabbih (d. ca.109/728) is quoted as saying that for killing Zakariyyā, Allah Most High sent Sābūr Dhū-l-Aktāf—a king from among the kings of the Persians—to lay waste the Children of Isrā’īl. For their killing of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā, Allah Most High sent Bukhtanaṣṣar (Nebuchadnezzar II) against them (Ṭabarī). Abū al-Su‘ūd Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā al-‘Amādī (d. 982/1574) says, “Allah sent His created slaves who possessed great military might and strength, [who fought under] Sanḥārīb (Sennacherib), Bukhtanaṣṣar or Jālūt” (*Irshād*, *sub* Q 17:5). Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Ghālīb Ibn ‘Aṭīyya (d. ca.542/1147) summarizes various opinions:

The implication of these verses is that Allah Most High informed the Children of Isrā’īl in the Torah that there would occur on their part disobedience (*‘isyān*), oppression (*ṭughyān*) and ingratitude for the blessings of Allah—such as [His sending of the] Prophets and Books to them—and [as a result] He will send against them a nation that will subdue, kill, and humiliate them. Then He will have mercy upon them and give them back a victorious life and restore their previous status. Then, once again, disobedience, ingratitude, sinning, killing, and disbelief in Allah will occur on their part, and Allah will, once again, send against them another nation that would destroy their houses, annihilate them and force them to excruciating exile; and it is said that between the two occasions, there would be two hundred and twenty years, during which prophets would keep coming to them; it is also said that there would be only seventy years. (*sub* Q 17:4)

Ibn ‘Āshūr is more specific: “The first event resulted in the Babylonian captivity when Bukhtanaṣṣar, the king of Bābil and Āshūr conquered Jerusalem and deported the Children of Isrā’īl and imprisoned others, while the second event resulted in the conquest by the Byzantine Empire” (*Tafsīr*).

Eight other verses (Q 2:61, 87, 91; Q 3:21, 112, 181; 4:155; 5:70) mention the killing of the Prophets by the Children of Isrā’īl. Certain Jews of Madina also tried to kill the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. According to the majority of exegetes, Q 5:11 is a reference to this attempt at the time when the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, had gone to

visit the Jewish tribe of Banū al-Naḍīr in Madina with some of his close Companions in order to seek their assistance in paying the bloodmoney (*diya*) for two men who had been killed by mistake. The Jews plotted to kill him, “saying to each other, ‘you will never find Muḥammad so close to you as he is now’” (Ṭabarī; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*). The Prophet was informed by Jibrīl, upon him peace, and he left the place. Q 5:11 was revealed in this connection: *O you who believe! Remember the blessing of Allah upon you, when a people were prepared to stretch forth their hands against you, but He withheld their hands from you. Be conscious of Allah and in Allah let the believers trust.* (Qurṭubī, Samarqandī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*; also see below section on Jews of Madina.)

iv. Their claim: “We slew the Messiah, ‘Isā, son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah”

The claim of the Children of Isrāʾīl to have killed ‘Isā, upon him be peace, is emphatically rejected: *And because of their saying, ‘We slew the Messiah, ‘Isā, the son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah; and they slew him not, nor did they crucify him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt about it; they have no knowledge thereof; they only follow their conjecture; indeed, they slew him not for certain, but Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise.* “They wished and plotted to kill him, making great efforts to achieve this, but, undoubtedly, this is absolute unbelief...The Jews disbelieved in ‘Isā and they were his enemies, they intended to kill him; they called him a magician (*al-sāḥir*), the son of a magician woman (*ibn al-sāḥira*)” (Rāzī, *sub* Q 4:157). (For more details see CRUCIFIXION)

v. Their tremendous calumny against Maryam

The verse mentioning this calumny (Q 4:156) appears at the end of a passage that enumerates several other transgressions committed by the Children of Isrāʾīl:

The People of the Book demand from you that you bring down a book from the Heaven; indeed, they had asked a greater thing of Mūsā, for they said, ‘Show us Allah openly,’ whereupon the thunderbolt seized them for their wrongdoing. Then they took the Calf, even after clear proofs had come to them; yet, We pardoned this and We gave Mūsā a manifest authority. And We raised the Mount over them by their Covenant, and We said to them, ‘Enter the gate, prostrating,’ and We said to them, ‘Do not transgress the Sabbath.’ And We made with them a solemn Covenant. Then for their breaking of the Covenant, and their disbelief in the signs of Allah, and their slaying of the prophets without right, and their saying, ‘Our hearts are encased,’—Nay! Rather, Allah has set a seal upon them for their disbelief, so they believe not, save a few—and for their disbelief, and their uttering against Maryam a tremendous calumny. (Q 4:153-156)

This accusation is also alluded to in Sūra Maryam (Q 19), when Maryam, upon her peace, returns to her people carrying baby ʿĪsā, to whom she gave birth far away from them, they say, *O sister of Hārūn, Your father was not an evil man, nor was your mother unchaste* (Q 19:28). Divinely instructed, Maryam, upon her peace, points to the baby but they say, *how can we speak to a child in the cradle?* At this point, ʿĪsā, upon him be peace, speaks to them (Q 19:28-33). Their accusation against her was in fact due to their disbelief in the Absolute Divine Power of creation, for “by this statement they denied Allah’s all-embracing ability to create a child without a father” (Rāzī) and “whoever denies the Absolute Power of Allah (*qudrat Allāh*) is a disbeliever” (Khāzin). According to scholarly consensus, ultimately based on reports from Ibn ʿAbbās, this calumny was, in fact, a false charge of adultery (*zinā*; see ADULTERY AND FORNICATION; CALUMNY, Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Samʿānī, Ibn Kathīr; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 4:156).

vi. Their hesitation to sacrifice the cow

As per exegetical explanations of the passage Q 2:67-73, which mentions this incident, a man was killed among the Children of Isrāʾīl and his body was placed before the door of someone else’s house. They [the Jews] were confused and differed in identifying the killer. Then Allah Most High ordered His Prophet Mūsā [to command them] to slaughter a cow (Q 2:67) and strike the deceased with a part of the slaughtered cow (Q 2:73); the dead man would be revived and reveal the name of the killer (Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*; Rāzī, Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:67-73). Prophet Mūsā informed the Children of Isrāʾīl, *Allah commands you to slaughter a cow*. They responded, *are you mocking us?* Mūsā, upon him be peace, replied, *I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant*. They then asked a series of questions about the nature of the cow to be slaughtered. Finally *they slaughtered her, but they almost did not*. Al-Thaʿālibī says the response of the Children of Isrāʾīl to Mūsā (*are you mocking us?*) is “a clear sign of the corruption of their belief (*fasādu iʿtiqād*) in Mūsā” (*Jawāhir*, *sub* Q 2:67). This verse is indicative of their “breaking of the covenant, for they disobeyed their prophet” (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:67).

vii. Their refusal to fight against the *jabbārīn*

After the drowning of the Pharaoh, the Children of Isrāʾīl were commanded to “*enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you, and do not turn back or you will be losers*.” They said, “*O Mūsā, indeed therein are people of tyrannical strength (qawman jabbārīn), and indeed, we will never enter it until they leave it; but if they leave it, then we shall enter*” (Q 5:21-22). The phrase *a people of tyrannical strength* is generally explained as “tall people, with exceptional physical power; they were the descendants of ʿĀd, and are referred to as *ʿamāliqa* (giants)”

(Baghawī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). According to the broad consensus of the exegetes, the twelve representatives (*nuqabāʾ*) of the twelve tribes (*asbāʾ*) of Banū Isrāʾīl went on a reconnaissance trip where they saw these mighty people (; Māwardī; Qurṭubī; Ibn al-Jawzī). They returned and told their tribes what they had seen, even though Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace, had commanded them not to tell people anything. Thus they violated the promise, except for Kālīb b. Yūfinā, from the tribe of Yahūdihā and Yūshaʿ b. Nūn from the tribe of Ifrāthīm / Afrāʾīm b. Yūsuf. These two are the referents in Q 5:23, *who feared [their Lord] and whom Allah had blessed, said, “Enter upon them by the gate, for once you have entered it, you will be victors. And trust in Allah, if you are believers* (Q 5:23) (Baghawī; Zamakhsharī; Wāḥidī, *Wasīl*).

The majority of the Children of Isrāʾīl, however, refused to follow the command, and instead, *They said: O Mūsā! Never shall we enter it so long as they remain therein; so, go forth, you and your Rabb, and fight. We shall sit here* (Q 5:24). After this response, Prophet Mūsā sought separation from them, saying, *My Lord! I have no power over anyone save myself and my brother; so separate us from the iniquitous people!*” (Q 5:25). Their response is understood as an act of defiance and disobedience. The word *Rabb* in their statement *so, go forth, you and your Rabb, and fight*, may refer to Hārūn, because Arabs use the word *rabb* (lord) for an elder as well as for one having a higher position, as it is used in *Indeed he is my master (rabbī), who has made good my residence* (Q 12:23) (; Māwardī; Samʿānī). Or it may be a reference to Allah Most High, meaning “your Lord will help and support you” (Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz*; Ṭabarī). The outcome of this event was forty years of wandering: *He said, “Then verily, it shall be forbidden them for forty years; while they shall wander on earth. So grieve not for the iniquitous people”* (Q 5:26).

viii. Their substitution of another word for *ḥiṭṭa*

Two nearly identical passages (Q 2:58-59; 7:161-62) mention the violation of a Divine command, asking the Children of Isrāʾīl to utter a specific word (*ḥiṭṭa*) while entering the gate of an unspecified city—identified as one of the gates of Jerusalem, “called *bāb ḥiṭṭa*” by Ibn ʿAbbās, Qatāda, and Suddī (d. 127/745), and as “Jericho (Ariḥā), near Jerusalem” by Ibn Zayd (Ṭabarī; cf. Sammarqandī, *sub* Q 2:58; also see Rāzī and Ibn Kathīr for other identifications): *And when We said, “Go into this city and eat freely of that which is therein, from wheresoever you wish, and enter the gate prostrating, and say, ‘ḥiṭṭa’; that We may forgive you your iniquities and We shall increase the virtuous.” But the wrongdoers replaced what they had been told to say with something else and We sent down upon the evil-doers wrath from Heaven for their evil-doing* (Q 2:58-59). The word *ḥiṭṭa* means “*ḥiṭṭa ʿannā awzāranā*”—‘take down our loads from us’” (Jawharī; Rāghib); or “unburden us an unburdening (Zamakhsharī). The Children of Isrāʾīl mockingly substituted

ḥiṭṭa with another word; thus, instead of saying *ḥiṭṭa* and entering the gate prostrating, they said *ḥabbatun fī shaʿra* (“a seed on a hair!”) and entered the gate moving on their buttocks (Bukhārī, *wa-qūlū ḥiṭṭa*; Muslim, Q 2:58; cf. Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:58); or they said *ḥaṭā simqāthā azba mazba*, a Hebrew phrase which in Arabic is *ḥabbatu ḥinṭatin ḥamrāʾu mathqūbatun fihā shaʿra* (“red wheat grain threaded with a hair”) as per ‘Abd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/ca.652) (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, qawluhu bāb qawlihi ḥiṭṭa; Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, *sub* Q 2:58); or they said *ḥinṭa* (wheat) (Ṭabarī, Q 2:58). Instead of entering the city in humility, seeking forgiveness—as they were commanded—they entered the city mocking the Divine command (Zamkhasharī). The command is reiterated in Q 4:154, without the mention of prostration.

ix. Their rejection of the Heavenly food

The Children of Isrāʾīl asked for the produce of the earth while they were in the desert and complained about having to eat only the heavenly manna and quail, which was given them without any toiling (cf. al-Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya; Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:61). The verse where this rejection of the heavenly food is mentioned also carries a Divine judgment: *And when you said, “O Mūsā, we shall not endure one food, so call upon your Lord for us, that He may bring forth for us some of what the earth produces—herbs, cucumbers, wheat/garlic, lentils, and onions.” He said, “Would you substitute what is meaner for what is better? Go down to any town, and there you will have what you ask for.” Abasement and poverty were imposed on them, and they earned a burden of wrath from Allah. That is because they disbelieved in the signs of Allah, and killed the prophets without right. That is because they disobeyed, and were transgressors* (Q 2:61). The word *fūm* is understood to mean wheat as well as the bread made from it by the early exegetes (*al-ḥinṭa wal-khubz* in Farrāʾ). Al-Ṭabarī cites a narration from Ibn ‘Abbās, who said “*fūm* is wheat in the dialect of the Banū Hāshim”. It is also the opinion of several other exegetes including ‘Aṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ, Mujāhid b. Jabr, Abū Mālik, al-Suddī, Qatāda, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Ibn Zayd (Ṭabarī). Others understand *fūm* to mean garlic (*al-thawm*; Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim). The word *miṣran* is understood as “any big city” by most, but Abū al-‘Āliya (478/1086) and al-Rabīʿ b. Anas (479/1087) held that the *miṣran* here refers to Egypt; this is based on a rare reading of *miṣran* as *miṣra* and other verses (Q 26:57-59; 44:25-28) which state that Allah Most High made the Children of Isrāʾīl inheritors of the lands and gardens of the Egyptians. Al-Ṭabarī, however, rejects the rare reading, because *miṣran* (any city) is the consensus opinion based on “all the codices that Muslims have and the agreement of the Readers’ recitation, as no one reads it by leaving out the *tanwīn* (“-an” the nunation; the sign of indefinite accusative case) and by dropping the *alif*, except for the one whose argument is not permissible in opposition to the overwhelming

consensus of the authoritative Readers.” Furthermore, although Allah Most High bequeathed them the gardens and lands previously possessed by the Egyptians, He did not return them to their land; rather, He promised Syro-Palestine (*al-Shām*) for them (*Tafsīr*).

x. Their haste in committing sin

And you see many of them hastening to commit sin and transgression (yusārīʿūna fi-l-ithm wal-ʿudwān) (Q 5:62). The phrase *many of them*, by scholarly consensus (Ibn ʿAbbās; Ṭabarī; Nasafi; Bayḍāwī; Qurṭubī), is a reference to the Jews. The noun “*ithm*—sin” in the verse is generally explained as unbelief by the majority (see e.g. Ṭabarī; Makkī, *Hidāya*). Al-Baghawī, however, understands it more generally as “disobedience towards Allah, and transgression stands for *ẓulm*—iniquity; or it is said that sin means their concealment of a portion of Torah, and injustice is what they added to it” (*Tafsīr*). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī remarks that “*musāraʿa*—hurrying” is generally used in the Qurʾān in reference to the virtuous deeds; for instance, “*they hasten* (yusārīʿūna) *to do good deeds*” (Q 3:114) and “*We hasten* (nusārīʿu lahum) *for them good things*” (Q 23:56) and consequently *al-ʿajala* (which also means hastening) would have been the word here, but Allah Most High uses *musāraʿa* advantageously (*li-fāʿida*), because they (the Jews) would embark boldly upon these objectionable acts as if they were on the right way (*ka-annahum muḥiqqūna fīhi*) (*Tafsīr*). “Ambitious desires overwhelmed them and carried them away to the labyrinths of pain” (Qushayrī).

xi. Their transgression regarding the Sabbath

The Sabbath, *al-sabt* in Arabic, from the root *s-b-l*, is mentioned six times (Q 2:65; 4:47, 154; 7:163; 16:124) as a noun. Observing the Sabbath was made obligatory for the Children of Isrāʾīl (Q 4:154). It was, however, *only ordained for those who differed concerning it* (Q 16:124)—a verse which is variously understood to mean: “ordained only for the Jews and not for other religious communities, as it was not part of the Law in the religion of Ibrāhīm, upon him peace” (Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 16:124); as a curse for those who differed about it (Samʿānī); or because they arbitrarily chose its observance and nonobservance (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr). Q 7:163 mentions the dwellers of an unspecified *town by the sea*, who were tested regarding the Sabbath, as fish would surface on their Sabbath and not on other days. The town is identified in the commentaries as Ayla, Midian, or Tiberias and the event is said to have occurred during the time of Prophet Dāwūd, upon him peace (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥatīm; Rāzī; Qurṭubī). Two verses (Q 2:65; 7:166) specify punishment for transgressing the Sabbath to have been their metamorphosis into apes, “*Be you apes, despised*”. The transgressors are also referred to in Q 5:60, as those *Allah has cursed and upon whom is His Wrath, and among whom He has made some*

to be apes and swine. The punishment is recalled in Q 4:47, as a warning to the People of the Book, specifically to the Jews of Madina, to *believe in what We have sent down, confirming that which is with you, before We blot out faces and turn them backwards, or curse them as We cursed the People of the Sabbath* (cf. Ṭabarī; Qurtubī).

According to the majority view, the Sabbath transgressors were metamorphosed into apes, they survived for three days during which they neither ate nor drank nor produced offsprings (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Rāzī; Qurtubī). Mujāhid b. Jabr, however, denied their physical metamorphosis and said only their hearts metamorphosed and their intellects were made like those of apes (or, as per another edition of his *Tafsīr*, he said, they did not metamorph into apes, but this verse is like Q 62:5, which likens them to an ass bearing books). Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Qurtubī both cite this opinion and al-Qurtubī calls it a singular opinion, “which no other exegete has, as far as I know, and Allah knows best”. (For a fuller exposition, see *SABBATH*.)

xii. Their distortion (*taḥrīf*) of the Scripture

This is specifically mentioned in five verses (Q 2:59; 3:78; 4:46; 5:13, 14) and, according to exegetical explanations, was done for financial gain, to conceal the places where the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, was mentioned in their Books (see AHMAD, UPON HIM BLESSINGS AND PEACE), to alter the legal rulings of the Torah, “like the Law of stoning” (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; for this, also see Q 5:15), after taking bribes (Makkī, *sub* Q 2:75), and it was accomplished by twisting their tongues (Q 3:78), and through false interpretations by their scholars. Al-Baghawī says some Jews who were known to do this included Ka‘b al-Ashraf, Malīk b. al-Ṣayf, Ḥuyayy b. Akḥṭab, Abū Yāsir and Shu‘ba b. ‘Amr, who with their tongues altered and changed the real content of their Books (*Tafsīr*, *sub* Q 3:78) (see *TAMPERING*).

xiii. Their disregard of the Book of Allah

The majority of the exegetes take the referent of Q 2:101 to be the Jews: *And when there came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming that which is with them, a group of those who have been given the Scripture cast the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they knew not* (cf. Baghawī, Qurtubī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ibn ‘Atīyya). Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (107-198/725-814) explains the verse as: “They wrapped [the Torah] in silk (*ḥarīr*) and brocade (*dibāj*), and they decorated it with gold and silver, but they did not permit that which is permitted by it and they did not prohibit that which is prohibited by it. This is the meaning of *throwing it behind the back*” (Qurtubī, *sub* Q 2:101). The same theme occurs in Q 3:187.

xiv. Their demand to see Allah

Q 2:55: *And when you said, ‘O Mūsā, we will never believe you until we see Allah*

outright (*jahratan*).’ Al-Ṭabarī says they demanded “to see Allah with the eyes (*‘iḡānan*), without any veil (*lā sāṭir*) between us and Him, and no covering should prevent us from seeing Him, and we should look at Him with our eyes (*ḥattā nanẓura ilayhi bi-abṣārīnā*)”. This was said either by the seventy men, who accompanied Mūsā to Mount Ṭūr or by the whole nation of the Children of Isrāʾīl, except those whom Allah saved from this sin (Baghawī; Ibn al-Jawzī). Their demand is also recalled in Q 4:153: *The People of the Scripture ask you to bring down a Book from the heaven, but they had asked of Mūsā [even] greater than that, saying, ‘Show us Allah outright.’* Al-Rāzī says that when a Book was revealed unto Mūsā, they were not satisfied with this Divine portent; instead, they asked for the vision (*al-ruʿya*), with their own eyes (*al-muʿāyana*). This is a proof that their [new] demand for a Book to be sent down is not for seeking guidance, but mere stubbornness (*sub* Q 2:55).

xv. Their reproachable sayings

“We are the children of Allah and His beloved”

Two passages (Q 5:12-30 and 41-86) in Sūrat al-Māʾida (Q 5) mentions a series of transgressions committed by the Children of Isrāʾīl; in some verses Christians and hypocrites are also included. Some of their transgressions appear successively, making a continuous narrative. Q 5:18 includes Christians in their claim: *The Jews and the Christians say, ‘We are the children of Allah and His beloved.’* Most commentators take the statement to be metaphorical, as al-Wāḥidī explains: “The Jews believe that Allah, in His affection and sympathy for them, is like a compassionate and kind-hearted father” (*Wajīz*). Al-Rāzī says that a word is omitted here; what the Jews meant is *naḥnu abnāʾ rusulī-Ilāhi*—we are the sons of Messengers of Allah (*Tafsīr*); the Jews made this statement, purposefully wanting to omit that element (*rasūl* // *rusul*) of the genitive construction (Khāzin). According to Ibn ʿAbbās, Allah be pleased with him and his father, the Prophet invited some Jews of Madina to Islam, warning them of Divine punishment, but they rejected his invitation, saying, “Why would we fear punishment from Allah? *We are the children of Allah and His beloved*” (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, Rāzī). Their claim is repudiated and they are asked, *Why then does He punish you for your sins? Nay, you are but [mortal] humans, from among what He has created. He forgives whomsoever He wills and He punishes whomsoever He wills, and unto Allah belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is in between them; and unto Him is the journey’s end.*

“The Hand of Allah is shackled”

The Jews say, “The Hand of Allah is shackled.” Shackled are their hands, and they are cursed for what they say. Nay, but His two Hands are outstretched, He bestows as He wills. Surely, what has been sent unto you by your Lord will increase many of them in rebellion and disbelief. And We have cast enmity and hatred among them

until the Day of Resurrection. As often as they kindle a flame of war, Allah extinguishes it. They strive to work corruption on Earth and Allah loves not the workers of corruption. (Q 5:64)

The verse contains a strong reproach for the Jews for their “insolence and recklessness toward their Lord, by describing Him in such an inappropriate manner” (Ṭabarī). “Shackled and outspread hands,” says al-Zamakhsharī, “are metaphors for stinginess and generosity, like His Words, *And do not make your hand shackled to your neck* (Q 17:29)” (Zamakhsharī). Other commentators, relating from Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Ikrima, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, and Qatāda, mention that Allah Most High was generous with the Jews, giving them all kinds of good things and making some of them the wealthiest men. But when they disbelieved in Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and denied his message and belied him, Allah held back from them what He had bestowed upon them previously; and this is why Finḥās b. ‘Āzūrā’ said *the hand of Allah is shackled* (Zamakhsharī, Rāzī, Baghawī). Al-Rāzī says: When the Jews saw the extreme poverty of some Companions of the Prophet, they said by way of mockery and ridicule that the God of Muḥammad is poor; His hands are shackled (*Tafsīr*).

“Allah is poor”

This statement is quoted verbatim in Q 3:181: *Allah has certainly heard the words of those who said, ‘Allah is poor and we are rich.’ We shall record what they said, and their slaying of the prophets without right, and We shall say, ‘Taste the punishment of the Fire.’* Al-Ṭabarī and al-Wāḥidī both provide the following occasion of revelation for the verse on the authority of ‘Ikrima and al-Suddī, according to which the statement was uttered by Finḥās b. ‘Āzūrā [al-Baghawī gives the name as ‘Āzūrā’], who was one of the erudite scholars of the Madinan Jews to Abū Bakr, who hit him and said, “By the One in whose Hand is my soul, if there were no treaty between us and you, I would have cut your throat, O enemy of Allah.” Thereafter, Finḥās went to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and said to him, “O Muḥammad! Look at what your Companion has done.” The Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace, said to Abū Bakr, “What made you do what you did?” He said, “O Messenger of Allah, verily the enemy of Allah uttered calumnious words (*qawlan ‘azīma*) and he claimed that Allah is poor and they were rich. I became angry for the sake of Allah and I struck his face.” But Finḥās denied this account. Thereafter, Allah Most High revealed, *Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said, ‘Indeed, Allah is poor, while we are rich,’* refuting Finḥās’ claim and corroborating the words of Abū Bakr (*Asbāb*, sub Q 3:181; see

also, Ṭabarī and Baghawī).

“We hear and disobey”

And when We made a Covenant with you and raised the Mount over you, “Take hold of what We have given you with strength, and listen.” They said, “We hear and disobey,” and they were made to drink the calf into their hearts because of their disbelief. Say, “Evil is that which your belief enjoins upon you, if you are believers.” Zayn al-Islām Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin b. ‘Abd al-Mālik al-Naysābūrī al-Qushayrī (376-465/ca.986-ca.1073) comments, “As if no counsel was beneficial for them, no punishment deterred them from their disobediences, and they paid no heed to any reprimand; and they did not act according to what was required” (*Tafsīr*). “The meaning of *listen* in the verse, al-Ṭabarī explains, “is to pay heed to what is being commanded, and accept it in full obedience, obey and act upon it” (*Tafsīr*). “Some scholars hold that they uttered *we hear and disobey* in reality, an exaggerated statement reflecting their stubbornness and offense; others hold that this is a metaphorical construction and they did not actually pronounce these words, but their actions amounted to saying it” (Ibn ‘Aṭīyya). The commentators explain that *wa ushribū fī qulūbihim al-‘ijla bi-kufrihim* (lit. “and their hearts were made to drink the Calf due to their disbelief”) is “a metaphorical statement (*tashbīh wa majāz*), indicating that the matter of the Calf had lodged itself in their hearts” (Ibn ‘Aṭīyya); it indicates “the love of the Calf” that had taken hold of their hearts (Ibn Kathīr). *Whosoever is an enemy of Jibrīl, he it is who sent it down upon thy heart by the command of Allah, confirming that which was there before, and as a guidance and glad tidings for the believers* (Q 2:97).

xvi. Their claim to be the exclusive friends of Allah

“Say, O you who are Jews! If you claim that you are the close friends of Allah, to the exclusion of other people, then long for death if you are truthful” (Q 62:6). In response, they are challenged to long for death, since “Allah does not punish His special friends (*awliyā*)”; rather, He honors them (*yukrimuhum*), and bestowed blessings upon them. So, if you are truthful in your claim, then long for death so that you can find ease from the sorrow of this world (*karb al-dunyā*), its anxieties (*humūmihā*), and its distresses (*ghumūmihā*), and so that you can reach the delights of the Gardens (*raḥḥ al-jinnān*) and its blessings through death” (Ṭabarī). Q 62:7-8 asserts that they will never long for death, *because of what their hands have put forth; and Allah knows the wrongdoers*. Yet, despite their running away from it, death will certainly take over and they will be returned to the *Knower of the Unseen and seen, and He will inform you of that which you used to do*. A similar rebuke is given in Q 2:94: *If the abode of the Hereafter with*

Allah is for you alone, to the exclusion of other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful. For anyone who believes that he belongs to the People of Paradise, death should be more beloved to him than life (Māwardī, *sub* Q 2:94).

But they will never long for it, because of what they have sent ahead, and Allah knows the wrongdoers. You will find them the most covetous of people for life, even more than the idolaters; each one of them would wish to live a thousand years, although that would not remove him from the punishment. And Allah sees whatsoever they do (Q 2:95-96).

xvii. Usury and other unlawful earnings

Q 4:161 censures Jews for their consumption of usury though they were prohibited from it, indicating that interest-based earnings were unlawful for them, as reinforced in the Qurʾān (*cf.* 2:275-79; 3:130; 30:39). The verse also censures devouring others' wealth illegitimately. Exegetes say that this refers to the practice of some Jewish rabbis and Christian monks (Q 9:34) who would accept bribes for legal decisions and distort religion through their writings, which they claimed to be Divine writ (Makkī; Baghawī, *sub* Q 4:161).

xviii. Their dispute about Ibrāhīm

Jews and Christians both claimed special status with Allah (Q 2:111-13; 5:18; 62:6) as well as with the Friend of Allah—Ibrāhīm, upon him be peace (*cf.* Q 4:125: *And who is better in religion than the one who submits his face to Allah, is virtuous, and follows the religion of Ibrāhīm as a ḥanīf? And Allah took Ibrāhīm as his intimate friend*). The Children of Isrāʾīl claimed this special status due to their genealogical descent from Ibrāhīm, through Ishāq and Yaʿqūb, upon them all peace. Several commentators report the saying of Ibn ʿAbbās, may Allah be pleased with him and his father both, who said, “the Jews say, ‘we are the children of Ibrāhīm’” (*cf.* Samarqandī, *sub* Q 7:163; Baghawī, *sub* Q 3:33; Ibn ʿAṭīyya, *sub* Q 62:6). They trace this claim variously to incidents involving the Jews of Madīna. The Qurʾān denies the Jewish claim of a special status with Allah and His intimate Friend, for Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian and the Torah and Injīl were not sent down but after him (Q 3:65-67).

Al-Rāzī says, “The Jews claimed that Ibrāhīm was upon their religion and the Christians claimed that he was upon their religion. Allah has discredited these claims (*fa-abṭala-llāhu ʿalayhim dhālika*), for the Torah and Injīl were not sent down but after him; so how can anyone consider [Ibrāhīm] to be a Jew or Christian?” He then entertains an objection: one may argue that you cannot also claim him to be a Muslim, for Islam was not sent down but a long time after him. If you respond by saying that what you really mean is that he adhered to the principles of Islam, then the Jews and the Christians can claim likewise. Al-Rāzī's answer is that “the Qurʾān informs us that Ibrāhīm was a Muslim and a ḥanīf [*cf.* Q 2:135; 3:67, 95; 6:161; 16:120, 123; 22:78], whereas

the Torah and the Injil do not say that he was a Jew or a Christian” (Rāzī, *sub* Q 3:65).

xix. Their penchant for misguidance

By the consensus of the exegetes, Jews—and more specifically the Jews of Madina—are the referent in Q 4:44, which begins a passage listing several other transgressions, including their “purchase of misguidance”: *Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Book, but who purchase misguidance (al-ḍalāla), and wish that you should stray from the Path?*” (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ṭabarī; Baghawī restricts the scope of the referent in this verse to the Jews of Madina). Makkī explains the phrase *purchase misguidance* by saying: “they prefer choosing the way that misleads, instead of choosing the path of Divine guidance (*al-hudā*)” (*Hidāya*). This is understood as a reference to their replacing true belief with erroneous ways and rejection the Prophet Muḥammad (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Rāzī; Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 4:44). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explains that the verb *purchase* here means “to prefer”: “The verse contains an ellipsis (*iḍmār*); the implication is that they they acquire error in exchange for guidance, as in [Q 2:16], *It is they who have purchased misguidance [in exchange] for guidance; [their commerce has not brought them profit; and they are not rightly guided]*” (*Tafsīr*, *sub* Q 4:44; see BUYING AND SELLING).

xx. Their belief in *jibt* and *ṭāghūt*

Q 4:51 reads: *Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture, who believe in al-jibt and al-ṭāghūt, and they say about the disbelievers, “They are better guided than the believers.”* Exegetes give different explanations for the two nouns; *al-jibt* is defined as something containing no good (Rāghib, *sub j-b-t*); it is an Arabicized word (*kalima dakhīla*), for the stem *j-b-t* is not known in Arabic—originally it was *jibs* (Ibn ʿĀshūr); it means sorcery and sorcerer (*siḥr* and *sāḥir*), idols in general (*al-aṣnām*), or the devil—*al-shayṭān* (Ibn al-Jawzī). *Al-ṭāghūt* is a collective noun for everything that is worshipped besides Allah (Rāghib, *sub ṭ-gh-y*); or the devil itself, or a sorcerer or *kāhin* (the soothsayer, or the Jewish priest; cf. the Hebrew word *kohen*, in the sense of priest) (Ibn al-Jawzī). Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī (110-209/708-829) says that “*jibt* and *ṭāghūt* together mean everything worshipped [besides Allah], be it a stone or earth (*madar*) or a picture or the devil” (*Majāz*). Al-Ṭabarī holds that *jibt* is used to denote idols (*al-aṣnām*) in general, while *ṭāghūt* means *tarājimat al-aṣnām*, those soothsayer-priests who interpret the words of the idols and convey them to the audience, telling them lies so as to lead them astray. He adds: “some hold that *jibt* is the *kāhin* while *ṭāghūt* refers to a Jewish man called Kaʿb b. al-Ashraf who was the leader of the Jews” (*Tafsīr*). Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib mentions on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās that in this specific verse, *al-*

jibt refers to Ḥuyayy b. Akḥṭab and *ṭāghūt* refers to Ka'b b. al-Ashraf (*Hidāya*; cf. Ṭabarī, Samʿānī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Māturīdī), to whom the Jews often turned for advice; they are called by these two names because they always strove to seduce others (*ighwāʾ al-nās*) and lead them astray (*Rāzī*). Al-Qurṭubī also cites Ibn Masʿūd, who said that *jibt* refers to Ka'b b. al-Ashraf and *ṭāghūt* refers to Ḥuyayy (*Tafsīr*). Despite differing on the details, exegetes agree that this verse refers to a specific group of Jews (Thaʿālibī, *Jawāhir*).

xxi. War-mongering and working corruption

Q 5:64 criticizes the Jews for wishing war: *As often as they kindle a flame of war, Allah extinguishes it. They strive to work corruption on Earth, and Allah loves not the workers of corruption.* This is understood by many commentators to refer to the Jews of Madina specifically, and Jews throughout their history more generally. Several exegetes have commented that the 'war' referenced here was their battles against the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, as reported from al-Ḥasan and Mujaḥid. Others say that the import was more general, referring to their failed plots and lost battles throughout history (Ālūsī; Ibn al-Jawzī). Al-Ṭabarī commented that 'corruption' here meant rejecting the verses of Allah, refuting His Prophets, and contravening His commands and prohibitions (*Tafsīr*). Ibn al-Jawzī gave four other possible implications of the term: general disobedience (as per Ibn ʿAbbās and Muqātil), erasing the mention of Muḥammad, upon him peace, from their books and opposition to Islam (as per al-Zajjāj), disbelief, and oppression (as per Māwardī) (*Zād*). Al-Baghawī says, "Allah made them differ [amongst themselves] in their religion...they spread corruption by violating the Laws of Torah...Allah imposed Bukhtunaṣṣar over them; then they spread corruption once again, and Allah sent the Romans and Byzantines against them; then they spread corruption once again, and Allah empowered the Majūs [Zoroastrians, *q.v.*] over them; then they spread corruption once again, and Allah sent Muslims against them" (*Tafsīr*).

xxii. Denial of the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace

Most of the Jews who were contemporaneous with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, denied his prophethood even though they find him inscribed in the Torah and the Injīl that is with them (Q 7:157), and should have recognized him as they recognize their children, as per one explanation of Q 2:146, *those unto whom We have given the Book recognize him/it as they recognize their children, but a group of them knowingly conceal the Truth. The Truth is from your Lord; so be not among the doubters*, which may also refer to their recognition of the direction of the *qibla*, or to both (Ṭabarī; Samʿānī; Qurṭubī; Ibn Kathīr; Māwardī; Samarqandī). ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām—the Jewish rabbi who became an

erudite Companion of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said similar words: “Indeed, I recognize him even more than I recognize my children” (Ṭabarī; Samarqandī). The recognition of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, is particularly incumbent on the rabbis (*aḥbār al-yahūd*) and the monks of the Christians (*cf.* Ṭabarī; Baghawī; Makkī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*), but they “conceal all that is found in their books” (Ibn Kathīr). “The scholars of the Jews and Christians had two vocations (*ḥirfatān*): They disbelieved in Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, although, they knew in their hearts that he is truly a Messenger sent by Allah Most High—and Allah prohibits this activity in the first verse [meaning Q 3:70]. Their second vocation is to excel in spreading doubts (*fi ilqāʾ al-shubuhāt*) and in concealing arguments, evidence, and clear proofs (*fi ikhfāʾ al-dalāʾil wal-bayyināt*); and Allah Most High prohibited this kind of activity in the second verse.” (*Tafsīr*, sub Q 3:71).

Ibn ‘Abbās, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, said, Q 2:6, *Indeed, those who disbelieve—it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them—they will not believe*, was “sent down concerning the Jews of Madina at the time of the Messenger of Allah and it rebukes them for their disavowal of the prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and their accusing him of lying, even though they knew him and had knowledge that he was the Messenger of Allah to them and to all people (Ṭabarī). Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib says Q 3:99 (*Say: O People of the Book! Why do you avert (limā taṣuddūna) those who believe from the Way of Allah, seeking to make it crooked while you are witnesses. And Allah is not unaware of what you do*) addresses the Jews and Christians and the meaning of *averting from the Way of Allah* is their denial of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and all that he brought of religion (*Hidāya*; *cf.* Samarqandī). This *averting from the Way of Allah* was realized by belying the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, through their claim that his description is not found in their books (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). Al-Māwardī also situates the verse in the context of Madina and says, “diverting others means their inciting (*al-ighrāʾ*) the tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj so that they began to remember wars of the Time of Ignorance (*al-Jāhiliyya*, *q.v.*)... and this is a specific act on behalf of the Jews [of Madina]; or it may mean their belying the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and their denial of his unquestionable references in their Books” (*Nukat*).

Ibn ‘Abbās said Q 2:97 (*Whosoever is an enemy of Jibrīl, then he is who sent it down upon your heart by the command of Allah, confirming that which was there before, and as a guidance and glad tidings for the believers*) was revealed when some Jews came to the Prophet and asked him who brings revelation to him. When he said Jibrīl, they said, had it been Mikāʾīl, we would have followed you, because the latter is the angel of rain and mercy and Jibrīl brings down war

and death and he is our enemy (Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, sub Q 2:97). Another account states that ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, (d. 23/644), Allah be pleased with him, asked certain Jews why they did not believe in the Prophet, and they said, “Jibrīl is our enemy because instead of us, he gave the prophethood to others” (Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, sub Q 2:97; Samarqandī).

xxiii. Believing at the beginning of the day and disbelieving at its end

Q 3:72 reads: *And a group of the People of the Book says, ‘Believe in what was sent down unto those who believe at the start of the day and disbelieve at its end, that haply they may return.’* The exegetes understand this to refer to some of the Jews of Madina (Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Wāḥidī identify a group of twelve rabbis, who said to one another, let us embrace the religion of Muḥammad in the morning verbally, and disbelieve in him in the evening, and say, “Verily, we have studied our books and discussed the matter with our scholars and we have realized that Muḥammad is not mentioned in [our revealed Book]; maybe his Companions will desist and doubt their belief [in the veracity of Islam]” (*Zād*; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Baghawī). Many early exegetes, including Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid b. Jabr, and Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī (d. 150/767), attribute this statement to the Jews of Madina or to the Jews of Khaybar, who attempted to misguide the weak believers at the time when the direction of the prayer was changed from Jerusalem toward the Ka‘ba in Makka (cf. Q 2:144). They said, let us take this directive during the day, but return to our direction in the evening, and it may happen that some Muslims would say, “Those are the People of the Book and they know better” (Baghawī).

xxiv. Wishing to turn Muslims back to disbelief

The desire of the People of the Book to turn the believers back to disbelief is mentioned in Q 2:109 and Q 3:100. Q 2:109 reads: *Many of the People of the Book wish they could turn you back to disbelief after you have believed, out of envy in their souls, even after truth has become clear to them. So pardon and forbear, until Allah comes with His command; truly, Allah is Powerful over all things.* Al-Ṭabarī and several other commentators specify the Jewish poet Ka‘b b. al-Ashraf—whose poetry ridiculed the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and who incited Muslims to turn back on their belief—as the special referent of this verse; others cite a report from Ibn ‘Abbās, who said that the verse was revealed after the Battle of Uḥud (3/625), when a group of Jews said to the Muslims, “How do you evaluate what has hit you recently? If you had been following the Truth you would not have been defeated. So turn back to our religion—it is much better for you” (Samarqandī; Ibn Abī Hātim, Qurṭubī; Makkī; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, sub Q 2:109).

Q 3:72 (above) was understood as part of the efforts to confuse Muslims with the hope of leading them away from their faith (*Zād*; *Wāḥidī*, *Wajiz*; *Baghawī*).

xxv. Hostility Toward believers

This hostility was specifically mentioned in Q 5:82: *You will surely find the most hostile of men toward those who believe to be the Jews and those who ascribe partners unto Allah, and you will find the nearest of them in affection toward those who believe to be those who say, "We are naṣārā (Christians)"; that is because among them are priests and monks, and because they are not arrogant.* Al-Rāzī notes that Allah brackets the Jews with the polytheists because they were extremely hostile (*fī ghāyat al-ʿadāwa*) to Muslims; moreover, the fact that Allah mentions them first, before the polytheists, suggests that they are more hostile than the polytheists. Al-Rāzī goes on to explain that this verse is intended to relieve the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, of his distress over the Jews' hostility; Allah is clarifying that their rebellion (*tamarrud*) and disobedience (*maʿṣiya*) is nothing new, but part of their history of rejecting their own prophets as well. Even though, from the creedal perspective, the disbelief of the Christians is more offensive (*aghlaẓ*) than that of the Jews, because Christians dispute the truth regarding both divinity and prophethood, while the Jews dispute only with regard to prophethood, yet, despite their gross disbelief, the Christians tend to "turn away from the world, focus on worship and they do not have yearning for leadership, pride (*takabbur*), or haughtiness (*taraffuʿ*).... On the other hand, despite their disbelief being lighter (*akhaḥḥ*), the Jews are characterized by their intense greed for this world (*bil-ḥirṣ al-shadīd*), which is the well-spring of all blameworthy traits, for whosoever is excessive in his pursuit of the world abandons his religion in pursuit of the world and engages in all kinds of prohibited (*maḥẓūr*) and abominable (*munkar*) things (Rāzī, *sub* Q 5:82).

In sum, the Qurʾān identifies them with those *who have incurred Divine wrath* as per the majority view of the exegetes who identify Jews and Christians to be the respective referents of the concluding verse of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (Q 1:7): *The path of those whom You have blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are astray* (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Qurṭubī; Samʿānī; Baghawī; Rāzī; Ibn Kathīr; Suyūṭī, *Durr*). This identification is supported by other verses (Q 2:61; 3:112; 5:60; 48:6) and the ḥadīth of ʿAdiyy b. Ḥātim (see Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Juzʾ 3, No. 26), in which the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, identifies the Jews as those who have incurred Divine wrath and Christians as those who have gone astray (Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, al-Qurʾān, wa min Sūra Fātiḥat al-kitāb; graded *ḥasan gharīb*; Alḥmad, *Musnad*, 32:124 § 19381; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Manāqib al-ṣaḥāba, dhikr ʿAdiyy b. Ḥātim, 16:184); al-Suyūṭī calls it "an exegesis by the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and by all the

Companions and Successors” (*Hāshiyat Nawāhid al-Abkār*, 1:244).

Muslims and the Torah

Abū Hurayra, Allah be well-pleased with him, said, “The People of the Book used to recite the Torah in Hebrew and explain it to Muslims in Arabic. The Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace, said to them, ‘Neither verify nor deny what the People of the Book say; rather say, *We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us* (2:136)’” (Bukhārī, *al-ʿItisām bil-kitāb wal-sunna*, qawl al-Nabī ṣallā-Llāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam “lā tasʿalū ahl al-kitāb ʿan shayʿ”).

Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773-852/1371-1449) explains that in this ḥadīth, “the People of the Book refers to the Jews, but the ruling is general, thus, it also applies to the Christians” (*Fath*, 9:111). Al-Bukhārī also cites the saying of Ibn ʿAbbās, Allah be pleased with him and his father, who said, “O Muslims! How do you ask the People of the Book, while your Book—revealed to His Prophet—is the most recent news from Allah (*akhbār bi-Llāhi*) and you recite it; it is the Book that has not been distorted. And Allah has revealed to you that the People of the Book have changed with their own hands what was revealed to them and they say, ‘This is from Allah,’ in order to gain some worldly benefit thereby. Is the knowledge revealed to you not sufficient to prevent you from asking them? By Allah I have never seen any one of them asking (Muslims) about what has been revealed to you” (Bukhārī, *al-Shahādāt*, *lā yusʿalu ahl al-shirk ʿan al-shahādati wa ghayrihā*).

In a related ḥadīth, narrated by Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh, an incident is mentioned which emphasizes the same point: “ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb came to the Prophet, upon him peace and blessings, with a book he had obtained from some of the People of the Book. He read it to the Prophet, who became angry, and said, ‘Are you hesitant regarding it, O son of Al-Khaṭṭāb? By the One in whose Hand is my soul, I have certainly been sent with that which is pure and clear proof. Do not ask them [the People of the Book] about anything, for they may inform you of something which is true and you may reject it; or they may inform you of something which is false and you may believe it. By the One in whose Hand is my soul, even if Mūsā was alive, he would have no choice but to follow me’” (Aḥmad, *Musnad*, *Musnad al-Mukthirīn min al-ṣaḥāba*, *Musnad Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh*, 23:349 § 15156; al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab*, 1:347 §175). In religious matters, the Prophetic unambiguously forbade Muslims to imitate or borrow anything from others. He said, “Whoever imitates a people is one of them” (Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Libās*, *fī lubs al-shuhra*; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 9:127 § 5116; al-Ṭabarānī, *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn*, 3:94 §1862). (Qurṭubī).

The Jews of Madina and their interactions with the Prophet and Muslims

The Jewish response to the Qurʾān and the coming of the last Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, began while the Prophet Muhammad was still in Makka. The Quraysh sent al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith and ʿUba b. Abī Muʿiṭ to the Jewish scholars of Madina, whom they held in high esteem because of their religious knowledge, to inquire about the veracity of his prophethood. The Jews advised them to ask the Prophet three questions; if he answered correctly then he is a prophet. The two returned with the questions and the Quraysh asked the Prophet about the youth who had taken refuge in a cave (Q 18:9), Dhūl-Qarnayn (Q 18:83), and about the spirit (*al-rūḥ*; Q 17:85). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said I will respond tomorrow, but he did not say *if Allah so wills* (Q 18:23-24) and did not receive revelation for fifteen (or forty, as per Rāzī) days, which made him very sad. Finally Jibrīl, upon him peace, came with Sūrat al-Kahf (Q 18), which responds to the questions about the youth in the cave and Dhūl-Qarnayn; the response to the question about the spirit is in Q 17:85 (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 18:5; *cf.* Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 17:85; Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, *sub* Q 18:9; Rāzī, *sub* Q 19:64; see CAVE; PEOPLE OF THE CAVE; DHŪL-QARNAYN; SPIRIT).

The three Madinan Jewish tribes—Banū Qaynuqāʿ, Banū al-Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayẓa—contemporaneous with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, are not named in the Qurʾān, but they are the direct and implied referent of many verses, specifically, the twenty-four-verse Sūrat al-Ḥashr (Q 59) which contains so many direct references to Banū al-Naḍīr that Ibn ʿAbbās used to call it Sūrat Banī al-Naḍīr (Wāḥidī, *Wasīṭ*; Ibn ʿAṭīyya, *Muḥarrar*; Baghawī, Ibn al-Jawzī; Khāzin, *Lubāb*, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 59).

Some Jews of Madina accepted Islam, these included the most learned rabbi of Banū Qanuqāʿ, al-Ḥuṣayn b. Salām, to whom Prophet gave a new name, ʿAbd Allāh (al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Sīra ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām). His tribe, however, repudiated him. He said to them, “O Jews! Be conscious of Allah. By Allah, apart from Whom there is no other diety, you know for certain that he is the Messenger of Allah and he has brought a true religion!” They said, “You lie.” (Bukhārī, Manāqib al-Anṣār, hijrat al-Nabī wa aṣḥābīh ilā-l-Madina; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, Islam ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām, qawmuḥu yukadhdhibūnahu wa lā yattabiʿūnahu).

Upon his arrival in Madina, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, established a formal Treaty with the three Jewish tribes of Madina and a bond of brotherhood (*muʿākhāt*) between the Madinan Muslims—Banū al-Aws, Banū al-Khazraj, the Anṣār—and the newcomers from Makka, the Muhājirūn. All communities were to jointly defend against outside aggressors, bearing their share of military expenditures and receiving their share of war booty. Yathrib

was declared inviolable for all signatories of the Treaty and mutual rights and responsibilities were guaranteed (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, al-Rasūl yuwādi‘ al-Yahūd). The Treaty did not last, however, and soon after the Battle of Badr (2/624), Banū Qaynuqā‘ demonstrated open hostility. When the news of Muslim victory reached them, Ka‘b b. al-Ashraf, their poet, left Madina and took refuge with the disbelievers in Makka, inciting them with his poetry to take revenge. One day, the Prophet admonished them in their market place, saying, “O Jews, Beware of Allah and of that which befell the Quraysh on the Day of Badr. Submit yourselves before the same would reach you. You surely know that I am a Prophet-Messenger (*nabiyy mursal*) and you find my mention in your Book.” They said: “O Muḥammad, you should not deceive yourself by [what happened when] you met those inexperienced in war. By Allah, if we were to fight you, you would know that we are men [of war]” (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, amr Banī Qaynuqā‘). Several commentators say that Q 3:12 was revealed in reference to these Jews: *Say to those who disbelieve, ‘You shall be overcome and gathered together in Hell—an evil resting place’* (Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr). Banū Qaynuqā‘ were expelled from Madina for breaking the treaty.

The second tribe to break the treaty was Banū al-Naḍīr. They secretly entered into a treaty with the Quraysh against the Madinan Muslim community. Their expulsion took place after the Battle of Uḥud fought in 3/625 after a siege. Banū al-Naḍīr were permitted to carry with them their belongings that could be loaded on a camel (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 59:2). Q 59:2 ascribes their expulsion to Allah Most High: *He it is Who expelled those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book*. The verses that follow state that whatever befell them and their palm trees, which were cut down during the siege, was by the permission of Allah (Q 59:2-5). Around the same time, some members of this tribe plotted to kill the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, by throwing a stone on his head from top of a house (Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 59; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, amr ijlā’ banī-l-Naḍīr).

The third Jewish tribe of Madina Banū Qurayza broke the Treaty in the midst of the Battle of the Trench imposed on Madina in 5/627 by a ten-thousand-strong army consisting of Makkan disbelievers and their allies, while all able-bodied Muslims were stationed by the trench, which was hurriedly dug around the city to protect it (see *MADINA; TRIBES AND CONFEDERATES*). When the siege of the city prolonged, the disbelieving Confederates secretly plotted an attack from within the city by persuading the Jews to attack Muslims from their side. Muslims found out the secret plot and thwarted it. The outcome of the Battle of the Trench is mentioned in Q 33:25: *And Allah turned back those who disbelieved in their rage; they attained no good. Allah sufficed the believers in Battle; and Allah is Strong, Mighty*. The Prophet, with his Companions, had hardly returned to

Madina, laid down his arms, and taken a bath, when Jibrīl came, as per the account of his wife, ʿĀisha (d. 58/678)—Allah be well-pleased with her—and said, “Have you laid down your arms? By Allah, we [Angels] have not laid them down yet. So set out for them.” The Prophet asked, “Where (are we to fight now)?” Jibrīl said, “Toward this side,” pointing toward Banū Qurayza. So the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, went out toward them (Muslim, *al-Jihād wal-siyar*, bāb jawāz qitāl man naqaḍa-l-ʿahd wa jawāz inzāl ahl al-ḥiṣn ʿalā ḥukm ḥākim ʿadl ahl li-l-ḥukm, Bukhārī, *al-Jihād wal-siyar*, al-ghusl baʿd al-ḥarb wal-ghubār; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, Kitāb al-maghāzī, Ghazwat al-Khandaq).

The Prophet sent word to those Muslims who had fought at the battle to rush toward the Banū Qurayza and pray the afternoon prayer there. The Muslim siege of Banū Qurayza lasted twenty-five days (cf. Ṭabarī, Qurtubī, and Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 33:26-27). Finally, Banū Qurayza agreed to have the matter decided by Saʿd b. Muʿadh b. al-Nuʿmān b. Imrīʾ al-Qays al-Awsī al-Ashhālī (see Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Juzʾ 1, No. 41), the leader of Banū al-Aws, who were a close ally of Banū Qurayza. Saʿd b. Muʿadh, may Allah be pleased with him, was wounded during the Battle of the Trench and he was in Madina at that time. “The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, sent for Saʿd and he arrived, (riding) a mule. When he approached, the Prophet said to the Anṣār, “Stand up for your chief, for the best among you.” Then he said to Saʿd, “These (i.e. Banū Qurayza) have agreed to accept your verdict.” Saʿd said, “Kill their warriors and take their offspring as captives.” On that the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, “You have judged according to Allah’s Judgment,” or, “according to the King’s judgment” (Bukhārī, Kitāb al-jihād wa-l-siyar, bāb idhā nazala-l-ʿaduww ʿalā ḥukm rajul; Muslim, *al-Jihād wal-siyar*, bāb jawāz qitāl man naqaḍa-l-ʿahd wa jawāz inzāl ahl al-ḥiṣn ʿalā ḥukm ḥākim ʿadl ahl li-l-ḥukm; also see Ṭabarī, Qurtubī, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 33:26-27; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, Taḥkīm Saʿd fi amr Banī Qurayza).

By the consensus of the exegetes, the “People of the Book” in Q 33:26-27 refer to Banū Qurayza who had supported the confederates: *And He brought those of the People of the Book who supported them down from their strongholds, and cast terror into their hearts. Some you slew, and some you took captive. And He bequeathed unto you their land, their homes, their property, and a land you have not trodden. And Allah is Powerful over all things.*

The last remaining concentration of Jews around Madina in Khaybar fell after the Battle of Khaybar (7/628) with abundant spoils coming into the hands of the Muslims, fulfilling the Divine promise made in Q 48:20: *Allah has promised you abundant spoils that you will capture—then He hastened this for you and restrained the people’s hands from you, that it may be a sign for the believers,*

and that He may guide you upon a straight path. The majority of exegetes gloss abundant spoils as the spoils of Khaybar (cf. Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr).

These early Jewish responses to the Qurʾān, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and Muslims have paradigmatically influenced Jewish-Muslim relationships throughout the centuries and they continue to have their impact.

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