

The background of the book cover is a dramatic painting. It depicts a shipwreck in a dark, stormy sea. In the foreground, there are dark, jagged rocks and debris. In the middle ground, a ship is partially submerged, with its masts and rigging visible. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, with a bright light source breaking through near the horizon, creating a dramatic silhouette effect. The overall mood is somber and powerful.

Shared Prophets

Biblical Figures

What they said and did

Second Edition

Bernard Payeur

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Biblical Figures in the Koran

What they said and did

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Foreword

The Disagreement

3:19 The [true] religion with Allah is Islam. Those who were given the Book (the Jews and Christians) did not disagree among themselves, except after certain knowledge came to them, out of envy among themselves. Whoever disbelieves in Allah's Revelations will find Allah Swift in retribution!

2:113 The Jews say: "The Christians follow nothing [substantial]" and the Christians say: "The Jews follow nothing [substantial]," while both recite the Book. Thus say too, those who know not. Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection regarding what they differ on.

Shared Prophets assumes a rudimentary knowledge of the Old Testament's best-known characters such as Moses, Abraham, Noah, Joseph (son of Jacob), Solomon, Lot, Saul, David, Adam, Cain, and Abel. As to the New Testament, it is sufficient to be aware that Christians believe 1) that Jesus is the Son of God 2) that he was born of the Virgin Mary 3) and that he died on the Cross.

The Koran gives credence only to the Virgin birth and vociferously denies the other two core Christian beliefs, with Jesus being the most vocal, after Allah, in denouncing those who would claim he is the Son of God. Mary, the only woman mentioned by name in the Koran, is there to back her son's claim that he is not divine, but just another Prophet of Allah, and a lesser one at that. There is no Joseph. Mary is a single mother, or so it would seem.

My short *Foreword* is my way of beginning the process of convincing those of you who don't care to learn about the Koran in the mistaken and dangerous delusion that it is like the Bible, *that you are wrong*. The Koran is not like the Bible, especially the New Testament portion, of which the Koran is the antithesis. Don't take my word for it. Read on, and let Allah convince you with His own Words.

Bernard Payeur

Revelations and Generalizations

THE PEOPLE

114 An-Nâs

*In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful*

114:1 Say: "I seek refuge with the Lord of the People,

114:2 "The King of the people,

114:3 "The God of the people,

114:5 "From the evil of the slinking whisperer [Satan],

114:6 "Who whispers in the breasts of people,

114:7 "Both jinn and men."

Both jinn and men. That is it, the last verse of the Koran. What a read! What a revelation! What is a jinn? It is a spirit that inhabits another dimension. There are good and evil jinns. The caricature of the genie is probably based on this creature of the Koran.

When I decided to read and study the Koran with the intention of writing about it, I was determined to get a Muslim's interpretation, one that could only be viewed as favourable to Islam. I also wanted a translation that was easy to read and understand. The edition that seemed to satisfy these requirements was a translation by Majid Fakhry, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the American University of Beirut. In the translator's own words, "We have tried to express ourselves in a simple, readable English idiom." *Publishers Weekly* wrote of Fakhry's notable accomplishment that it "succeeds in expressing the meanings of the original Arabic in simple readable English."

My goals in reading the Koran were diverse. At the top of my list was gaining an understanding of what makes this book so special; to understand what makes the religion based on its content so attractive to so many; and yes, to satisfy my curiosity about what God sounds like, or more accurately, reads like. I also read the Koran in the hope of dispelling prejudices and apprehensions I had developed after reading

about Islam from authors--devoted Muslims, most of them--who had nothing but praise for Allah and His "perfect religion."

In my books on the Koran, I prefer letting Allah and His Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, speak for themselves, offering only an informed layman's opinion, or an expert's explanation, where I feel one is warranted. When Fakhry's crisp translation is not sufficient, it is Moududi I most often turn to. Abul A'la Moududi's (also spelt Maududi) [1903-1979] credentials as a pre-eminent Islamic scholar are impeccable: journalist, theologian, Muslim revivalist, Islamist philosopher, and first recipient of the *King Faisal International Award* for his services to Islam and Islamic studies. Of the more than 120 books he wrote, he is most famous for his magnum opus, *The Meaning of the Qur'an*.

The Koran is the book upon which the Taliban, the Islamist fundamentalist movement that ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, based their concept of God's government on Earth. The Taliban, like all believers, are required to at least attempt to commit to memory the entire Koran. Believers are also expected to accept Allah's Revelations in their totality without question. This has not been my approach in presenting my impressions, as a former Catholic, now an agnostic, upon first reading the Koran.

As an unbeliever, I hope I can safely express my opinions about the Koran and the Prophet Muhammad, although nothing is certain. It is an unfortunate fact of life that authors who choose to write about Islam, the Koran or the life of the Prophet must tread carefully lest believers perceive their writings as an insult to Islam. I hope that I have achieved that fine balance of respect and critique, if such an equilibrium is even possible where religion is the topic.

Translations of the Koran are usually called interpretations because believers claim that only the Arabic version of the Koran can convey the true meaning of God's words. If you can't read the Koran in the original, they say, you are bound to misinterpret Allah's words. Do they have a point, or is this just pre-emptive rationalisation, a ready excuse for some of the frightening revelations contained within the Muslim Holy Book, revelations that may leave some unbelievers wondering if these are the words of God or those of His nemesis?

The Koran is written in verses or ayats, therefore it is true that you cannot appreciate the rhythm and rhyme that only the original can convey; however, any good translation will be able to communicate the original meaning of the author's words, and the meaning of the words is what you should be concerned with.

An English translation of the Koran adds up to about 77,700 words, the approximate size of a standard 300-page book. This is a book, Allah reveals, in which you can study “whatever you choose.”

68:35 Shall We consider those who submit like those who are criminals?

68:36 What is the matter with you; how do you judge?

68:37 Or do you have a Book in which you study?

68:38 Wherein there is whatever you choose.

It is a bold statement for a relatively small book where boundless repetitions occupy space that could, perhaps, be put to better use. The Koran is made up of 114 chapters; when referring to these, I use the Arabic transliteration (conversion from one alphabet to another) of chapter, which is surah. Each surah is further divided into verses, a term I have chosen to retain over the Arabic transliteration of ayat.

There are 6,346 verses in the Koran if you include the 112 unnumbered Basmalahs, the formulaic invocation “in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful,” which appears at the beginning of every surah except the first and the ninth.

I refer to passages by the surah and verse numbers—for example, 2:282 is Chapter 2, Verse 282—or by surah name and verse: *The Cow*, Verse 282. A verse can be just a few words long or more than 200 words, such as the aforementioned, the longest verse in the Koran which instructs the believer, among other things, on the number of witnesses required to legitimize the contracting of debt.

Just a few editorial notes before we get down to business and let God speak for Himself. All quotes from the Koran are from Majid Fakhry’s interpretation unless otherwise indicated. Text added by Fakhry within a quoted verse to improve understanding is enclosed within square “[]” parentheses or brackets. Other clarifications by Fakhry, including footnotes, are enclosed in round “()” brackets.

On rare occasions, you will find italicised bracketed comments within a verse: these are the author’s, usually included to identify someone whom Allah does not explicitly name and, when it is not evident to the casual reader, whom He is informing when He tells Muhammad how to respond to questions and observations. Any underlining for emphasis is also my doing, not Fakhry’s. I hope Majid will forgive my use of the more familiar Koran instead of his preferred spelling, Qur’an.

Where warranted, verses are accompanied by the Prophet's recorded sayings or descriptions of actions, called *hadiths*. (*Ahadith*, often used to indicate the plural form of *hadith*, is not used herein.) *Hadiths*, of which there are more than ten thousand, are hearsay evidence collected approximately 200 years after the Prophet's passing that describe what Muhammad said and did, including the silent approval of actions done in his presence. An authentic (*sahih*) or good (*hasan*) *hadith*, i.e., one that can be traced to a legitimate witness, passed down via of chain of reliable transmitters, is usually considered a legal precedent so long as it does not contradict the *Koran*¹.

When you encounter 'say' followed by a colon in a revelation (with no other qualifier, e.g., "they say" or, on rare occasions, "you said"), assume this is Allah directing His spokesman.

All quoted verses have been carefully reviewed to ensure that Fakhry's interpretation has been faithfully rendered. Many verses, such as 44:43-44, must be read together to form a complete sentence or thought; therefore, do not assume a typographical (typo) or grammatical error if a verse does not end with the expected punctuation.

44:43 The Tree of Zaqquq (the Tree of Bitterness) will certainly be

44:44 The food of the sinner.

Some of the quoted verses from Fakhry's interpretation of the *Koran* have no end quotations due to an often-misunderstood rule of English grammar. If a quote is more than one paragraph long, i.e., verses, opening quotation marks (") appear at the beginning of each verse but closing quotation marks (") are only required at the end of the complete quotation. Finally, all translations consulted are from recognized Islamic scholars of the *Koran*.

¹ Sunni Islam gives credence to the *hadiths* collected by six men (al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, At-Tirmidi, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawood and An-Nisa'i), with the largest, the al-Bukhari collection, considered the most authoritative of the "six canonical collections." Imam Bukhari (d. 870) is said to have gathered over 600,000 *hadiths*, of which 7,275 are considered authentic. The *Koran* and these "hadith collections" inform every facet of a believer's existence.

An Unfair Comparison

There is no god besides me.

Isaiah 45:21

We have not sent before you any Messenger, but We revealed to him that there is no god but I; so worship Me.

Allah 21:25

Like most non-Muslims who are familiar with the Bible but not the Koran, I assumed it was like the Bible; I was wrong. I never expected the Koran to be so different, not only in the way it presented its message but the difference in the message itself. Both the Bible and the Koran claim God as the author; nonetheless, the two books are poles apart. Virgil Gheorghiu, in his insightful, admiring biography of the Prophet Muhammad and his time, *La vie de Mahomet*, explained the contrast this way (my translation):

The Christian Bible, the Old Testament portion, is mainly about hope; the New Testament is about love; the Koran is about neither! The Koran is all about loyalty, absolute, unquestioning, blind loyalty to one God.

This unequivocal demand for absolute, blind, unquestioning loyalty would not, in and of itself, be a problem if the God of the Koran did not come across to the layperson as such a vain, cruel, controlling, and vengeful deity who damns the unbelievers at every turn. Nobody holds a grudge like Allah holds a grudge. With such a god, it should not have come as a surprise that instead of finding the Koran edifying, uplifting, and full of noble sentiments for the ages, I found mostly what I consider to be petty obsessions with organizing every aspect of a believer's life. Of course, what I consider petty, a believer might see as befitting the preoccupations of a deity, even if such worldly concerns and attention to the minutia of daily life leave very little room for spiritual or intellectual growth.

The Bible covers a period of over a thousand years with a cast of thousands, yet for such a monumental work it is surprisingly well ordered. The Koran is the inspiration of just one man, derived from

revelations he maintained having received from God over a period of just twenty-three years, from 610 to 632 A.D. Despite its brevity, the Koran is somewhat disorganized: there is no timeline and the only allowance given to any kind of order is the sequencing of most of the 114 chapters from longest to shortest.

Because no attention appears to have been given to arranging the chapters and verses in some kind of chronological order, readers often receive answers to questions that have yet to be asked. For example, in Chapter 9, Verse 114 we are told that Allah refused Abraham's plea to forgive his father for not believing.

9:114 Abraham asked forgiveness for his father, only because of a promise he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he disowned him. Indeed Abraham was compassionate, forbearing.

The actual request made by Abraham, and the promise made, is revealed ten chapters later:

19:47 [Abraham] said: "Peace be upon you. I will seek forgiveness for you from my Lord. He has, indeed, been gracious to me."

This lack of chronology and the apparent haphazard manner in which many of the revelations appear to have been collected and compiled mean the layperson has to read the entire Koran carefully just to get the gist of what Allah has to say on any given subject. More than a cursory reading of the book requires patience and dedication. This prerequisite commitment in time and effort may explain why the Koran remains a mystery for the vast majority of non-Muslims. Adding to a layperson's woes, chapter headings, which appear to be based on catchwords within the text, are almost useless as an indication of the content. The longer chapters in particular are a challenge, with Allah—in the words of Justin Wintle, author of *History of Islam*—"jumping from one subject to another in a sort of unfurling stream of supra-consciousness," i.e., a consciousness or awareness that is beyond our understanding.

Another difficulty in interpreting some revelations is that different subjects are often addressed in the same verse, such as in Revelation 2:189 where God instructed Muhammad on what to say when asked about the timing of the pilgrimage to Mecca, ending with a warning about entering houses via the back door.

2:189 They ask you about the crescents (the new moons) say: "They are times fixed for mankind and for the pilgrimage." It

is not righteousness to enter houses from the back; but the righteous is he who fears Allah. Enter then the houses by their front doors; and fear Allah that you may prosper.

There is the not insignificant irritant of Allah, like the child who wants to always be the centre of attention, interrupting every narrative to shout "Look at me, look at me, see how great I am!" God, in His Koran, gives new meaning to the term omnipresence.

Those who are familiar with the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, have a small advantage when it comes to getting a handle on the Koran because the foremost stories from the Bible have found their way into the text. Biblical epics are a favourite of Allah's; He obviously enjoys repeating parts that capture the imagination over and over, with small but significant differences. These variations may be due to the way the verses were collected, with different sources having different recollections of what God allegedly revealed to Muhammad.

For the believers, however, each recollection of what was conveyed to Muhammad is accurate to the letter, the many contradictions notwithstanding. Every revealed truth communicated by God's Messenger to the Messenger, the angel Gabriel stands on its own, perfectly rendered word for word by the Prophet who forbade its writing down, only memorized, word for word, by his followers and later impeccably compiled, word for word, by the transcribers of the Koran. To question this perfection is to challenge dogma, a capital offence. One man's perfection is another's jumble.

British historian Thomas Carlyle: "a confused, jumble, crude, incondite, endless iteration...";

Edward Gibbon: "as toilsome a reading as I ever undertook; a wearisome confused jumble."

Richard Wright, author of *The Evolution of God*, offers a more circumspect appraisal of the Koran when comparing it to the Bible.

There is no denying the Koran is unlike the religious text westerners are most familiar with, the Bible. For one thing, it is more monotonous. The Bible, is a cornucopia of genres: the cosmic mythology of Genesis, the legal and ritual code of Leviticus, a multibook national history of Israel, the complaints and alarms of the prophets, the pithy self-help and deep reflection of the wisdom literature, the poetry of the Psalms, the gospel profiles of Jesus, the mystical theology of John, the

early church history Acts, the apocalyptic visions of Revelation and Daniel and so on.

As to the violence in the Koran compared to the Bible, Wright writes:

The Koran is a shorter book than the Bible; pound for pound, it no doubt features more exhortations to violence.

So if you ask which book is “worse” in terms of belligerence, you might say that qualitatively the Hebrew Bible (and hence the Christian Bible) takes the trophy—thanks to that unrivalled embrace of genocide in Deuteronomy—but that quantitatively the winner is the Koran, at least in terms of the frequency of belligerent passages, if not in absolute numbers. And if, on top of the verses espousing violence in the terrestrial world, you add verses gleefully envisioning the suffering of infidels in the afterlife, the Koran wins the quantitative competition more decisively.

How the Bible Came To Be

The oral histories that comprise the first books of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) were probably written more than a thousand years after the events described took place. How do we know this?

According to Thomas Cahill, author of *The Gifts of the Jews*, “There is no reliable record of written Hebrew before the tenth century B.C. That is well after the resettlement of the Israelis in Canaan after their escape from Egypt ... this means that the supposedly historical stories of at least the first books of the Bible were preserved originally not as written text but as oral tradition, beginning with the wonderings of Abraham and ending with the resettlement of Canaan under Joshua. What we are reading are oral tales, collected and edited for the first (but not the last time) in the tenth century [BCE] during and after the kingship of David.”

How the Koran Came To Be

10:37 This Qur'an could never have been produced except by Allah. It is a confirmation of that [which was revealed] before it and an exposition of the Book. There is no doubt about it. It is from the Lord of the Worlds.

God communicated with His Messengers via revelations, i.e., immutable facts communicated to a mortal by a god.

42:51 It is not given to any mortal that Allah should speak to him, except by Revelation or from behind a veil. Otherwise, He sends forth a Messenger who reveals by His Permission whatever He wishes. He is, indeed, All-High, All-Wise.

42:52 That is how We revealed to you (*O Muhammad*) a Spirit by Our Command. You did not know what the Book is nor what is Belief; but We made it a light, by which We guide whomever We wish of Our Servants. You will surely guide unto a Straight Path;

Gabriel – Messenger to the Messenger

The contents of the Koran, according to the Book itself, were delivered by Gabriel, God's Messenger to the Messenger, during often impressive private meetings, two of which are described below.

53:1 By the star when it goes down,

53:2 Your Companion (*Muhammad*) has not gone astray or erred,

53:3 And he does not talk capriciously.

53:4 It (the *Qur'an*) is only a Revelation being revealed,

53:5 Taught him by a mighty one (the angel Gabriel),

53:6 Possessed of steadfastness. And so he arose,

53:7 While he was on the highest horizon;

53:8 Then, he came closer and hovered around;

53:9 Coming thus within two bows' length or closer.

53:10 Then (Allah) revealed to His servant what He revealed.

53:11 The heart did not deny what it saw.

53:12 Do you then dispute with him (*Muhammad*) concerning what he saw;

53:13 He has indeed seen him (Gabriel) a second time;

53:14 By the Lotus Tree of the outermost limit.

53:15 Close by it is the Garden of Refuge².

53:16 As the Lotus Tree was covered by that which covers it;

53:17 His gaze did not shift nor did he exceed the bound.

53:18 He saw some of the Great Signs of his Lord.

At the beginning of Surah 44, *The Smoke*, Allah intimates that He sent the whole of the Koran in just one night.

44:1 Ha – Mim.

44:2 By the Manifest Book.

44:3 We have sent it down on a blessed night. We were then admonishing.

44:4 Therein, every wise matter is determined,

44:5 As a Command from Us. We have been sending forth revelations,

44:6 As a Mercy from your Lord. He is indeed the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

44:7 The Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is in between them; if you only believe with certainty.

That “blessed night” in Verse 44:3 is “the night of Power”; if only we knew what that was.

97:1 We have sent it (the Qur’an) down on the night of Power.

97:2 If only you knew what is the Night of Power.

97:3 The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

97:4 The angels and the Spirit (Gabriel) descend thereon by the Leave of their Lord with every Command.

² Moududi writes that during the second meeting, “Gabriel (upon whom be peace) ... appeared before him (Muhammad) in his real shape and nature.” The place in which this meeting took place can only have been heaven. In support of his opinion, Moududi cites an unattributed 11th-century text describing the *Garden of Refuge*:

There are seven gardens. The first of them is the abode of majesty and it is of white pearl. The second is the abode of peace and it is of red sapphire. The third is the garden of refuge and it is of green chrysolite (sic). The fourth of them is the garden of eternity and it is of yellow coral. The fifth is the garden of bliss and it is of white silver. The sixth is the garden of paradise and it is red gold. And the seventh is the garden of Eden and is of white pearl. This is the capital of the Garden and it is elevated over all the gardens.

97:5 It is peace, till the break of dawn.

Then again, the following revelation refers to the process as having taken a month.

2:185 The month of Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed, providing guidance for mankind, with clear verses to guide and to distinguish right from wrong. He who witnesses that month should fast it. But if anyone is sick or on a journey, [he ought to fast] a number of other days. Allah desires ease and does not desire hardship for you, that you may complete the total number [of fasting days]; glorify Allah for His Guidance, and that you may be thankful.

And still in another revelation, Verse 17:106 clearly states that the Koran was sent piecemeal. Based on what we know, this is the most accurate representation.

17:105 We have revealed it in truth, and in truth it came down; and We have sent you (Muhammad) only as a bearer of good news and a warner.

17:106 It is a Qur'an which we have divided into parts that you may recite it with deliberation, and We revealed it piecemeal.

17:107 Say: "Believe or do not believe in it. Surely when it was recited those, who were given the knowledge (the People of the Book) before it, fall down prostrate on their faces."

17:108 And they say: "Glory be to our Lord. Certainly the Promise of our Lord is fulfilled."

17:109 And they fall down upon their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility.

In response to an unbeliever who thought Allah should have sent the Koran all at once, God explains why He revealed it in stages, and that whoever asks that it be delivered all at once risk being dragged on their faces into Hell.

25:32 The unbelievers say: "If only this Qur'an had been sent down on him all at once." That is how We wanted to strengthen your heart with it and We have revealed it in stages.

25:33 They never bring you any simile but We bring the truth and a better exposition.

25:34 Those who are mustered on their faces in Hell; those are in a worse position and are more wayward.

Some surahs were transmitted whole on certain occasions, such as during a homily that some listeners did not care to remain to hear until the very end.

9:124 Whenever a Surah is revealed, some of them would say: "Who of you has this one increased in faith?" It has increased the faith of those who believe, and they rejoice.

9:125 But for those in whose heart there is a sickness, it will add disbelief to their disbelief, and they will die while they are unbelievers.

9:126 Do they not see that that they are tried once or twice every year? Yet they neither repent nor take heed.

9:127 And whenever a Surah is revealed, they look at each other [saying]: "Does anyone see you?" Then they turn away. Allah has turned away their hearts, because they are a people who do not understand.

The First Written Version

The first written version of the Koran was undertaken during the reign of the first Caliph (first successor to the Prophet Muhammad) Abu Bakr. He was prevailed upon to create a written record of what had been revealed by God to Muhammad after seventy of the most prominent memorizers were killed during a rebellion against Islamic rule in southern Arabia. Until that time, it was felt there was no need to put anything in writing because of the tradition established by the Prophet that the Koran should be committed to memory and not written down, a tradition that endures to this day.

A former scribe of Muhammad by the name of Zayd ibn Thabit, on Bakr's insistence, gathered the recollections of what Muhammad had claimed were revelations from God. Paper, a Chinese invention, had just made its appearance in Arabia and may have been used for the first time in ibn Thabit's transcription. He gave his pages (there is some disagreement as to whether it was paper or parchment), in no particular order, to Umar (Bakr's successor) who gave them to his daughter and widow of the Prophet, Hafsa, for safekeeping.

Umar was assassinated and succeeded by Uthman [644-656], who, upon hearing that his armies were reading from different versions of the *Koran*, ordered that all collections of verses, except for the version kept under Hafsa's bed – which he asked Thabit, with the help of three men from Muhammad's tribe, to revise – be burnt (see Appendix *The First Korans* for the relevant hadiths).

The version commissioned by Uthman was completed during the reign of his successor Ali [656-661], many years after Muhammad's death, is referred to as the Uthman Codex. A fragment of the earliest copy of the Codex, dated approximately 150 years after Uthman's death, can be found in the library of the 16th century Khast-Imam Madrassa in Tashkent, Uzbekistan³.

Despite the human origins of the written Koran, the Book, as aforementioned, is regarded by believers as beyond reproach and every word, God's definitive last words. The Koran is meant to correct errors in and reiterate God's messages from the Torah; to validate or repudiate, writes Justin Wintle, "Christo-Judaic beliefs and experience." The Koran came after the Bible and for believers, this alongside God's claim to have created a book without defects⁴ is all the proof they need that the Koran is the most accurate record of the events and personalities that both books purport to describe.

Repetitions

Needless to say, Thabit's first attempt at compiling the Koran from the recollections of surviving memorizers was bound to elicit different recollections of the same event⁵, such as the more than a dozen accounts of the Moses and Pharaoh encounter. He may simply have included them all in the pile of papers stashed under Hafsa's bed to be sorted out later.

³ What is believed to be an earlier version of the Koran, the Sana'a Manuscripts, was found in 1972 during renovations of the Great Mosque of Sana'a in Yemen. When Yemeni authorities were informed that this earlier Koran contained minor but significant differences from the version that orthodox Islam maintains is the perfect unchanging Word of God, they restricted access to the more than 40,000 pieces of parchment, of which only an estimated 15,000 had been reviewed by Islamic and Western scholars.

⁴ 39:28 We made it an Arabic Qur'an without any defect that perchance they might be God-fearing.

⁵ The same thing happened at least once in the compilation of the first books of the Hebrew Bible, which has two versions of Creation. In Genesis I, God created plants before animals and humans; in Genesis II, God created Adam, then plants and animals, and last but perhaps not least, Eve.

It was obviously not *sorted out* during the review commissioned by Uthman. In any event, it would have been next to impossible for Thabit's committee of four to ascertain which recollection was the most accurate and may explain why many different account of what was said remained in the final version. Also, if you are a believer, it is quite possible that for God, varying recollections of what Muhammad revealed was in the Koran are all true and just His way of making a point. Better for all concerned to include all variations and let future scholars sort it.

Revelations in duplicate, triplicate, quadruplicate, and so on, are possibly the strongest evidence that Muhammad was indeed illiterate; that in the twenty years or so in which he delivered God's Revelations, he had only his memory to depend on.

29:48 You did not recite before it any book or write it down with your right hand. Then the negators (sic) would have been in doubt.

If Muhammad could not refer to previous written orations to avoid repeating himself or telling a different version, then it was not only the believers remembering the same events differently; the preacher himself was adding to the confusion.

At the end of the Surah Al-Ahzâb (The Confederates), Allah reveals that He first offered the Koran—my understanding of “the Trust”⁶ in Revelation 33:72—“to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains” but that only humans were “ignorant” enough to accept it; a Freudian slip, perhaps?

33:70 O believers, fear Allah and speak in a straightforward way.

33:71 He will set right your deeds and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has won a great victory.

33:72 We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they refuse to carry it and were afraid of it, but man carried it. He has indeed been unjust and ignorant.

⁶ Moududi, explaining why Allah would call man ignorant for accepting the ‘Trust’, claims that it means caliphate. Dr. Mohsin Khan, on the other hand, refers to “the trust or moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties which Allah has ordained”—indeed, is that not the Koran?

Punishment would be dealt for babbling while reading the Koran:

41:26 The unbelievers said: "Do not listen to this Qur'an, but babble in reading it, that perchance you might win."

41:27 Truly, We shall make the unbelievers taste a terrible punishment, and We shall reward them for the worst of what they used to do.

41:28 That is the reward of Allah's enemies, the Fire wherein they shall have an eternal abode, as a reward for that they used to repudiate Our Signs.

Biblical vs. Koranic Accounts

Some Bible stories in the Koran tend to become Mecca-centric, with biblical heroes such as Abraham making near impossible treks across the length of the Arabian Peninsula to pay homage to God at Mecca, as well as visit with his wife's former servant Hagar and their son Isma'il. None of these visits are mentioned in the Bible, and there is no historical or archaeological evidence of major biblical figures crossing the deserts of Arabia to spend time in Mecca which, at the time of Abraham, if it even existed⁷, would have been nothing more than a nomadic settlement.

⁷ In the 1st century, the Romans maintained a garrison at the port of Jeddah about 50 miles from Mecca and catalogued much of the area without reference to Mecca, though they did take notice of Medina.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Adam

4:1 O people, fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul (Adam), and from it He created its mate (Eve), and from both He scattered abroad many men and women; and fear Allah in Whose Name you appeal to one another, and invoke family relationships. Surely Allah is a Watcher over you.

Eve may have been the first to disturb the sands where Mecca would rise. In one *Tradition of the Prophet*, Adam and Eve were literally flung out of Paradise, Adam landing in present-day Sri Lanka on a mountain appropriately named Adam's Peak, and Eve, near Mecca. A rock depression near the summit is believed in Islamic traditions to be the footprint left by Adam when he landed. At 1.8 m, it is a sizeable dent that only a big man could have made:

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet said, "Allah created Adam in his complete shape and form (directly), sixty cubits (about 30 meters) in height. When He created him, He said (to him), "Go and greet that group of angels sitting there, and listen what they will say in reply to you, for that will be your greeting and the greeting of your offspring."

Adam (went and) said, 'As-Salamu alaikum (Peace be upon you).' But they replied, 'As-Salamu-'Alaika wa Rahmatullah (Peace and Allah's Mercy be on you) so they increased 'Wa Rahmatullah'.

The Prophet added 'So whoever will enter Paradise, will be of the shape and form of Adam. Since then the creation of Adam's (offspring) (i.e. stature of human beings is being diminished continuously) to the present time."

Bukhari 55.543

Adam, just before he was bodily thrown out of Paradise, held onto a large stone which followed him down. He dragged this rock all the way to where Eve was patiently waiting for him in the desert of present-day Southern Arabia and used the stone to set up an altar to

Allah. This original altar would become the Ka'ba around which grew the town of Mecca.

Paradise Lost I

Adam is referenced quite early in the Koran and again on a number of occasions, but mainly as part of Allah's numerous retelling of the story of Iblis (also referred to as Satan), who refused to bow down to Adam. It all began with God informing his angels about his intention to place a deputy on Earth and they, in turn, questioning His motivation.

2:30 When your Lord said to the angels: "I am placing a deputy on earth", they said: "Will you place one who will make mischief in it and shed blood, while we sing Your praise and glorify Your sanctity?" He said: "I know what you do not know."

Then followed a surreal discussion where Adam identified the angels using the names by which they are known.

2:31 And He taught Adam all the names. Then He laid them before the angels. He said: "Tell me the names of these if you are truthful."

2:32 They said: "Glory be to You; we have no knowledge other than that what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the Wise."

2:33 He said: "O Adam, tell them their names." When Adam told them their names He (Allah) said: "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen in the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal?"

The first mention of Iblis:

2:34 And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam", they all prostrated themselves except Iblis (Satan) who refused, out of pride and was one of the disbelievers.

God, in Revelation 2:30, said: "I am placing a deputy on earth." Did He anticipate the expulsion of the first couple from Paradise? Allah never mentions Eve by name in the Koran. The *wife of Adam* is first mentioned along with the infamous tree.

2:35 Then We said: "O Adam, dwell in Paradise, you and your wife, and eat from it as much as you wish and wherever

you wish, but do not approach this tree (meaning do not eat from it) or you will both be unjust (by being disobedient)."

Who could resist?

2:36 But Satan caused them to fall down from it and be turned out of the bliss they had been in. And We said: "Go down (from Paradise to earth), being enemies one to the other. And you will have in the earth an abode and sustenance for a while."

Allah forgave Adam, but perhaps not his wife.

2:37 Then Adam received words from his Lord, Who forgave him. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, The Merciful.

2:38 We said: "Go down from here (Paradise) all of you. And when in time My Guidance is vouchsafed to you, those who follow My Guidance will have nothing to fear nor will they grieve (because they will be admitted into Paradise)."

If you don't believe this story about Adam and his wife along with my other revelations, Hell awaits you.

2:39 And [as to] those who have disbelieved and denied Our Revelations, they are the people of Hell, wherein they will dwell forever.

Paradise Lost II

In this retelling of the story of Adam and his wife's fall from Paradise, there is no Iblis, only Satan.

7:10 And We have established you firmly in the earth and provided you therein with means of livelihood. But seldom do you give thanks.

7:11 And we created you, then fashioned you, and then said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves to Adam"; so they prostrated themselves, except for Satan who was not one of those who prostrated themselves.

7:12 He (Allah) said: "What prevented you from prostrating yourself when I commanded you?" He (Satan) said: "I am better than he; You created me from fire, and You created him from clay."

7:13 He said: "Get down from it (Paradise), then. It is not given you to be arrogant therein. Get out; you are indeed one of the lowly."

7:14 Satan said: "Give me respite, until the Day when they shall be resurrected."

7:15 He (Allah) said: "You are one of those who are granted respite."

Did Satan assume that he was superior to God's latest creation, or was he misled into believing so? Notice the capitalized "You" in the following verse; it can only mean that he is addressing Allah.

7:16 Satan said: "Because You have misled me, I will lie in wait for them on Your Straight Path.

7:17 "Then I will come upon them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left; and You will not find most of them thankful."

7:18 He (Allah) said: "Get out of it despised and vanquished. I will fill Hell with all who follow you!"

7:19 And [We said]: "Adam, dwell you and your wife in Paradise, and eat from wherever you wish; but do not come close to this tree, lest you both become wrongdoers."

In this retelling, Satan offered not only immortality but perhaps immortal life as an angel. As used below, "secretly" may be Allah's way of revealing that Satan snuck back into Paradise after being banished in Revelation 7:13.

7:20 But Satan tempted them secretly in order to expose their nakedness to them saying: "Your Lord has forbidden you this tree, lest you become angels or become immortal."

7:21 And he swore to them: "I am indeed a sincere advisor to you both."

Their private parts "became visible to them":

7:22 Then he brought about their downfall by deceit; so that when they tasted the tree, their private parts became visible to them, and they started to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise. Then their Lord called out to them: "Have I not forbidden you that tree and said to you: 'Indeed Satan is your sworn enemy'?"

Adam and his wife would be forced to go live among the losers, i.e., their progeny, unless Allah could forgive them.

7:23 They said: "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if you do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will surely be among the losers."

They could, of course, only have been at odds with one another at the time.

7:24 He said: "Go down, some of you as enemies of the others. On earth you will have a dwelling place and a means of enjoyment for a while."

7:25 He said: "Therein you shall live and therein you shall die, and from it you shall be brought out."

No, Allah does not approve of nudity, no matter how devoted you are to the Clothier.

7:26 "O Children of Adam, We have provided you with clothing and finery to cover your private parts. But the attire of piety is the best." Such are Allah's Signs, that they may take heed.

In Allah's version of Adam and his wife in Paradise, both were clothed until Satan stripped them down to nothing to expose them.

7:27 "O Children of Adam, do not let Satan lead you astray as he drove your parents out of Paradise, stripping them of their clothes so as to show them their private parts. He and his host (*army*) see you from a place where you cannot see them. We have made the devils the friends of those who do not believe."

The following is a reference to pre-Islam when, during pilgrimages, many circumambulated the Ka'ba naked as did their ancestors, and nobody cared.

7:28 When they commit an indecency, they say: "We have found our fathers doing it, and Allah commanded us to do it." Say (*O Muhammad*): "Allah does not command indecencies. Do you impute to Allah what you do not know?"

Paradise Lost III

In this retelling, Allah is more specific as to the type of clay used in the creation of the first man.

15:26 And We have created man from potter's clay, moulded out of slime.

15:27 And the jinn We created before that from blazing fire.

15:28 When your Lord said to the angels: "Behold, I have created a man from potter's clay, out of moulded slime.

15:29 "When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall down prostrating yourselves to him."

15:30 The angels prostrated themselves, all together;

15:31 Except Satan who refused to be one of those who prostrated themselves.

15:32 He said: "O Satan, what keeps you from being one of those who prostrate themselves?"

15:33 He said: "I refuse to prostrate myself before a mortal you created from potter's clay out of moulded slime."

15:34 He said: "Get out of here, then, for you are surely accursed.

15:35 "And the curse shall be upon you till the Day of Judgement."

Satan again asked and was granted the opportunity to lead mankind astray.

15:36 He said: "My Lord, reprieve me till the Day of Resurrection."

15:37 He said: "You are indeed one of those reprieved,

15:38 "Till the Appointed Day."

15:39 [Satan] said: "My Lord, since you misguided me, I will make what is foul on earth seem fair to them, and I shall mislead them all,

15:40 "Except for Your sincere servants among them."

15:41 He (Allah) said: "This is my Straight Path.

15:42 "Over My servants you have no authority, except for those sinners who follow you."

Paradise Lost IV

In this recollection of the life and times of Adam and his wife in Paradise, Satan threatens to use an army of cavalry and infantry against Adam's progeny.

17:61 And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam", they all prostrated themselves, except Satan, who said: "Shall I prostrate myself before one You have created from clay?"

17:62 He (Satan) said: "Do you see this one whom you honoured more than me? If you would reprieve me until the Day of Resurrection, I will certainly destroy his progeny except for a few."

17:63 He (Allah) said: "Begone! Whoever of them follows you, Hell is surely your reward, an ample reward.

17:64 "Stir up those of them you can with your voice, rally against them your horsemen and your infantry⁸, share with them their wealth and children and promise them." But Satan makes them only deceitful promises.

17:65 "Surely, over My servants you have no authority. Your Lord suffices as a Guardian".

Paradise Lost V

In the fifth retelling of the first couple's fall from Grace, Allah admits that the first man was a bit of a disappointment.

20:115 And We commanded Adam before, but he forgot, and We found in him no firm resolve.

Satan again refused to prostrate himself, prompting a warning from God about His recalcitrant angel.

20:116 And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves to Adam", they prostrated themselves, except for Satan who refused.

⁸ A telling statement given that Islam, from its founding to this day, continues to be spread by the sword.

20:117 So We said: "O Adam, this is surely an enemy to you and to your wife; so do not let him drive you out of Paradise; for then, you will be miserable.

You will be dressed for dinner...and for every other occasion.

20:118 "You will certainly not be hungry therein, nor be naked.

First, it was the offer of immortality as humans or angels. In this account, Satan throws in a kingdom to convince Adam to eat from that infamous tree.

20:120 But the Devil whispered to him, saying: "O Adam, shall I show you the Tree of Immortality and a kingdom which will never perish?"

We all know what happened next.

20:121 And so they both (Adam and his wife) ate from it; whereupon their shameful parts were revealed to them and they started fastening upon themselves leaves of Paradise. Adam thus disobeyed His Lord and so went astray.

At the very beginning of creation, God made His preference for the human male obvious.

20:122 Then, his Lord favoured him, and so he relented towards him, and guided him.

Revelation 20:123 is a reiteration of Revelation 7:24 commanding the first couple to: "Go down, some of you as enemies of the others."

20:123 He (Allah) said: "Go down from it both of you, as enemies of one another; but should guidance from Me come to you, he who follows My Guidance will not go astray or suffer.

Paradise Lost VI

38:71 When your Lord said to the angels: "I am going to create a mortal out of clay.

38:72 "When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of my Spirit, fall prostrate before him."

38:73 Then all the angels prostrated themselves entirely;

38:74 Except for Iblis; he waxed proud and was one of the unbelievers.

38:75 He said: "O Iblis, what prevented you from prostrating yourself before what I created with My Own Hands? Have you waxed proud or were you one of the exalted?"

38:76 He said: "I am better than he; You created me from fire and You created him from clay."

38:77 [Allah] said: "Get out of here (Paradise); you are truly accursed.

38:78 "And My curse shall pursue you till the Day of Judgement."

The irony is that Iblis was cursed, labelled an unbeliever—with Allah standing, sitting or hovering over him—and banished from Paradise when, in fact, he was obeying God's Law to the letter: that only He be worshipped. Iblis, as did his other persona Satan, asked Allah to postpone his punishment to test how many of Adam's progeny could be enticed to disobey Him.

38:79 He said: "Lord, give me respite till the day they shall be resuscitated."

38:81 "Till the day of the well-known time."

38:82 He (Satan) said: "By your glory, I will seduce them all,

38:83 "Except for your sincere servants among them."

Like before, God acquiesced to this request.

38:80 [Allah] said: "You are one of those respited."

By accepting Iblis/Satan's challenge, Allah deliberately set up much of mankind to fail, and He knew it.

38:84 [Allah] said: "Truly, and I say the truth;

38:85 "I will fill Hell with you and those of them who follow you all together."

Adam's Dust Origins

Genesis: 2:7 Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

The first mention of Adam having been created from dust is in a revelation about Jesus having been created from the same substance.

3:59 Jesus in Allah's sight is like Adam; He created him from dust, then He said to him: "Be", and there he was.

It all started with dust; now, humans are to be found everywhere.

30:20 And of His Signs is that He created you from dust; and behold, you are mortals scattered around.

Unlike in the Bible, it is not specified who was created from whom, and here the first couple are not portrayed as enemies.

30:21 And of His Signs is that He created for you, from yourselves, spouses to settle down with and He established friendship and mercy between you. There are in all that signs for people who reflect.

Adam's Clay Origins

Job 9:10 Please remember that You formed me like clay. Will You now return me to dust?

In more than five revelations, including the following, Allah said that He created the first human being from clay.

6:2 It is He Who created you from clay, then decreed a term [for you] and another set term with Him, but still you doubt.

God may have let the potter's clay harden into the consistency of bricks before putting Adam together like a bricklayer would or carving him. Even moulding clay as hard as brick, for a god as powerful as Allah, would have been an easy task.

55:14 He created man from hard clay, like bricks.

The best evidence available that it was clay is in the number of time God makes that claim including in Revelation 32:7.

32:6 That is the Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

32:7 Who fashioned well everything He created, and originated the creation of man from clay.

Allah's Covenant with Adam's Progeny

17:70 We have honoured the Children of Adam and carried them on land and sea, provided them with good things and preferred them greatly over many of those We have created.

God first mentioned a covenant with his supplicants in the following revelation:

2:27 Those who break Allah's Covenant after its confirmation and sever what Allah ordered to be joined, and make mischief (committing sins and obstructing faith) in the land – those are the losers.

Allah's Covenant with Adam and his descendants was the promise God extracted from the first human and all his posterity: that He was their Lord, the one and only God.

7:172 And [remember] when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the Children of Adam their posterity and made them testify against themselves. [He said]: "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes, we testify." [This] lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: "We were in fact unaware of this."

7:173 Or lest you should say: "Our fathers associated [other Gods with Allah] before [us] and we are their posterity. Will you destroy us for what the fabricators of falsehoods did?"

7:174 And thus We expound the revelations so that they may return [to the Truth].

Eve, First in a Verse

In Revelation 30:21, Allah was noncommittal about who He created from whom. In the following revelation, the order is clear:

7:189 It is He Who created you from a single soul from which He created her mate to live in comfort with her⁹. Then when

⁹ The implication of Eve being created first is so astounding that I have provided alternate interpretations from two of the most respected translators of the Koran. Both, unlike Fakhry, are noncommittal.

Muhammad Assad:

7:189 IT IS HE who has created you [all] out of one living entity, and out of it brought into being its mate, so that man might incline [with love] towards woman. And so, when he has embraced her, she

he approached her she bore a light burden; and so she carried on easily. When she became heavy, they called upon Allah, their Lord saying: "If You grant us a righteous child, we shall be thankful.

7:190 He then gave them a righteous child. But they considered it to be given not only by Him, but also by associates whom they set up with him. But Allah is exalted above those associates.

conceives [what at first is] a light burden, and continues to bear it. Then, when she grows heavy [with child], they both call unto God, their Sustainer, "If Thou indeed grant us a sound [child], we shall most certainly be among the grateful!"

Yusuf Ali:

7:189 It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love). When they are united, she bears a light burden and carries it about (unnoticed). When she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah their Lord, (saying): "If Thou givest us a goodly child, we vow we shall (ever) be grateful."

Cain and Abel

Of all the stories from the Bible that have found their way into the Koran, that of Cain and Abel is probably one of the most significant for both Christians and Muslims. God, with this story about brother killing brother (the Koran does not mention Adam's two sons by name) establishes a fundamental difference between the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and His Revelations. Where Jesus said "to turn the other cheek," Allah countered with 'repay a wrong done to you in kind and a wrong done to Me, or my Messenger, in spades'.

2:179 In retaliation there is life for you, O people of understanding, that you may be God-fearing.

We take up the story of Cain and Abel after God has asked Moses to tell their cautionary tale to His unruly chosen people after helping them escape Egypt.

5:27 And recite to them in all truth the tale of Adam's two sons, when they offered a sacrifice, which was accepted from one, but not accepted from the other. The latter said: "I will surely kill you", the other replied: "Allah accepts only from the God-fearing.

5:28 "Should you stretch your hand out to kill me, I will not stretch my hand out to kill you; for I fear Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

5:29 "I only wish that you be charged with my sin and yours and thus be one of the companions of the Fire; and that is the reward of the evildoers."

5:30 Then his soul prompted him to kill his brother; and so he killed him and became one of the losers.

5:31 Then Allah sent forth a raven digging the earth to show him how to bury his brother's corpse. He said: "Woe is me, am I unable to be like this raven and bury the corpse of my brother?" Thus he became one of the remorseful.

Law of Retaliation

With the murder of Abel, Allah confirmed that the *Law of Retaliation*, i.e., Talion law, is the law of the land whenever murder is not in the name of retaliation or for “corruption in the land.”

5:32 For that reason, We decreed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul, not in retaliation for a soul or corruption in the land, is like one who has killed the whole of mankind; and whoever saves a life is like one who saves the lives of all mankind. Our Messengers came to them with the clear proofs; but afterwards many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.

“Corruption in the land” is a catch-all accusation that renders anyone who opposes the expansion of Islam, or seeks to reform the religion – the so-called reformers¹⁰ – candidates for death, and a gruesome one at that.

5:33 Indeed, the punishment of those who fight Allah and His Messenger and go around corrupting the land is to be killed, crucified, have their hands and feet cut off on opposite sides, or to be banished from the land. That is a disgrace for them in this life, and in the life to come theirs will be a terrible punishment.

Gaining satisfaction does not have to involve a life for a life. You can always demand blood money and stay well below “the limit in slaying,” whatever that limit is.

¹⁰ 2:8 There are some who say: “We believe in Allah and the Last Day;” but they are not real believers.

2:9 They seek to deceive Allah and the believers, but deceive none other than themselves, though they are not aware of that.

2:10 In their hearts is a sickness; so Allah has increased their sickness. A painful punishment awaits them because of their lying.

2:11 And when they are told: “Do not sow mischief in the land”, they say: “We are only doing good.”

2:12 It is they who make mischief, but they are unaware of that.

A translation of Verses 2:11-12 by Sheikh Muhammad Sarwar makes God’s intent ever clearer:

2:11 When they are told not to commit corruption in the land, they reply, “We are only reformers.”

2:12 They, certainly, are corrupt but do not realize it.

17:33 Do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for a just cause. Whoever is killed unjustly, We have given his heir the power [to demand satisfaction]; but let him not exceed the limit in slaying, for he will be the victor.

Setting the Price of a Human Life

Muhammad's grandfather is credited with getting God to agree to blood money in the form of camels as payment for a human life. Abd al-Muttalib was a man without sons. In another variation of an old story, he promised Allah to sacrifice his tenth son if He gave him ten male heirs. Ask and you shall receive. When the time came for Muttalib to keep his side of the bargain, he consulted a dervish to find out if he could fulfill his promise to God in some manner that did not involve killing his tenth son, Abdullah (the future father of Muhammad of all people). The dervish that Muttalib consulted was no ordinary soothsayer; he had jinns in his employ, jinns who specialized in eavesdropping on Allah's conversations with His angels. They would fly as close as possible to the lowest of the seven levels of heaven—the one closest to Earth, dodging rocks, i.e., meteorites thrown by the angels to keep them away—to find out what Allah had to say about was happening down below.

In an attempt to answer his client's question, the dervish, in a time-honoured tradition, sent his jinns to eavesdrop on God. One reported that Allah had indicated to an angel that He would be happy with a sacrifice of camels; but how many camels? The dervish then threw dice (bone fragments of some type) to find out. The answer provided was one hundred camels: this was the price of a human life.

The most important legal document in Islam, after the Koran, is Muhammad's Last Khutba, his Farewell Sermon delivered a few months before he died. In his final instructions for the believers, delivered on Mount Arafat on the outskirts of Mecca, God's spokesman reminded the believers about Allah's declaration concerning Talion law and one hundred camels as the price of human life.

And intentional murder shall be punished according to talion law; where the murderess intention is not clear and the victim is killed using a club or a stone it will cost the perpetrator one hundred camels as blood money. Whoever demands more is a man from the time of ignorance.

From a translation by Islamic scholar and author Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah [1908-2002].

The Saudis have simplified things for visitors who might, during their visit to the Kingdom, accidentally kill someone by providing them, in advance, with a "death compensation schedule" for payment. In 2002, the penalty for accidentally killing a male believer was 100,000 riyals; a male Christian or Jew cost 50,000 riyals; practitioners of other religions, a mere 6,666.66 riyals; and a non-believing woman was a real bargain at 3,333 riyals. There was no amount on the schedule for the unlikely accidental killing of a believing secluded woman. If there had been, it would probably have been half the amount demanded for the accidental killing of a believing man.

Noah

A Familiar Storyline

Stories of prophets from the Bible that have made their way into the Koran have plots about as simple as simple can get. The scenario is similar to the story structure found in your typical movie script: an introduction of the characters followed by a crisis and eventual climax, then a denouement where the crisis is resolved one way or another.

- 1) Allah sends a messenger to inform “his people” that, as a representative of the one and only God, they must do as he tells them or there will be dire consequences.
- 2) The people not only ignore this message but accuse their kin of spreading falsehoods.
- 3) Allah kills all those who denounce His Messenger, including their wives and children, usually at His Messenger’s behest.

The first complete, though brief, account of the story of Noah is a good example of this simple storytelling technique.

7:59 We sent Noah forth to his people, and he said: “O my people, worship Allah, you have no other god but Him. I fear for you the punishment of an Awful Day.”

7:60 The dignitaries among his people said: “We see you, indeed, in manifest error.”

7:61 He said: “O my people, I am not in any error, but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds.

7:62 “I deliver to you the Messages of my Lord and give you good advice, and I know from Allah what you do not know.

7:63 “Do you wonder that a reminder from your Lord has come to you at the hands of a man from your own people to warn you, and to induce you to fear Allah so that mercy may be shown to you?”

7:64 However, they denounced him, and so We delivered him, together with those in the ark, and drowned those who denied Our Revelations. For they were indeed a blind people.

The Noah Surah

Noah was one of the few prophets from the Bible—a group that includes Joseph, son of Jacob—to get an entire surah to himself.

NOAH

71 Nûh

*In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful*

71:1 We have indeed sent Noah forth to his people saying: "Warn your people before a painful punishment afflicts them."

71:2 He said: "O my people, I am truly a manifest warner to you;

71:3 "That you should worship Allah and fear Him, and obey me.

There is no escaping the obligatory reminder about Judgement Day:

71:4 "Then, He will forgive you your sins and reprieve you till an appointed term. Allah's term cannot be deferred, once it comes; if only you knew."

Noah's insistence that he was God's messenger may have convinced some who already believed in Allah to quit believing.

71:5 He said: "Lord, I have called my people night and day;

71:6 "But my call only increased them in defection.

71:7 "In fact, every time I called them, so that You might forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, wrapped themselves up in their clothes, persisted and waxed very proud.

Whether in public or in private, the people of Noah revealed that they didn't care for him and what he had to say.

71:8 "Then, I called them publically;

71:9 "Then, I proclaimed to them and spoke to them in secret.

71:10 "I said to them: 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord; He is truly All-Forgiving.

71:11 ""He will then loose heavens upon you in torrents;

71:12 "And provide you with wealth and sons, and allot for you gardens, and allot for you rivers.

71:13 ""What is the matter with you? Why do you not show reverence towards Allah?

71:14 ""Although, He created you in stages.

71:15 ""Do you not see how He created for you seven heavens superposed upon one another?

71:16 ""And placed the moon therein as a light and made the sun a lamp?

71:17 ""And Allah caused you to grow out of the earth;

71:18 ""Then, He will cause you to return to it and bring you out.

71:19 ""And Allah has made the earth a vast expanse for you;

71:20 ""So that you might follow therein broad pathways.'"

In the end, Noah—like most of the messengers to come—asked God to obliterate his people for the usual reason: they have refused to obey, not to mention been the cause of envy and paranoia, such as in the case of the builder of the Ark.

71:21 Noah said: "Lord, they have disobeyed me and followed one whose wealth and children only increased him in perdition;

71:22 "And they devised a mighty plot.

71:23 "And they said: 'Do not forsake your gods; do not forsake Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq or Nasr (deities of the pagan Arabs before Islam¹¹).'

¹¹ Joktan, Noah's great-great-grandson, is considered the ancestor of the Arabs, so the reference to Noah's people worshipping Arab gods is tenuous at best.

71:24 "They have led many astray. Hence, increase not the wrongdoers except in greater error."

71:25 Because of their sins, they were drowned, and were hurled into the Fire. Then, they did not find, apart from Allah, any supporters.

71:26 And Noah said: "Lord, do not leave of the unbelievers a single dweller upon the earth.

As if Allah needed further convincing, Noah encouraged His murderous rage by reminding the Almighty about the "unbelieving libertines"¹² that the unbelievers would beget if He did not slaughter them all (except for a coterie of believers, which included his parents, who would join him on the Ark).

71:27 "Surely, if You leave them alone, they will lead Your servants astray and will not beget any but unbelieving libertines.

71:28 "Lord, forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer and all the believers, men and women; and do not increase the wrongdoers except greater perdition."

Noah may not have been the first messenger God sent to his people; notice the use of the plural form in the following revelation:

25:37 And the people of Noah, when they denounced the Messengers, We drowned them and made them a sign unto mankind. We have prepared for the wrongdoers a very painful punishment.

Noah's Age, and What Became of His Wife

54:9 The people of Noah denounced before them; they denounced Our servant as a liar and said: "A madman", and he was rebuffed.

54:10 So, he called upon his Lord: "I am beaten; so give me support."

54:11 Thereupon, We opened up the gates of heaven with torrential water;

¹² Like Allah and all His spokespersons, including Muhammad, Noah was very much a prude.

54:12 And caused the earth to gush with springs¹³, and so the waters converged in accordance with a foreordained decree.

54:13 And We carried him along upon a ship made of boards and iron plates;

54:14 Sailing before Our Very Eyes, as a reward to him who was disbelieved.

54:15 We have indeed left it as a sign. Is there, then, any one who will remember?

54:16 How, then, were My Punishment and My Warnings?

54:17 And We have made the Qur'an easy to remember. Is there, then, any one (sic) who will remember?

Noah's approximate age at the time of the Flood was just shy of a thousand years old.

29:14 We sent Noah to his own people and he tarried among them a thousand years minus fifty years. Then the Deluge overtook them; for they were wrongdoers.

29:15 Yet We delivered him, together with the companions of the Ark, and We made it a sign unto mankind.

God revealed that Noah's wife betrayed him and would spend an eternity in Hell for that transgression, along with Lot's wife¹⁴.

66:10 Allah gave as an instance of the unbelievers the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants, then they betrayed them. Nothing availed them against Allah and it was said to them: "Enter you two the Fire with the other entrants."

¹³ Rain was a rare occurrence on the Arabian Peninsula. So rare and so welcomed that in Muhammad's time, according to Gheorghiu, it was believed to be the spit of angels. The desert dwellers of the peninsula could not imagine enough rain falling from the sky to flood the Earth. The water for the biblical flood had to come from a familiar place, one with plenty of water and that was a well in the middle of an oasis. This would explain why, in the Koran, it is not only torrential rainfall that causes the great flood but gushing wells.

¹⁴ "The Prophet Noah's wife used to convey news about the believers to the wicked of her people, and the Prophet Lot's wife used to inform the immoral people about those who visited him in his house." *Ibn Jarir*.

The Answerer

Is God blessing Himself, let alone acknowledging the existence of other 'answerers'?

37:75 Noah called Us in times past; blessed are the Answerers.

37:76 We delivered him and his people from the great calamity.

I thought He drowned most of them?! Here is what God may have meant:

37:77 And made His progeny the survivors.

37:78 And We bequeathed to him, among those who succeeded:

37:79 "Peace upon Noah among all the nations."

37:80 Indeed, this is how We reward the beneficent.

37:81 He was truly one of our believing servants.

37:82 Then, We drowned the others.

The Boiling Oven

In another recollection of Noah and the flood, an oven boiling over is the signal that it is imminent (Revelation 23:27).

23:23 And We sent Noah forth to his people, and he said: "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than He. Do you not fear [Allah]?"

23:24 Then, the dignitaries of his people who had disbelieved said: "This is only a mortal like you, who wishes to show you favours. Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels. We never heard of this from our forefathers.

23:25 "He is a man possessed; so watch him for a while."

23:26 He (Noah) said: "Lord, help me, for they deny me."

23:27 We revealed to him then: "Make the Ark under Our Very Eyes and according to our Revelation. Then when Our Command comes and the oven boils over¹⁵, take into it a

¹⁵ "There are some who express the opinion that the words have been used metaphorically for the creation of turmoil. But in view of the context, we see no reason

couple of every kind, together with your family, except for him against whom the Decree has already been pronounced. Do not speak to Me concerning those who are wrongdoers; for they will certainly be drowned.

Don't forget to be thankful for the lengths I went through to deliver you from the "wrongdoing people."

23:28 "Then, when you are seated, you and your company, upon the Ark, say: 'Praise be to Allah Who delivered us from the wrongdoing people.'"

23:29 And Say: "Lord, let me land in a blessed way; for you are the Best of those who make people land."

23:30 Surely in that are signs. Thus We put them to the test.

Noah - The Shortest Version

21:76 And Noah, when he called before, and so We answered him and delivered him and his people from the great calamity.

21:77 And supported him against the people who had denied Our Signs. They were an evil people, and so We drowned them all.

Noah - The Longest Variation

11:25 And We have sent Noah forth to his people; [he said]: "I am a plain warner to you;

11:26 "That you worship none but Allah. I fear for you the punishment of a very painful Day."

11:27 Thereupon the unbelieving dignitaries among his people said to him: "We do not see you except a mortal like ourselves; nor do we see in those who hastily followed you except the scum of our people. We do not see that you (Noah and the believers) have any merit over us, but rather think that you are liars."

why one should take a farfetched figurative meaning of a clear word of the Qur'an. It appears that a particular oven (tannur) had been ear-marked for the deluge to start from, which was to all appearances an unexpected origin of the doom of the wretched people." *Moududi*

11:28 He said: "O my people, do you think that I have a clear proof from my Lord and He has granted me a mercy from Him but it has been hidden from your sight, we would force it on you while you are averse to it?"

11:29 "And O my people, I do not ask you money for it; my reward is with Allah; and I will not drive those away who believe, for they will surely meet their Lord, but I see that you are an ignorant people.

11:30 "O my people, who will save me from Allah if I drive [the believers] away? Will you pay heed?"

11:31 "I do not say that I possess Allah's Treasures; and I do not know the Unseen. I do not claim to be an angel; nor do I say to those you look with disdain that Allah will not accord them any good; Allah knows best what is in their hearts. For I would be, then, one of the wrongdoers."

11:32 They said: "O Noah, you have disputed and disputed much with us. Bring us, then, what you promise us (*the punishment*), if you are truthful."

11:33 He said: "It is Allah who will bring it to you, if He wills, and you will not be able to escape.

11:34 "My advice will not profit you, should I wish to give you advice, if Allah wills to lead you astray. He is your Lord and unto Him you shall be brought back."

At this point in this account of the story of Noah, a Meccan listening to Muhammad must have accused him of falsification for Fakhry to make clear that the allegation of forgery came from "the pagans of Mecca", not Noah's people.

11:35 Or will they (the pagans of Mecca) say: "He has forged it." Say: "If I have forged it, my guilt is upon me and I am innocent of the evil you commit."

11:36 And it was revealed to Noah: "None of your people will believe except those who have already believed, so do not grieve at what they do;

11:37 "And make the Ark under Our Eyes and with Our Revelation, and do not plead with Me regarding the wrongdoers; they shall be drowned."

11:38 So he started making the Ark, and whenever a group of his people passed by him, they mocked him. [But] he would say: "If you mock us, we will mock you as you are mocking.

11:39 "You shall surely learn who will be afflicted by a degrading chastisement, and will undergo a lasting punishment."

God, in the Koran, revealed that a son of Noah who refused to join his father on the Ark was drowned.

11:40 And when Our Command came, and the water gushed forth from the earth¹⁶, We said: "Carry in it (the Ark) two of every kind, together with your family, except for those who have been doomed, and [take] those who believe." However, only a few believers besides him were there.

11:41 And he said: "Embark on it. In the name of Allah will be its sailing and anchor. My Lord is indeed All-Forgiving, Merciful."

11:42 And as it (the Ark) sailed along with them amid waves like mountains, Noah called out to his son, who stood apart: "My son, embark with us and do not remain with the unbelievers."

11:43 He (Noah's son) said: "I will seek refuge in a mountain that will protect me from water." He (Noah) said: "Today there is no protector from Allah's Decree, except for him on whom He has mercy." Then the waves came between them and so he was one of those who were drowned.

11:44 And it was said (by Allah): "O earth, swallow your waters, and O heaven, desist." The water then subsided and the Decree [of Allah] was accomplished; and it (the Ark)

¹⁶ This hole in the ground from which the water which flooded the entire Earth first originated is said to be at Kufa where the Great Mosque is located; in Shia traditions, the Ark was built there.

The Ark began its voyage at Kufa in central Iraq and sailed to Mecca, circling the Ka'ba (sic) [seven times] before finally travelling to Mount Judi where it settled.

Ibn Haukal [died 978 A.D.]

settled upon al-Judi mountain¹⁷; and it was said: "Away with the wrongdoing people."

God made it abundantly clear to Noah; He would make it abundantly clear to Abraham, Moses, and Muhammad (although He would make an exception for his parents): you must disown, if not kill, family members who do not submit!

11:45 Noah then called out to his Lord saying: "My Lord, my son is my family; and Your Promise is surely the Truth and you are the best of judges."

11:46 He said: "O Noah, he is not of your family. It is an act which is not righteous, so do not ask Me about that of which you have no knowledge. I admonish you not to be one of the ignorant."

"Do not ask Me about that of which you have no knowledge," and variations of this phrase, is God's stock response when He does not want to answer a direct question—especially with regard to why a god who claims to be quintessentially merciful and compassionate demonstrates a complete lack of empathy. After receiving the standard non-answer from Allah as to why his son deserved to die, Noah apologised to God for asking for His mercy.

11:47 He said: "Lord, I seek refuge with You, lest I should ask You that of which I have no knowledge. For unless You forgive me and have mercy on me I will be one of the losers."

God, after inviting Noah to disembark from the Ark, informed him that he had taken on people who would give rise to nations that would require more "severe punishment from Us." It never ends!

11:48 It was said to Noah: "Come down [from the Ark] in peace from Us and blessings on you and on [some] nations [descending] from those with you, and We shall provide for others [in this life]. Then they will be afflicted by severe punishment from Us."

We have to assume that when God told Muhammad, in the following revelation, that "Neither you, nor your people knew it before this," He

¹⁷ Both the Bible and the Koran claim a mountain peak in present-day Southern Turkey as the final resting place of the Ark. In the Bible, it is Mount Ararat; in the Koran, it is al-Judi. Scholars still dispute whether this is the same mountain.

was referring to the account of Noah and the Ark in the Koran that differs from the Hebrew Bible.

11:49 That is part of the tidings of the Unseen which we are revealing to you. Neither you, nor your people knew it before this. Forebear then, the [good] outcome belongs to the righteous.

Criminals on the Ark

26:105 The people of Noah have denounced the Messengers as liars;

26:106 When their brother Noah said to them: "Do you not fear god?

26:107 "I am to you a faithful Messenger.

Most of God's Messengers (Jesus being the most conspicuous exception) come across as preachers who wanted to be both spiritual and secular leaders of men. Noah is no exception, and even less so; twice in three revelations he insisted that his people obey him (Revelations 26:108 and 110).

26:108 "So, fear Allah and obey me.

26:109 "I ask you no wages for this; my wage is with the Lord of the Worlds.

26:110 "So, fear Allah and obey me."

Noah may remind you of a power-hungry buffoon. In this account of his attempt to convince people to obey him because he was a Messenger of God, our would-be Chaplin-like dictator was caught short when "his people" informed him about "the lowliest crowd" his message has attracted: criminals.

26:111 They said: "Shall we believe in you, when the lowliest crowd has followed you?"

God obviously never told Noah what these invited guests "used to do."

26:112 He said: "How could I know what they used to do?

They would be held to account by God, and in event, it was not up to him to drive away believers.

26:113 "They will only be called to account by my Lord; if only you had any sense.

26:114 "And it is not for me to drive away the believers.

26:115 "I am only a manifest warner."

26:116 They said: "If you will not desist, O Noah, you will surely be stoned."

26:117 He said: "Lord, my people have called me a liar.

26:118 "So, judge between me and them decisively and deliver me and the believers who have joined me."

26:119 And so, We delivered him and those who joined him in the laden Ark.

26:120 Then We drowned all the rest.

26:121 There is in that a sign, but most of them would not believe.

26:122 And your Lord is the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

An Easy to Board Ark

36:41 And a sign unto them is that We carried their progeny in the laden Ark.

36:42 And We created for them the like of it that which they could board.

Eber/Hud

The Prophet Hud is believed to be Noah's great-grandson, Eber of the Old Testament. Both accounts of the story of Eber/Hud follow the storyline of the typical messenger: a kin sent by God to an unbelieving people—in this instance, the people of 'Ad, believed to be a pre-Islamic Arabic tribe that Allah wiped out for the usual reason.

Hud I

7:65 And to 'Ad, [We sent] their brother Hud. He said: "O my people, worship Allah; you have no other god but He. Will you not fear [Allah]?"

7:66 The dignitaries of his people, who were unbelievers said: "We see that you are foolish and we believe that you are a liar."

7:67 He said: "O my people, I am not foolish but am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds;

7:68 "Delivering to you the Revelations of My Lord, and I am a sincere advisor of yours.

The people of 'Ad may have been taller than your average descendant of Noah.

7:69 "Do you wonder that a Reminder from your Lord has come to you through a man of your own people, in order to warn you? Remember how He made you successors (that is, possessors of a vast kingdom) after the people of Noah and increased you in physical stature. Remember then Allah's Bounties, that perchance you may prosper."

7:70 They said: "Have you come to us, so that we may worship Allah alone and forsake what our fathers used to worship? Bring us then what you promise us, if you are one of the truthful."

There may have been some discussions as to whether the gods the people of 'Ad worshipped, whose name Allah does not acknowledge, included Allah.

7:71 He said: "A scourge and wrath have descended on you from your Lord. Do you dispute with me over names which you and your fathers have invented, and for which Allah has sent down no authority? Wait [for the punishment] then. Surely I shall be, along with you, among those who wait."

7:72 We delivered him thereupon, with those of his company, by a Mercy from Us, and cut off the roots of those who denied Our Revelations and were no believers.

Hud II

In the second account, Hud not only insists that the people of 'Ad worship only Allah, but quit lying about the one and only god.

11:50 And [We sent] to 'Ad their brother Hud. He said: "O my people, worship Allah; you have no other god but He. You are only lying [about Allah].

Like Noah, and all the prophets to come, Hud asks for no reward for telling his people about Allah.

11:51 "O my people, I ask you no reward for it; my reward is only with Him who created me. Do you not understand?

The promised rain, in Revelation 11:52, would be a beneficial rain that would make them *stronger* if they repented, unlike the rain that drowned the people of Noah.

11:52 "O my people, ask forgiveness from your Lord, then repent unto Him, for He will send you torrents of rain from the sky and add strength to your strength. And do not turn away guilty."

The people of 'Ad could not be swayed to abandon their gods in favour of this Allah without proof. They also suspected Hud to be under some evil influence.

11:53 They said: "O Hud, you have not brought us any clear proof, and we will not abandon our gods because of what you say, and we will not believe in you.

11:54 "We only say that some of our gods have smitten you with some evil." He said: "I call Allah to witness and call you to witness that I am innocent of what you associate,

11:55 "With Him. So try your guile on me, all of you; then do not give me any respite.

All creatures that crawl have forelocks?!

11:56 "I have put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature which crawls, but He takes it by the forelock. My Lord is truly on a Straight Path.

I have delivered the message I was given, and if you do not heed it, you have no future.

11:57 "Then, if you turn away, I have actually delivered to you what I was sent forth to you with, and my Lord will raise up as successors a people other than you, and you will not cause Him any harm. My Lord watches over all things."

11:58 And when Our Decree came, We saved Hud and those who believed with him, by a Mercy of Ours, and delivered them from a harsh punishment.

11:59 Such were the [people of] 'Ad; they denied the signs of their Lord and disobeyed His Messengers and followed the command of every obstinate tyrant.

Away with another civilization!

11:60 And they were pursued by a curse in this world and [shall be cursed] on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, 'Ad disbelieved their Lord. Away with 'Ad, the people of Hud.

The Great Calamity

'Ad was destroyed by what appears to have been hot hurricane-force winds. For the people of Thamud, thought to have lived in Southern Arabia, the cause may have been an earthquake.

69:1 The Certain Hour (Judgement Day);

69:2 And what is the Certain Hour?

69:3 If only you knew what the Certain Hour is.

69:4 The people of Thamud and 'Ad have disbelieved in the Great Calamity.

69:5 As to the people of Thamud, they were destroyed by the overwhelming Cry¹⁸;

69:6 But 'Ad were destroyed by a violent gusty wind,

69:7 Which He unleashed upon them for seven nights and eight days in succession; so you could see the people during that time prostrate, as though they were the stump of hollow palm trees.

69:8 Do you see now any vestige of them?

Then there was, of course, the pharaoh, and before him, the Overturned Cities (Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible).

69:9 Then Pharaoh came, and those before him, and the Overturned Cities, steeped in sin.

69:10 They disobeyed the Messenger of their Lord and so He seized them with an overpowering grip.

And before that were the people of Noah:

69:11 Indeed, when the water rose, We carried you along in the cruising ship.

69:12 So as to make it a reminder for you and to be grasped by an attentive ear.

Which brings us to the Great Calamity, Judgement Day, in which the people of 'Ad did not believe.

69:15 Then, on that Day, the terrible Calamity shall come to pass;

69:16 And the heavens shall be rent asunder, so that on that Day it shall be tottering;

69:17 And the angels shall be ranged around its borders, eight of whom will be carrying above them, on that Day, the Throne of your Lord.

Scare Tactics

God tried to scare the Meccans into submitting with the story of the destruction of 'Ad, to which He returns here.

¹⁸ A violent catastrophe such as an earthquake.

46:21 And remember the brother of 'Ad, when he warned his people upon the sand-dunes, warners having gone before him and after him, saying: "Do not worship any one but Allah. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day."

46:22 They said: "Did you come to divert us from our deities? Brings us then what you are promising us if you are truthful."

46:23 He said: "Knowledge is only with Allah and I am conveying you the message I was charged with, but I see that you are an ignorant people."

46:24 Then, when they saw it (the punishment) as a cloud-burst coming towards they valley, they said: "This is a cloud-burst raining upon us." No, it is what you sought to hasten, a wind wherein is a painful punishment;

46:25 Destroying everything at the behest of its Lord. Then when they woke up, there was nothing to be seen except their dwellings. Thus do We reward the criminal people.

46:26 We had established them firmly in a manner We did not establish you (*Meccans*), and We gave them hearing, eye-sight and hearts; but their hearing, eye-sight and hearts availed them nothing, as they repudiated the Signs of Allah; and so they were overwhelmed by that they used to mock (*the punishment*).

In case it is necessary, we are reminded that 'Ad was not the only city in the vicinity that God obliterated.

46:27 We have also destroyed the cities surrounding you and expounded the Signs, that perchance they might return.

46:28 Why, then, were they not supported those they took apart from Allah, as favourite deities? No, they abandoned them. That was their fabrication and what they used to allege.

'Ad again, shed a tear:

51:41 And in 'Ad, when We loosed (sic) upon them the barren wind;

51:42 It left nothing it came upon, but reduced it to rubble.

In the surah *The Moon*, God again recalls the many people He has destroyed, including the citizens of 'Ad for refusing to worship Him,

ending this recollection with a reminder that He has made the Koran 'easy to remember'. Stories of mindless destruction do have a tendency to be memorable.

54:18 "Ad denounced; how, then, were My Punishment and My Warnings?

54:19 We have loosed upon them a mighty wind, on a day of constant misfortune;

54:20 Uprooting people, as though they were the stump of fallen palm trees.

54:21 How, then, were My Punishment and Warnings?

54:22 We have made the Qur'an easy to remember. Is there, then, any one who will remember?

God admits that 'Ad was one-of-a-kind, as was another city He destroyed: Thamud, i.e., Petra.

89:6 Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with 'Ad?

89:7 Iram (the ancient city of 'Ad in central Arabia) of the many pillars;

89:8 The like of which was not created in the land?

89:9 And Thamud, who burrowed the rock in the valley?

89:10 And Pharaoh of the many tent-pegs (a metaphor or power or grandeur)?

89:11 Who waxed proud in the land;

89:12 And compounded corruption in it.

89:13 Then your Lord unloosed upon them a scourge of punishment.

89:14 Your Lord is, indeed, Ever-Observant.

Hud the Archetypal Messenger

Hud, like all God's Messengers, would be accused of deception.

26:123 'Ad called the Messengers liars,

26:124 When their brother Hud said to them: "Do you not fear God?

26:125 "I am truly a faithful Messenger to you.

Like every messenger, Hud demanded obedience.

26:126 "So, fear Allah and obey me.

Like every messenger, Hud insisted it was not about the money.

26:127 "I do not ask you for it (my Message) any wage; my wage is with the Lord of the Worlds.

Like every messenger, Hud was not known as a fun-loving guy.

26:128 "Do you build upon every elevation an edifice for amusement?

26:129 "And acquire castles perchance you may live forever.

26:130 "And when you attack, you attack like giants?

Again with the "obey me or else":

26:131 "So fear Allah and obey me;

26:132 "And fear Him, Who imparted to you whatever knowledge you have.

26:133 "He granted you cattle and children;

26:134 "And gardens and springs.

Like every messenger, Hud would remind his people of Judgement Day and the horrible punishment that the god for whom he claimed to speak had in mind.

26:135 "I certainly fear for you the punishment of a Great Day."

26:136 They said: "It is the same to us whether you exhort or are not one of those who exhort.

26:137 "This is only the manner of the ancients.

26:138 "And we shall not be punished."

26:139 They denounced him as a liar, and so We destroyed them. There is in that a sign, but most of them would not believe.

26:140 Your Lord is surely the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

Abraham

3:65 O People of the Book, why do you dispute concerning Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were only received after him. Do you have any sense?

3:66 There, you have disputed concerning what you know; so why do you dispute concerning what you do not know? Allah knows and you do not know.

3:67 Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a hanif (Arabic word which means "one who turned away from paganism") and a Muslim. And he was not one of the polytheists.

3:68 Surely, the people who are worthiest of Abraham are those who followed him, together with the Prophet (Muhammad) and the believers. Allah is the Guardian of the believers!

3:95 Say (*Muhammad*): "Allah has spoken the truth. Follow then the religion of Abraham, the upright; he was not one of the polytheists."

A Friend of Allah's and the Father of all Muslims

4:123 It will not be in accordance with your wishes or the People of the Book. Whoever does evil shall be requited for it and will not find, apart from Allah, a friend or supporter

4:124 And whoever does some good deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer - those shall be admitted into Paradise and shall not be wronged a whit.

4:125 And who has a better religion than one who submits himself to Allah, does right and follows the true religion of Abraham the upright one? Allah has taken Abraham for a friend.

22:77 O believers, kneel down, prostrate yourselves and worship your Lord and do good, that you may perchance prosper.

22:78 And strive for Allah as you ought to strive. He elected you, and did not impose on you any hardship in religion – the faith of your father Abraham. He called you Muslims before and in this (the Qur'an), that the Messenger may bear witness against you and you may be witnesses against mankind. So, perform the prayer, give the alms and hold fast to Allah. He is your Master; and what a Blessed Master and a Blessed Supporter!

Challenger and Buster of Idols

Abraham was a man that God knew well.

21:51 And We gave Abraham his right judgement formerly; for We knew him well.

He started asking questions about the idols that his father and “his people” worshipped earlier on.

21:52 When he said to his father and his people: “What are these statues to which you are devoted?”

21:53 They said: “We found our fathers worshipping them.”

God may have given Abraham his “right judgement” but it did not include tactfulness.

21:54 He said: “Indeed, you and your fathers have been in manifest error.”

21:55 They said: “Have you brought us the truth, or are you one of those who jest?”

21:56 He said: “No, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who created them both; and I bear witness to that.

Abraham, having founded the most influential monotheistic religion of all time, was a natural ally of Allah against the polytheists (also referred to in the Koran as idol-worshippers and idolaters). No one in the Koran breaks more idols than Abraham. He may have been a teenager, or even younger, when he busted his first idol.

21:57 "And by Allah, I will show your idols my guile, after you turn your backs."

After they have turned their backs in a variation of hide-and-seek, or perhaps have even gone home, Abraham proceeded to destroy the idols except for the leader of the statues or statuettes. He had a plan for that one.

21:58 Then he reduced them to pieces except for their chief, so that they might turn to him.

21:59 They said: "He who did this to our gods is certainly one of the wrongdoers."

Their suspicions naturally fell on the young Abraham as the wrongdoer.

21:60 They said: "We heard a youth called Abraham mentioning them."

21:61 They said: "Bring him along in full view of the people, so that they may bear witness."

21:62 They said: "Are you the one who did this to our gods, O Abraham?"

Who? Me! Why don't you ask your busted statues?

21:63 He said: "No, but their chief did this; so ask them if they can speak."

21:64 Then, they turned to themselves and said: "Surely, you are the wrongdoers."

21:65 And so they were utterly confounded and [they said]: "You know that these [idols] do not speak."

21:66 He (Abraham) said: "Do you, then, worship, besides Allah, what does not profit or harm you a whit?"

21:67 "Fie on you and on what you worship besides Allah. Do you not understand?"

In the Old Testament, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, thrown into a fiery furnace, walk out without even a hair singed. In the Koran, Abraham gets more or less the same treatment and he too walks away unscathed. Allah spoke to the fire and apparently that did the trick.

21:68 They said: "Burn him and support your gods, if you are going to do anything."

21:69 We (Allah) said: "O fire, be coolness and peace upon Abraham."

After defeating the plotters, God, in this account of the story of Abraham, delivers the Patriarch and his nephew Lot (the Koran does not mention their filial relationship) unto a *blessed* land, where they become god-fearing leaders of men.

21:70 They wanted to plot against him, but We made them the worst losers.

21:71 And We delivered him and Lot unto the land which We have blessed for all mankind.

21:72 And We granted him Isaac, and Jacob, his son's sons, as a bounty and each We made to be righteous.

21:73 And We made them leaders, guiding others at Our Behest; and We revealed to them to do good, perform the prayer and give the alms, and they have worshipped Us.

Like Abraham, Lot is given good judgement.

21:74 And Lot, We gave him good judgement and knowledge, and We delivered him from the city which practiced foul deeds (Sodom). They were indeed an evil and sinful people.

21:75 And We admitted him into Our Mercy; for he was one of the righteous.

In Surah 29, *The Spider*, Abraham's people again try to burn him for what he preaches.

29:16 And (remember) Abraham, when he said to his people: "Worship Allah and fear Him; that is far better for you, if only you knew.

29:17 "Indeed, you only worship, apart from Allah, mere idols, and you invent falsehood. Surely, those you worship, apart from Allah, have no power to provide for you. So, seek provision from Allah, worship Him and give Him thanks. You shall be returned onto him.

29:18 "And if you denounce [the Prophets], other nations

before you have denounced too. It is only incumbent on the Messenger to deliver the message plainly."

29:19 Have they not seen how Allah originates creation, then brings it back into being? That for Allah is an easy matter.

29:20 Say: "Travel in the land and see how Allah originated the creation; then Allah produces the other generation (that is, Resurrection). Allah truly has power over everything."

29:21 He punishes whom He pleases and has mercy on whom He pleases, and to Him you will be turned over.

29:22 You cannot thwart Him on earth or in heaven, and you have, apart from Allah, no friend or supporter.

29:23 Those who disbelieved in Allah's Signs and His Encounter are those who despaired of My (?) Mercy¹⁹. To those is reserved a very painful punishment.

29:24 His own people's only reply was their saying: "Kill him and burn him", but Allah delivered him from the fire. Surely, in that are signs for a people who believe.

You and your idols would curse one another on Judgement Day!

29:25 He (Abraham) said: "You only took, apart from Allah, idols, as a bond between you in the present life. Then on the Day of Resurrection you will disbelieve in each other and curse each other. Your refuge shall be the Fire and you will have no supporters."

It was not all in vain; Abraham did make a convert out of Lot.

29:26 Then Lot believed in him and he said: "I will emigrate to my Lord; He is indeed the Almighty, the Wise."

The next revelation leaves the impression that it was Lot who was granted Isaac and Jacob.

29:27 And We granted him Isaac and Jacob and conferred on his progeny the Prophethood and the Book, and gave him his reward in this life; and in the Hereafter he shall be among the righteous.

In Surah 37, Allah reveals that Abraham was a partisan of Noah.

¹⁹ To despair of Allah's Mercy is the second greatest sin in Islam. Associating other gods with Allah is number one.

37:79 "Peace upon Noah among all the nations."

37:80 Indeed, this is how We reward the beneficent.

37:81 He was truly one of Our believing servants.

37:82 Then, We drowned the others.

37:83 And of his partisans was Abraham.

37:84 When he came to his Lord with a sound heart.

37:85 He said to his father and his own people: "What are you worshipping?

37:86 "Do you desire, falsely, other gods, apart from Allah?

37:87 "What do you think, then, of the Lord of the Worlds?"

Abraham's idol warfare takes on a new twist. First, he gets the people to flee by pretending to have some infectious disease.

37:88 Then he cast a glance at the stars.

37:89 And said: "I am really sick."

37:90 Whereupon, they turned away from him in flight.

He proceeded to try feeding their animal (or perhaps human) representations of their gods, coaxing them to talk.

37:91 And he turned towards their gods, saying: "Will you not eat?

37:92 "Why do you not speak?"

Maybe a slap or two would get their attention.

37:93 Then, he proceeded to hit them with his right hand.

This assault caused the idol worshippers to come to the defense of their gods. They again threw Abraham onto (or into) a blazing fire.

37:94 Then, [his people] came towards him in haste.

37:95 He said: "Do you worship what you hew?

37:96 "When Allah created you and what you do?"

37:97 They said: "Build him a pyre"; and so they cast him into the furnace.

37:98 They wished him ill, but we reduced them to the lowest rung.

Abraham had had enough. Walking out of the fire, he asked God to grant him a new progeny that would give rise to the Arab people.

37:99 And he said: "I am going to my Lord; he will guide me.

37:100 "Lord grant me a righteous child."

37:101 So, We announced to him the good news of a prudent boy.

Isma`il

The so-called prudent boy is Isma`il, born to Hagar—an Egyptian servant of Sarah, Abraham's barren wife—gifted to her husband so that he might father a child. In the Koran, it is Isma`il, not Isaac, whom Abraham attempts to sacrifice to his God and in Mecca. Isma`il is a willing volunteer.

37:102 Then, when he attained the age of consorting with him, he said: "My son, I have seen in sleep that I am slaughtering you. See what you think." He said: "My father, do what you are commanded; you will find me, Allah willing, one of the steadfast."

37:103 Then, when they both submitted and he flung him down upon his brow;

37:104 And We called out to Him "O Abraham,

37:105 "You have believed the vision." Thus We reward the beneficent.

37:106 This, indeed, is the manifest trial.

37:107 And We ransomed him with a large sacrifice.

37:108 And We left him for later generations:

37:109 "Peace be upon Abraham."

Islam considers Hagar to be the legitimate wife of Abraham and her son, his first heir. The Koran is clear on the order of birth. As a reward for his willingness to sacrifice his son, God would grant Abraham another son, who would be none other than Isaac.

37:110 Thus, We reward the beneficent.

37:111 He is indeed one of Our believing servants.

37:112 And We announced to him the good news of Isaac as a Prophet, one of the righteous.

The blessing of God on Abraham and Isaac, and Isaac's righteousness would not be enough to stop some of their progeny from "wronging themselves."

37:113 And We blessed him and blessed Isaac; and of their progeny some are beneficent and some are wronging themselves manifestly.

Abraham at Mecca

2:124 And when Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commandments which he fulfilled, He said: "I am making you a spiritual exemplar to mankind." Abraham said: "And what about my posterity?" He replied: "My Covenant does not apply to the evil-doers."

Of course, the preceding did not apply to all Abraham's progeny, only "the evil-doers."

2:125 And [remember] when We made the House (the Ka'ba) a place of residence for mankind and a haven [saying]: "Make of Abraham's maqam [stand] a place for prayer." We enjoined Abraham and Isma'il [saying]: "Purify My House for those who circle it, for those who retreat there for meditation, and for those who kneel and prostrate themselves (perform the prayers)."

2:126 And when Abraham said: "My Lord make this a secure city and feed with fruits those of its inhabitants who believe in Allah and the Last Day." Allah (having accepted Abraham's prayer) said: "As for those who disbelieve, I shall provide for them for a while (in this life), and then subject them to the scourge of the Fire, and what an abominable fate!"

If the Islamic tradition that Adam set up the original altar at Mecca using the stone he brought from Paradises has any connection with reality, then people were already circling the Ka'ba when Abraham and Isma'il showed up. Where the *tradition* falls down a bit is if we give "raised the foundations" in Revelation 2:127 its ordinary, everyday meaning.

2:127 And while Abraham and Isma`il raised the foundations of the House, [they prayed]: "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Surely you are the All-Hearing, the Omniscient."

It is while labouring at laying (or rebuilding) the foundations of the Ka`ba that Abraham asked God to send the Koran, of whose existence in heaven he was obviously aware, to the Arabs via "a Messenger from among themselves," the Prophet Muhammad.

2:128 "Our Lord, cause us to submit to You, and make of our posterity a nation that submits to You. Show us our sacred rites, and pardon us. You are, indeed, the Pardoner, the Merciful."

2:129 "Our Lord, send them a Messenger from among themselves who will recite to them Your Revelations, to teach them the Book (the Koran) and the wisdom, and to purify them. You are truly the Mighty, the Wise."

Abraham is the chosen one, a leader and a righteous person who does what he is told, and this would be his legacy.

2:130 And who would forsake the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself? We have chosen him in this world and in the Hereafter; he shall be one of the righteous.

2:131 When His Lord told him (Abraham): "Submit", he said: "I have submitted to the Lord of the Worlds."

2:132 And Abraham bequeathed that to his sons, and so did Jacob saying: "O my sons, Allah has chosen the religion for you; so do not die except as submitting people."

Abraham wanted God to prove that He could raise the dead. This would not be the last time Allah would be asked to put, so to speak, his money where His mouth is, and every time He would find a way of avoiding actually doing so, as He does here.

2:260 And when Abraham said: "My Lord, show me how You raise the dead", He replied: "Have you not embraced the faith?" Abraham said: "Yes, but so that my heart be reassured." Allah then said: "Take four birds, draw them to you, then [cut them to pieces] and place a part thereof on each mountain. If you then call them, they will come rushing to you. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise."

Abraham has a chapter of the Koran named after him, Surah 14, *Abrahim*. Herein you will find familiar information about his stay at Mecca and his conversations with God.

14:35 And [remember] when Abraham said: "Lord, make this town secure, and keep me and my sons from worshipping the idols.

14:36 "Lord, they have led (the idols) many people astray; therefore he who follows me, shall belong to me, and he who disobeys me, surely You are All-Forgiving, Merciful.

14:37 "Our Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley which has no tillage, by Your Sacred House²⁰, so that, Lord, they may perform the prayer. Make, then, the hearts of some people incline towards them, and provide them with some fruits, that perchance they might give thanks.

14:38 "Our Lord, You know what we conceal and what we reveal, and nothing on earth or in heaven is concealed from Allah.

14:39 "Praise be to Allah, who has given me, in old age, Isma`il and Isaac. Surely my Lord is the Hearer of Prayer.

14:40 "Lord, make me and my posterity keep up the prayers; and, our Lord, accept my supplication.

14:41 "Our Lord, forgive me, my parents and the believers, on the Day when the reckoning shall come to pass."

²⁰ After Sarah became pregnant, Abraham was told by Allah to take Hagar and their son Ishmael from their home in Palestine to the desert wilderness of Arabia and leave them there. When their water ran out, Hagar ran frantically between the hills of Safa and Marwa—which later became part of the Hajj ritual—until she collapsed next to her son, who struck his foot on the ground and caused a spring to gush forth, the famous well of Zam Zam. If this spring is not a stream today, it is Hagar's fault.

Narrated Ibn Abbas:

The Prophet said, "May Allah be merciful to the mother of Ishmael! If she had left the water of Zam-Zam (fountain) as it was, (without constructing a basin for keeping the water), (or said, "If she had not taken handfuls of its water"), it would have been a flowing stream. Jurhum (an Arab tribe) came and asked her, 'May we settle at your dwelling?' She said, 'Yes, but you have no right to possess the water.' They agreed."

Bukhari 40.556

Abraham and His Father

19:41 And remember in the Book of Abraham. He was a truthful man, a Prophet.

19:42 He said to his father: "Father, why do you worship that which neither sees nor hears, and can do nothing to help you?

19:43 "To me has come knowledge which has not come to you; so follow me and I will guide you to a straight path.

19:44 "Father, do not worship the Devil; for the Devil has been rebelling against the Compassionate.

19:45 "Father, I fear that a punishment from the Compassionate shall afflict you, and so you will become a friend of the Devil."

19:46 He (the father) said: "Are you forsaking my gods, O Abraham? If you will not desist, I will certainly stone you. So leave me alone for a while."

19:47 [Abraham] said: "Peace be upon you. I will seek forgiveness for you from my Lord. He has, indeed, been gracious to me.

19:48 "And I will draw away from you and from those you call upon except Allah, and I will pray to my Lord. Perhaps I may not be unfortunate in praying to my Lord."

19:49 Then, when He withdrew away from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We granted him Isaac and Jacob²¹ and each we made a Prophet.

19:50 And We gave them freely of Our Mercy and We accorded them an honourable and a true rebound.

Allah's Safety Argument

6:74 And when Abraham said to his father Azar, "Do you take idols for gods? I see you and your people are in manifest error."

²¹ Jacob is, of course, the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham.

6:75 Thus we show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be one of those possessed of certainty.

The stars, the moon, and the sun are not gods; if they were, they would not ever set.

6:76 And when night fell, he saw a star; so he said: "This is my Lord", but when it set, he said: "I do not like those that set."

6:77 Then, when he saw the moon rising, he said: "This is my Lord", but when it set, he said: "If my Lord does not guide me rightly, I will be one of the erring people."

6:78 Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my Lord; this is larger", but when it set he said: "O, my people, I am innocent of what you associate [with God].

6:79 "I turn my face towards Him Who fashioned the heavens and the earth as an upright man, and I am not one of the polytheist."

6:80 His people disputed with him. He said: "Do you dispute with me regarding Allah Who has guided me? I do not fear what you associate with Him, unless my Lord wills anything. My Lord embraces everything in His Knowledge; do you not remember [this]?"

If Islam was founded today, it would be considered a criminal enterprise. No Western court would recognise that Muslims had a God-given right to do what they once did, that is stealing from those who did not benefit from God's protection²², i.e., safety in Revelation 6:82.

6:81 "And how should I fear what you associate [with Him], while you do not fear the fact that you have associated with Allah that for which He has sent down upon you no authority? Which of the two parties, then, is more deserving of safety? [Tell me] if you know."

²² 8:68 But for a prior ordinance of Allah, you would have been afflicted on account of what you have taken (an ordinance which made it lawful for Muslims to take spoils and captives) by a terrible punishment.

6:82 Those who believe and do not mix their faith up with injustice – to these belongs the safety, and they are the well-guided.

6:83 That is Our Argument which We imparted to Abraham against His people. We raise up in degrees whomever We please. Your Lord is indeed Wise, All-Knowing.

Another mention of Jacob as being a son Abraham:

6:84 And We granted him Isaac and Jacob, and guided each of them; and Noah We guided before that, and his progeny, [We guided] David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron. Thus We reward the beneficent.

6:85 And Zachariah, John, Jesus and Elias, each was one of the righteous.

6:86 And Isma'il, Elijah, Jonah and Lot; Each We exalted above the whole world.

6:87 [We also exalted some] of their fathers, progeny and brethren. And We chose them and guide them to a straight path.

6:88 That is Allah's Guidance by which He guides whom He pleases of His servants. Had they associated [other gods with Allah], all they did would have been nullified.

6:89 Those are the ones to whom We gave the Book, wisdom, authority and Prophethood. So if these (the Meccan unbelievers) disbelieve in them, We have entrusted them to a people who do not disbelieve in them.

Abraham Uninterrupted

In this account of the story of Abraham, the patriarch of Arabs and Jews is not thrown into a fire.

26:69 And relate to them the tale of Abraham;

26:70 When he said to his father and his people: "What do you worship?"

26:71 They said: "We worship idols, to which we continue to be devoted."

26:72 He said: "Do they hear when you call upon them?"

26:73 "Or profit or harm you?"

26:74 They said: "No, but we found our fathers doing that."

26:75 He said: "Have you considered what you have been worshipping,

26:76 "You and your forefathers?

26:77 "They are surely an enemy of mine, except for the Lord of the Worlds;

26:78 "Who created me, and He guides me;

26:79 "And He is the One Who feeds me and gives me drink;

26:80 "And if I am sick, He is the One Who heals me;

26:81 "And He is the One Who causes me to die, then brings me back to life.

26:82 "And He is the One Whom I hope will forgive me my sins on the Day of Judgement.

26:83 "Lord, grant me sound judgement and make me join the righteous;

26:84 "And give me a truthful tongue among the others;

26:85 "And make me one of the heirs of the Garden of Bliss.

26:86 "And forgive my father; for he was one of the wayward.

26:87 "And do not disgrace me on the day they will be raised from the dead,

26:88 "The day when neither wealth nor children will avail one;

26:89 "Except for him who comes to Allah with a pure heart.

26:90 "And Paradise shall be brought closer to the God-fearing.

26:91 "And Hell shall be exhibited to the perverse."

26:92 And it will be said to them: "Where are those you used to worship;

26:93 "Apart from Allah? Will they support you or support themselves?"

26:94 Then they will be cast down, together with the perverse ones;

26:95 And the hosts of Iblis, all together.

26:96 They will say, while they disputed there with each other:

26:97 "By Allah, we were indeed in manifest error,

26:98 "When we made you (false gods) equal to the Lord of the Worlds.

26:99 "We were only misled by the criminals;

26:100 "So we have no intercessors;

26:101 "Nor, an intimate friend.

26:102 "If only we could have another chance; then we would be among the believers."

26:103 Surely in that is a sign; but most of them are not believers.

26:104 Your Lord is surely the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

Lot

God fondly remembers Lot while revelling in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, although neither city is mentioned by name in the Koran. In a number of revelations He refers to them as the “overturned towns,” as in the following:

9:70 Have you not heard about those who came before them (the hypocrites), the people of Noah, of `Ad, of Thamud, the people of Abraham, the people of Madyan (Midian) and the overturned towns? Their Messengers came to them with the clear proofs; Allah never wronged them, but they wronged themselves.

The story of Lot and the fate of his people gets more than a handful of verses across at least eight surahs (7, 11, 15, 26, 27, 29, 37 and 51), again with slight variations in each retelling. The most complete and longest account is in Surah 11, *Hud*. In Allah’s retelling of the story of Lot in *Hud*, Abraham’s plea to spare the people of Lot is dismissed out of hand. The plea for mercy from Abraham is said to have been made after God’s angels, who are on their way to see Lot, interrupt their journey to drop in on an apprehensive Abraham with good news.

11:69 Our messengers (the two angels) indeed came to Abraham bearing good news. They said: “Peace”, he said “Peace.” Then he brought a roasted calf at once.

11:70 But when he saw that their hands did not reach out to it, he became suspicious of them and conceived a fear of them. They said: “Fear not, we have been sent to the people of Lot.”

The angels announced to an incredulous wife that she would bear a child by the name of Isaac and later Jacob²³.

11:71 His wife was standing by, so she laughed. Thereupon We announced to her the good news of Isaac, and after Isaac, of Jacob.

²³ In the Bible, Jacob is the son of Isaac and Rebecca.

11:72 She said: "Woe is me, shall I bear a child while I am an old woman, and this, my husband, is an old man too? This is truly a very strange thing."

11:73 They said: "Do you wonder at Allah's command? May the Mercy and Blessings of Allah be upon you, O people of the House (the House of Abraham). Surely He is Praiseworthy and Glorious."

11:74 Then when fear left Abraham and the good news came to him, he started pleading with Us concerning the people of Lot.

11:75 Abraham is truly clement, contrite, penitent.

11:76 "O Abraham, desist from this; the Command of your Lord has come and an irreversible punishment shall surely smite them."

The angels finally get to meet Lot.

11:77 And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was grieved by them and felt unable to protect them. He said: "This is a dreadful day."

A revelation about the evil of sodomy:

11:78 And his people came rushing towards him; and before that time they used to perpetrate evil deeds (sodomy). He said: "O my people, these are my daughters; they are purer for you. So fear Allah and do not disgrace me by [wronging] my guests. Is there not one right-minded man among you?"

You know what we want!

11:79 They said: "You know that we have no right to your daughters, and you know well what we want."

Would Lot have made the following wish had he known he was dooming "his people"—men, women, and children—to a horrible death?

11:80 He said: "Would that I had the power to stand against you, or could seek refuge with a strong supporter."

The angels instructed Lot to set out with his family and not to stop his wife from looking back.

11:81 They (the angels who were Lot's guests) said: "O Lot, we are your Lord's messengers to you; they will not reach you. Set out with your family in watch of the night and let no one look back, except for your wife. She will be afflicted with what they have been afflicted with. Their appointed time is the morning. Is not the morning close enough?"

And then it happened!

11:82 And when Our decree came, we turned [the town (Sodom)] upside down and rained down upon it stones of clay in clusters;

God bragging about His marksmanship ends the story of Lot in the Surah Hud.

11:83 Marked from your Lord; and they were never far off from the wrongdoers.

In two surahs, a shower of clay becomes a shower of rain.

26:173 And We loosed on them a rain. Wretched is the rain of those forewarned!

27:58 And We sent down upon them a torrent of rain. Wretched is the rain of those who have been forewarned!

In an earlier surah, it was a shower of brimstones.

7:84 And We rained a shower [of brimstone] upon them. See then what was the end of the sinners.

In Surah 54, Allah reveals that he blinded Lot's people before destroying them the next morning; and it is pebbles He rained down on the cities.

54:33 The people of Lot denounced the warnings as lies.

54:34 We loosed upon them a squall of pebbles, except for the family of Lot whom We saved at dawn,

54:35 As a Grace from Us. Thus We reward those who give thanks.

54:36 He (Lot) had warned them of Our Onslaught, but they doubted the warnings.

54:37 And they even solicited of him his guests; so we blotted out their eyesight: "Taste, then, My Punishment and My Warnings."

54:38 Early in the morning, they were visited with implacable punishment.

54:39 "Taste, then, My Punishment and My Warnings."

In Surah 51, it is Abraham who tells the angels that they are strangers, and they may have shared a meal.

51:24 Has the tale of Abraham's honoured guests reached you?

51:25 When they entered upon him and said: "Peace", he replied: "Peace; you are an unknown people to me."

51:26 Then, he went back to his own family and brought a fattened calf.

51:27 He offered it to them, saying: "Will you not eat?"²⁴

51:28 So, he conceived a fear of them. They said: "Do not fear", and they announced to him the good news of a clever boy.

51:29 Then his wife came shouting and she smote her face and said: "I am a barren old woman."

51:30 They said: "That is what your Lord has said. He is indeed the Wise, the All-Knowing."

51:31 He (Abraham) said: "And what is your business, O envoys?"

51:32 They said: "We have been sent forth to a criminal people;

51:33 "To unleash on them stones of clay,

51:34 "Marked by your Lord for the extravagant.

51:35 "So, we brought out such believers as were therein.

51:36 "But did not find in it except one house of those who have submitted.

²⁴ Abraham said this exact phrase, "Will you not eat?" when he tried to get the animal representation of his peoples' gods to eat: 37:91 And he turned towards their gods, saying: "Will you not eat?"

51:37 "And we left therein a sign for those who fear the painful punishment."

One of the shortest variations on the story of Lot:

37:133 And Lot was one of the Messengers.

37:134 When We delivered him and his whole family,

37:135 Except for an old woman who was among the lost.

37:136 Then We destroyed the others.

37:137 And you pass by them in the morning,

37:138 And at night. Do you not understand, then?

Lot Uninterrupted

The next longest reiteration of the story of Lot is in Surah 15, *The Rock*. In this retelling, Lot's wife stays behind and God lists other towns He has destroyed for good measure.

15:49 Tell (*O Muhammad*) my servants that I am truly the All-Forgiving, the Merciful.

15:50 And that My punishment is truly the painful punishment.

15:51 And tell them about the guests (the angels) of Abraham.

15:52 When they entered unto him saying: "Peace"; he said: "We are afraid of you."

15:53 They said: "Do not be afraid; we bring you the good news of a boy possessing knowledge."

15:54 He said: "Do you bring me good news, when old age has overtaken me? What good news do you bring, then?"

15:55 They said: "We bring you good news in truth, so do not be one of those who despair."

15:56 He said: "Who despairs of his Lord's Mercy, except those who have gone astray."

15:57 He said: "What is your errand, O messengers?"

15:58 They said: "We have been sent forth to [destroy] a sinful people.

15:59 "Except for the family of Lot; we shall deliver them all,

15:60 "Except for his wife; We have decreed that she will remain behind [to perish]."

15:61 And when the messengers (the angels) came to the family of Lot;

15:62 He said: "You are surely a people unknown [to us]."

15:63 They said: "No; we bring you that whereof they were in doubt.

15:64 "And we bring you the truth, and we are truthful, indeed.

15:65 "Set out, then, with your family in a watch of the night, and follow in their rear; and let no one of you look back, and go forth wherever you are ordered."

15:66 And We conveyed to him this decree that these [sinners] will be rooted out in the morning.

15:67 And the people of the town came rejoicing.

15:68 He said: "These are my guests, so do no disgrace me.

15:69 "And fear Allah and do not shame me."

15:70 They said: "Did we not forbid you [to approach] strangers?"

15:71 He said: "These are my daughters, if you are intent on doing anything."

15:72 By your life [O Muhammad] they wandered blindly in their folly.

15:73 Thereupon the dreadful Cry overtook them at sunrise.

15:74 And We turn their town upside down, and We rained upon them stones of baked clay.

15:75 In this, there are truly signs for those who ponder.

15:76 And they (the towns) lie along an existing road.

15:77 In that, there is indeed a sign for the believers.

15:78 Surely the People of the Thicket (near Median) were also wrongdoers

15:79 So We punished them. And they (the people of Lot and the People of the Thicket) were also wrongdoers.

15:80 And the people of al-Hijr²⁵ denounced the Messengers.

15:81 We brought them Our Signs, but they turned away from them.

15:82 They hewed their houses in the mountains in security.

15:83 The Cry overtook them in the morning.

15:84 Thus, what they did availed them nothing.

The Foul Act

God reminded the believers what He thinks of homosexual relationships in at least four retellings of the story of Lot, in four different surahs no less. In one retelling, He even includes Abraham. Could His feelings on the matter be any clearer?

Surah 7, The Ramparts

Before the people of Lot, homosexuality, according to Allah, was unknown in the ancient world.

7:80 And [remember] Lot when he said to his people: "Do you commit indecencies which no one in the whole world committed before you?"

7:81 "You approach men instead of women lustfully; you are rather a people given to excess."

7:82 His people's response was simply to say: "Expel them (Lot and his people) from your city; for they are men who wish to remain chaste."

7:83 So We delivered him and his household, except for his wife who stayed behind.

Surah 26, The Poets

26:160 The people of Lot denounced the Messengers as liars.

26:161 When their brother Lot said to them; "Do you not fear God?

26:162 "I am a faithful Messenger to you;

26:163 "So, fear Allah and obey me.

²⁵ Ancient city of the Nabataeans located north of Medina, today an archeological site.

26:164 "I do not ask you any wage for this; my wage is with the Lord of the Worlds.

26:165 "Do you approach the males from all of mankind;

26:166 "And leave the wives that your Lord created for you? No, you are a transgressing people."

26:167 They said: "If you will not desist, O Lot, you will certainly be one of those expelled."

26:168 He said: "I am a detester of your deed.

26:169 "Lord, save me and my family from what they do."

26:170 So, We delivered him and his family, all together.

26:171 Except for an old woman who was one of those who lingered behind.

26:172 Then we destroyed the others.

26:173 And We loosed on them a rain. Wretched is the rain of those forewarned!

26:174 There is in that a sign, but more of them were not believers.

26:175 Truly, your Lord is the Almighty, the Merciful.

Surah 27, The Ants

27:53 And We delivered those who believed and were God-fearing.

27:54 And Lot, when he said to his people: "Do you commit the foul act, while you perceive?"

27:55 "What then, do you approach men lustfully, instead of women? No, you are an ignorant people."

27:56 The only response of his people was to say: "Drive the family of Lot out of your city. They are a people who keep themselves clean."

27:57 We delivered him and his family, except for his wife; We decreed that she should stay behind.

Surah 29, The Spider

Further confirmation from Allah that, before the people of Lot did it, sodomy was unknown in the ancient world

29:28 And [remember] Lot, when he said to his people: "You are committing the foul act (sodomy) which no one in the whole world committed before you."

29:29 "You approach men and waylay the traveler and commit in your gatherings reprehensible acts." To which the only reply of his people was: "Bring upon us Allah's punishment if you are truthful."

29:30 He said: "Lord, support me against the workers of corruption."

29:31 When Our Emissaries (the angels) brought Abraham the good news, they said: "We are going to destroy the inhabitants of this city. Its inhabitants have indeed been wrongdoers."

29:32 He said: "Lot is in it"; they said: "We know better who is in it. We shall deliver him and his household, except for his wife; for she is one of those who will stay behind."

The woman left behind obviously fascinated Allah. In *The Spider*, He mentions her not once, but twice. The second time:

29:33 Then, when our Emissaries came to Lot, he was troubled and distressed on their account, and they said: "Do not fear and do not grieve; and we shall deliver you and your household, except for your wife; she is one of those who will stay behind."

29:34 We are sending down upon the inhabitants of the city a scourge from heaven, because of their sins.

29:35 And We have left as vestige of it a clear sign to people who understand.

Joseph, Son of Jacob

Jacob and the Breaking of Blood Ties

Jacob, on his death bed, had a question for his sons.

2:133 Or were you (*O Muhammad*) present when Jacob was in the throes of death and said to his sons: "What will you worship when I am gone?" They replied: "We will worship your God and the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Isma'il and Isaac – the One God; and to Him we submit."

2:134 That was a nation which passed away. Hers is what she has earned and yours is what you have earned. And you shall not be questioned about what they did.²⁶

The remaining few lines that Jacob has in the Koran are part of Joseph's story in a surah named after his twelfth son and which, uncharacteristically, does not stray far from the subject matter.

The Vision

Joseph, the eleventh of Jacob's twelve sons and first son of Rachel, not only gets an entire surah named after him, but one with contents almost exclusively about him. Allah, unlike his earlier appearance in the Bible, can't be bothered with the names of the supporting cast. Nowhere is this more evident than in the story of Joseph where his brothers are just "the brothers" or "the brother"; no Benjamin, no Simeon, no Judah, no Reuben... Joseph's surah begins with Allah praising the easy-to-understand Arabic version of the Koran.

THE PROPHET JOSEPH

12 Yûsuf

*In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful*

²⁶ "What is being said here is that even though they might be their offspring in terms of blood - they had, in fact, no true relationship with them (the Jews). What right did they have to pretend to belong to them when they had departed far from their way?"
Moududi

12:1 Alif – Lam – Ra.

These are the verses of the clear Book.

12:2 We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur'an, that perchance you may understand.

12:3 We narrate to you (*Muhammad*) the fairest narratives in revealing to you this Qur'an, although you were, prior to it, one of the headless.

With formalities out of the way, Joseph makes his entrance.

12:4 When Joseph said to his father: "O my father, I saw [in my dream] eleven planets and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves before me."

12:5 He said: "My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers, lest they plot evil against you. Surely, the Devil is the sworn enemy of man."

12:6 And thus your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of dreams and will perfect His Grace upon you and upon the family of Jacob, as He has perfected it formerly upon your two fathers²⁷, Abraham and Isaac. Surely your Lord is All-Knowing, Wise.

12:7 There are indeed in Joseph and his brothers signs for the inquiring.

Sold Into Slavery

As in the Bible, it is the affection that their father bestows on Joseph and his dreams that causes his brothers to plot against him. In the next verse, God mentions another brother, possibly Benjamin, Joseph's youngest brother.

12:8 When they said: "Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than the rest of us, although we are a large group. Our father is truly in manifest error."

What to do?

12:09 "Kill Joseph or cast him away in some land that your father's love may be wholly yours, and you may become after him a righteous people."

²⁷ In three of seven translations consulted, "two fathers" becomes "forefathers."

12:10 One of them said: "Do not kill Joseph, but rather throw him in the bottom of the pit, so that some traveller may pick him up, if you must do anything."

First they must convince their father to let Joseph come out and play.

12:11 They said: "Our father, why do you not trust us with Joseph? We certainly wish him well.

12:12 "Send him forth with us tomorrow that he may frolic and play, and we will surely take care of him."

Jacob worried that if he let Joseph out of his sight, he might be eaten by wolves.

12:13 He said: "It grieves me to let you take him away; and I fear that the wolf may devour him while you are not watching him."

12:14 They said: "If the wolf should devour him while we are a large group, we should then be the real losers."

It's into the pit with Joseph. While the brothers were plotting, Allah was keeping Joseph apprised of their intentions, but to no avail.

12:15 But when they took him away and decided to cast him in the bottom of the pit, We revealed to him: "You should tell them about their intention while they are unaware."

12:16 And they came to their father in the evening weeping.

In the Bible, Joseph was 17 years old when the brothers decided to get rid of him. This would indicate that his ten half-brothers (he and his younger brother Benjamin were the only sons of Rachel, Jacob's second wife, the first being Leah) were older. Some had to be much older, but in the Koran they all behave like children, and their explanation for Joseph's disappearance is a childish one.

12:17 They said: "Our father, we went away racing and left Joseph by our baggage; and so the wolf devoured him. You will not believe us even if we are truthful."

12:18 And they stained his shirt with false blood. He said: "Rather, your souls tempted you to do something. So come gentle patience! To Allah I turn for help against what you say."

In the Bible, Midianite traders were the ones to find Joseph in the pit and sell him to Ishmaelites on their way to Egypt. In the Koran, unidentified travelers who sent down buckets to get water from the “pit”—which appears to have been a functioning well—instead discover Joseph and promptly sell him.

12:19 And some travellers came, and they sent their water-drawer, who let down his bucket. He said: “Good news! Here is a boy.” And they hid him as merchandise, Allah being fully aware of what they were doing.

12:20 And they sold him for a cheap price, a number of dirhams, since they were not interested in him.

Joseph and the Governor’s Wife

Joseph’s story provided an opportunity for Allah to offer an opinion on rape and why women who make accusations of rape are usually lying. He explains how to find out the truth, using the example of the wife of the Egyptian who bought Joseph. She would attempt to seduce the reluctant Joseph after being told by her husband to make his stay an honourable one.

12:21 And the Egyptian who bought him said to his wife: “Make his stay honourable; perhaps he will profit us or we may take him for a son.” Thus We established Joseph in the land and taught him the interpretation of dreams. Allah has control over His Affairs though most people do not know.

12:22 When he was fully grown, We gave him judgement and knowledge, and thus We reward the beneficent.

12:23 And the woman, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors firmly and said: “Come.” He said: “Allah forbid. It is my Lord who gave me a good abode. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper.”

12:24 Certainly she made for him and he would have made for her if it were not for a sign from his Lord. And that was to divert him from evil and indecency. He was indeed one of Our sincere servants.

A woman can also be expected to lie about sexual assault, for example, falsely accusing a man of attempted rape when in reality she was the aggressor.

12:25 They raced to the door, and she ripped his shirt from behind. When they met her husband at the door, she said: "What is the penalty of one who intended evil for your wife except imprisonment or severe punishment?"

Exceptionally, God, when relating this encounter, concedes that men can, on rare occasion, be the aggressors; how can you tell?

12:26 He (Joseph) said: "She sought to seduce me." And a member of her household bore witness: "If his shirt was torn from the front, then she is telling the truth and he is a liar.

12:27 "But if his shirt is torn from behind, then she lies and he is one of the truthful."

While admitting that men can also be forceful in the pursuit of intimacy, God makes another generalization about women: *that they are skilled in the art of deception*. Notice the plural form, "you women," in Revelation 12:28.

12:28 When he (the husband) saw that his shirt was torn from behind, he said: "This is part of your guile, you women. Your guile is indeed very great.

Her husband asked Joseph to overlook his wife's attempt at an intimate moment and told her to beg forgiveness for her sins.

12:29 "Joseph, overlook this matter; and you woman, ask forgiveness for your sin. You are indeed one of the sinners."

In the Bible, the husband is a fellow by the name of Potiphar, "an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard"; in the Koran, he is known only as "the governor."

12:30 And some women in the city said: "The wife of the governor has been seeking to seduce her slave; he has infatuated her with his love. We see her in manifest error.

His wife, rather than ask God's forgiveness for having sinned, invites Joseph to dine and perhaps exchange more than the usual pleasantries with the women who have been spreading rumours about her attempt at seduction. It depends on your interpretation of "Come out unto them" in the following verse:

12:31 When she heard about their wives, she sent after them and prepared for each of them a dining couch. Then she gave each of them a knife and said to him (Joseph): "Come out

unto them.” But when they saw him, they admired him and cut their hands and said: “Allah forbid! This is no mortal, he is but a noble angel.”

The women, completely mesmerized by Joseph’s presence, began to cut themselves. Whatever the governor’s wife had in mind, her guests wanted none of it after seeing Joseph, and neither did he, judging by her reaction.

12:32 She said: “This is the one you reproached me for. I have in fact sought to seduce him, but he held back. If he will not do what I command him, he will surely be imprisoned and will be one of the humbled.”

Joseph in Jail

In the Bible, Joseph was thrown in jail because the husband believed his wife’s lies about Joseph coming on to her. In the Koran, as can be expected, Joseph was not thrown in jail because of a woman’s accusation that he tried to have sex with her against her will; that would have been unthinkable! It is Joseph who insisted God make it so, to get away from his owner’s wife and her friends who may –judging by his expression “their guile” –also have wanted him, a prospect he was finding more and more difficult to resist.

12:33 He said: “My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that which they call me to. If you do not rid me of their guile, I will be inclined towards them and will be one of the ignorant.”

God granted Joseph his wish, with a little help from the governor and his entourage.

12:34 Thereupon his Lord answered his prayer and so rid him of their guile. He is indeed the Hearer, the Knower.

12:35 Then it occurred to them after they had seen the signs (signs of Joseph’s innocence) to imprison him for some time.

In the Bible, Joseph met the King’s cupbearer and baker after being in jail for some time; in the Koran, he was incarcerated alongside two young men (the assumed cupbearer and baker of the Bible) who get right to the point, seeing that Joseph just oozes righteousness.

12:36 And there entered the prison with him two youths. One of them said: “I saw in my dream that I am pressing grapes.” And the other said: “I saw in my dream that I am carrying on

my head bread from which the birds were eating. Tell us their interpretation; we see that you are one of the righteous."

Like most of the well-known and respected characters of the Bible who are welcomed in the Koran, Joseph would first offer copious praise to God and make a pitch for Allah's religion before getting down to business.

12:37 He said: "No food with which you are provided will be given to you but I will tell you its interpretation before it arrives. This is part of what my Lord has taught me. I have forsaken the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah, and disbelieve in the Hereafter.

12:38 "And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was not for us to associate anything with Allah. That is part of Allah's Favour upon us and upon mankind; but most men do not give thanks.

12:39 "O my two fellow-prisoners, are diverse lords better, or the One, the Omnipotent?

12:40 "You do not worship, besides Him, except names you have named, you and your fathers, for which Allah has not sent down any authority. Judgement belongs only to Allah; He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the right religion, but most men do not know.

Joseph does finally get around to answering the questions that were asked, responding in a brisk, matter-of-fact fashion—but that is not important. In the Bible, he said that Pharaoh would lift the baker's head and hang him from a tree; in the Koran, he predicted the baker would be crucified. Again, no surprise there! From the many verses about crucifying disbelievers, it is reasonable to conclude that this is Allah's favourite form of execution. The degrading, lingering death of the crucified, for a vengeful god, does have its appeal.

12:41 "O my two fellow-prisoners, one of you shall give his Lord wine to drink; whereas the other will be crucified, then the birds shall eat from his head. Thus the matter you are enquiring about is settled."

Do I detect a note of uncertainty in the next verse?

12:42 And he said to the one of the two whom he thought would be saved: "Mention me to your Lord." However, the

Devil caused him to forget to mention him to his Lord and so he (Joseph) remained in prison a number of years.

Joseph and the King's Dream

Warning: Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" type of weirdness ahead and more women's guile! Also, the governor is now "the King", i.e., Pharaoh.

12:43 And the King (the King of Egypt) said: "I saw in my dream seven fat cows devoured by seven lean cows, and seven green ears of corn together with seven other withered ones²⁸. O my dignitaries explain to me my dream, if you are able to interpret dreams."

12:44 They said: "Confused dreams, and we know nothing about the interpretation of dreams."

In the Bible, the cupbearer remembers Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and informs the King, who then sends for his aid. In the Koran, it would appear that the cupbearer goes to see Joseph, gets the interpretation, and then returns to tell the King.

12:45 And one of the two who had been released remembered after a while and said: "I will tell you its interpretation, so let me go."²⁹

12:46 "Joseph, O truthful one, enlighten us concerning seven fat cows devoured by seven lean ones, and concerning seven green ears of corn and seven withered ones, so that I might go back to the people, that perchance they might learn."

12:47 He said: "You shall sow for seven consecutive years, but what you harvest, you should leave in its ears except for the little whereof you need to eat.

12:48 "Then, afterwards seven hard years will consume what you have laid up for them, except for a little of what you have stored.

12:49 "Then there will come after that a year in which the people will receive help and will be able to press grapes in it."

²⁸ In the Bible, the dream is about cows and wheat.

²⁹ "I will tell you the interpretation of this dream; just send me (to Joseph in prison)."
islamicstudies.info

In the next verse, “the King” again sends for Joseph who, according to islamicstudies.info “declined to quit the prison till his character was cleared” who sends the messenger back with his own question and an observation about women and their guile.

12:50 The King said: “Bring him (Joseph) to me.” Then when the messenger came to him, he said: “Go back to your lord and ask him about the women who cut their own hands. My Lord knows well their guile.”

Joseph’s question and derogatory comment about women convinces the King as to his innocence and induces the “governor’s wife” to confess and clear Joseph.

12:51 He (the King) said; “What was the matter with you, women, when you sought to seduce Joseph?” They said: “Allah forbid! We learnt nothing evil about him.” The governor’s wife then said: “Now the truth has come out, I was the one who sought to seduce him, and he is indeed one of the truthful.”

Guile as a noun?!

12:52 [Joseph said]: “That was said so that [my Lord] may know that I did not betray Him in secret, and Allah will not guide the guile of the treacherous.

More of the standard repentance followed by praise for God:

12:53 “I do not exonerate myself from sin. Surely the [human] soul commands evil, except for those on whom my Lord has mercy. My Lord is truly All-Forgiving, Merciful.”

Appointed Treasurer

The king again asked that Joseph be brought before him to share that arrangements have been made to protect him from the women who would try to seduce him.

12:54 The King said: “Bring him to me; I will attach him to my person alone.” And when he spoke to him, he said: “Today you are firmly established and secure with us.”

Yes, but...

12:55 He (Joseph) said: “Put me in charge of the treasures of the land; I am a keeper who knows.”

And so it came to pass.

12:56 And thus We established Joseph firmly in the land, dwelling wherever he wished. We bestow Our Mercy on whom We will, and We do not waste the rewards of the righteous.

One more pitch for the Hereafter. Yeah!

12:57 And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who believe and fear Allah.

At this point, Joseph's brothers showed up in Egypt looking for "supplies"—we pick up Allah's account of how Joseph got them to convince their father Jacob to let another brother, Benjamin it is assumed, join them. Benjamin is, of course, never mentioned by name.

A Camel's Load

In the Bible, Joseph made Simeon a hostage to get his father to let Benjamin come to Egypt. In the Koran, he would increase the family's share of 'merchandise' by an extra 'camel's load'. This was enough to convince Jacob to let Benjamin make the trip.

12:58 Then Joseph's brothers came and went in to him. He recognized them while they did not know him.

12:59 When he provided them with their supplies, he said: "Bring me a brother of yours from your father. Do you not see that I fill up the measure and am the best of hosts?"

12:60 "But, if you do not bring him to me, you shall have no measure from me and you will not come near me."

12:61 They said: "We will solicit him from his father. Surely we shall do that."

12:62 He said to his servants: "Put their merchandise in their saddlebags, that perchance they may recognize it when they return to their people, and perchance they will come back."

12:63 When they returned to their father, they said: "Our father, we have been denied the full measure; so sent forth our brother with us that we may receive the measure; we will surely guard him."

12:64 He said: "Can I entrust him to you except as I had entrusted his brother to you before? Allah is the best

guardian, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy."

12:65 And when they opened their bags, they found their merchandise was returned to them. They said: "Father, what more do we desire? This is our merchandise; it has been returned to us. We shall get food for our family, guard our brother and receive an added camel's load. That is an easy measure."

The extra camel's load convinced Jacob to entrust them with his youngest son after swearing that they would bring him back - unless they couldn't.

12:66 He said: "I will not send him with you unless you swear in Allah's Name that you will bring him back to me, unless you are constrained." So when they brought him their pledge he said: "Allah is Witness of what we say."

Some last-minute fatherly advice is imparted.

12:67 And he said: "My sons, do not enter by one door, but enter by separate doors. I cannot avail you anything against Allah; the Judgement is truly Allah's; in Him I put my trust, and in Him let all who trust put their trust."

The King's Drinking Cup

As instructed by their father, the brothers enter Joseph's house by separate doors. It must have been a really big house, if all of eleven (if you include Simeon) of Joseph's brothers entered the house of the second most powerful man in Egypt by different entrances.

12:68 And when they entered wherefrom their father had commanded them, nothing could avail them against Allah. It was only a desire in Jacob's breast which he satisfied. He was indeed in possession of knowledge, because We taught him. But most people do not know.

What Benjamin may have been grieving in the following revelation is the presumed death of Joseph, which he now knows to have been exaggerated.

12:69 And when they came into Joseph's presence, he took his brother into his arms saying: "I am your own brother; so do not grieve at what they were doing."³⁰

The cup was placed in the unnamed brother's bag, and before they could say, "thank you, farewell and God bless," someone, from some distance away, promptly accused them of being thieves.

12:70 Then, when he provided them with their supplies, he put the drinking-vessel in his brother's bag. Then a crier shouted: "O men of the caravan, you are thieves."

12:71 They said, as they approached them: "What is it that you miss?"

12:72 They said: "We miss the King's drinking cup; and to him who brings it a camel's load will be given, and I am the guarantor thereof."

12:73 They said: "By Allah, you know well that we have not come to spread corruption in the land, and we are no thieves."

12:74 They said: "What is the penalty thereof, if you are liars?"

The penalty for whoever was found to have stolen the cup was, surprisingly, *not* having one or both hands severed.

12:75 They said: "The penalty thereof is that whoever it is found in his bag shall himself be the penalty (that is, he shall be enslaved). That is how we punish the wrongdoers."

Joseph himself searched the bags.

12:76 And so he (Joseph) began with their bags before the bag of his brother. Then he took it out from his brother's bag. This is how We contrived for Joseph's sake; for he could not take his brother in accordance with the King's law, except if Allah pleased. We raise by degrees whom We will, and above every man of learning, there is one more learned.

³⁰ In Muhammad Assad's translation, it is clear that Joseph revealed his identity to Benjamin only.

12:69 AND WHEN [the sons of Jacob] presented themselves before Joseph, he drew his brother [Benjamin] unto himself, saying [to him in secret]: "Behold, I am thy brother! So grieve thou not over their past doings!"

12:77 They said: "If he has stolen, a brother of his has stolen before." Joseph kept that to himself and did not reveal it to them." He said: "You are in a worse position, and Allah knows best [the truth of] of what you say."

The brother who had stolen before was, of course, Joseph. The unnamed person accused of stealing the cup was Benjamin, who is also the unnamed brother in next revelation for whom the brothers (Judah in the Bible) make a plea.

12:78 They said: "O mighty one, he has a very old father; so take one of us in his place. We see that you are one of those who are beneficent.

Joseph would have none of it.

12:79 He said: "Allah forbid that we take anyone other than the one with whom we found our property. For then we will be wrongdoers."

The brothers held a conference. The "eldest brother" in the following revelation had to be Reuben.

12:80 Then when they despaired of him, they conferred privately. Their eldest said: "Did you not know that your father took a solemn pledge in the name of Allah from you, and before that you failed to perform your duty in the case of Joseph. I will not leave this land until my father permits me or Allah decides for me; for He is the Best of Judges."

Reuben may not have wanted to leave without Benjamin, but in the end, he obviously does not.

12:81 "Go back to your father and say: 'Our father, your son has stolen. We bear witness only to what we know, and we could not keep watch over the Unseen.'

12:82 "'Ask the town where we were and the caravan which we came along with. Surely we are truthful.'"

Before you can say "there's no place like home," the brothers were back in Canaan where Jacob awaited, still grieving for Joseph.

12:83 He (Jacob) said: "Rather, your souls made some matter look fair to you. Come gentle patience! Maybe Allah will bring them all back to me. He is indeed the All-Knowing, the Wise."

12:84 And he turned away from them and said: "Alas for Joseph!" and his eyes turned white, because of the grief which he repressed.

Jacob sent the boys back to Egypt to enquire about two lost sons: Joseph and that other one.

12:85 They said: "By Allah, you shall continue to remember Joseph until you are about to perish or even when you do perish."

12:86 He said: "I only complain of my sorrow and grief to Allah and I know, from Allah, what you know not.

12:87 "O my sons, go forth and enquire about Joseph and his brother and do not despair of Allah's Mercy. Surely no one despairs of Allah's Mercy, except the unbelieving people."

The Other Brother

When they got to see Joseph again, enquiring about their lost brothers is not what the remaining brothers had in mind.

12:88 When they went to him, they said: "O mighty one, we and our people have been visited by affliction and we have brought scant merchandise. So fill up the measure for us and be charitable to us; Allah will surely reward the charitable."

However, it is what Joseph wanted to discuss.

12:89 He said: "Do you know what you did with Joseph and his brother, in your dire ignorance?"

God may have thought this was a good time to end the charade before things got too confusing and had Joseph reveal himself to the other brothers.

12:90 They said: "Are you truly Joseph?" He said: "Yes, I am Joseph and this is my brother. Allah has been gracious to us. Surely, whoever fears God and forbears will find that Allah will never deprive those who do the good of their reward."

12:91 They said: "By Allah, Allah has exalted you above us, and we have only been sinful."

Do not worry. Allah is a merciful god, the Most Merciful of all.

12:92 He said: "Let there be no reproach against you today. Allah will forgive you and He is the Most Merciful of those who have mercy.

All's Well That Ends Well

Joseph was not only good at interpreting dreams; he performed what most would consider a miracle.

12:93 "Take this shirt of mine and lay it on my father's face, and he will regain his sight; then come to me with all your family."

12:94 And when the caravan set out, their father said: "I find Joseph's scent, thought you may deny it."

In the Yusuf Ali translation used by islamicstudies.info, it is assumed that the caravan was travelling from Egypt to Canaan. "And as the caravan set out (from Egypt), their father said (in Canaan): 'Indeed I smell the fragrance of Joseph.'" The following had to have been spoken by the brothers, when they arrived back in Canaan and were told about their father's extraordinary sense of smell, for the passage to make sense.

12:95 They said: "By Allah, you persist in your old error."

Whoever had the magic shirt then placed it on the old man's face.

12:96 Then when the bearer of good news came, he placed it (the shirt) on his face and so he regained his sight. He said: "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you know not?"

Confronted with the miracle, the brothers again admitted to having sinned and beseeched Jacob to ask for their forgiveness.

12:97 They said: "Father, ask forgiveness for our sins; we have indeed been sinful."

Jacob was more than happy to oblige.

12:98 He said: "I shall ask my Lord to forgive you. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, the Merciful."

Rachel, Joseph's mother, died giving birth to Benjamin. At least, that is the story according to the Bible.

12:99 Then, when they went in to Joseph, he lodged his parents with him and said; "Enter Egypt, Allah willing, in security."

In the Bible, Joseph's half-brothers bowed before him during their first encounter, and thereby fulfill the vision. In the Koran, it is his parents who bowed before their son.

12:100 And he raised both his parents to the high seat, and they fell prostrate before him. He said: "Father, this is the interpretation of my old dream; my Lord has made it come true. He was kind to me when he brought me out prison and brought you out of the desert, after the Devil has sown mischief between me and my brothers. My Lord is truly subtle in bringing about what He wills. He is indeed the All-Knowing, the Wise.

Thank you, Lord, for everything; I hope I get to see you in person along with the other righteous believers!

12:101 "Lord, you have given me power and taught me the interpretation of dreams. O Creator of the heavens and the earth; you are my protector in this world and in the Hereafter; receive my soul as a submissive one, and let me join the ranks of the righteous."

A short one-sided conversation between Allah and Muhammad follows, at the end of which God provides reassurances that revelations about His Prophets are not invented tales. This brings us to the end of the Surah Yusuf, but not before Allah strays into familiar territory where the only certainty is the punishment.

Why the News from the Unseen?

12:102 That is part of the news of the Unseen [which] We reveal to you (*O Muhammad*); for you were not with them when they concurred in their affair, while they plotted.

12:103 And even if you desire it, most people are not believers.

12:104 And you do not ask them for a reward for it (the Qur'an); it is nothing but a reminder for all mankind.

12:105 How many a sign in the heavens and on earth by which they pass while they turn their faces away from it!

12:106 And most of them do not believe in Allah, unless they continue to associate others [with Him].

12:107 Do they guard against a crushing strike of Allah's Punishment or the sudden coming of the Hour while they are unaware?

12:108 Say: "This is my way; I call to Allah with knowledge, I and those who follow me. Glory be to Allah; and I am not one of the polytheists."

12:109 We did not send forth [as Messengers] before you except men from the people of the cities who received Our Revelations. Have they not travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those who came before them? The abode of the Hereafter is surely better for those who fear God. Do you not understand?

12:110 And when the Messengers despaired and thought they would be regarded as liars, Our Help came to them and We delivered whom We pleased. The sinners could not escape Our punishment.

12:111 In these narratives about them, there is a lesson for people of understanding. It is not an invented tale, but a confirmation of what came before it, and a clear exposition of all things, and a guidance and mercy for people who believe.

A clear exposition! You be the judge.

Jethro

Shu'ayb is believed to be the biblical Jethro, the man for whom Moses shepherded while in Midian and who gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. The Prophet Shu'ayb was sent to Midian to persuade its citizens to submit to Allah's Will. They not only refused, but accused Shu'ayb of hypocrisy or not practicing what he preached, i.e., cheating his customers and getting wealthy in the process. You do not accuse Allah's prophets of *anything* if you want to live. The story of Shu'ayb and the wanton destruction of Midian begins shortly after one of God's recollections of His obliteration of the people of Lot.

11:84 And to Midian [We sent] their brother Shu'ayb. He said: "O my people, worship Allah; you have no other god but Him. Do not skim the measure and the weight. I see that you are prospering, but I fear for you the punishment of an encompassing day.

11:85 "And my people, be just and give full measure and full weight and do not cheat people out of things due to them, and do not sow corruption in the land by committing evil.

11:86 "What remains for you from Allah's provision is better for you if you are true believers; and I am not a watcher over you."

The people of Midian, of course, mocked him.

11:87 They said: "Shu'ayb, does your prayer (that is religion) command you that we should abandon what our fathers worshipped and that we should not do with our wealth what we wish? You are indeed the clement and right-minded one (they said mockingly)."

Shu'ayb pleaded that they heed his words—for their own sake, of course.

11:88 He said: "O my people, do you think that if I have a clear proof from my Lord and He has granted me a fair provision from Him [I would commit any of those evils]? I do

not want to do what I forbid you to do. I only want to do what I can to set things right. My success only comes from Allah. In Him I have put my trust and to Him I turn.

11:89 “O my people, let not my disagreement with you bring upon you what the people of Noah, the people of Hud or the people of Salih³¹ brought upon themselves (that is destruction). The people of Lot are not far away from you.

11:90 “And ask forgiveness from your Lord; then repent upon Him. My Lord is truly Merciful, Kind.”

Instead, they threatened to stone him in spite of his wealth, and only held back because of his family.

11:91 They said: “O Shu’ayb, we do not understand much of what you say; and surely we see you weak in our midst. Were it not for your family, we would have stoned you; for you are not too dear [to be stoned].”

Don’t let that stop you!

11:92 He said: “O my people, is my family dearer to you than Allah? You have turned your backs on Him. My Lord knows what you do.”

Continue doing what you’re doing, warned Shu’ayb, and see what happens.

11:93 “O my people, continue to do what you can, and I shall continue too. You will surely learn who will be seized by a punishment disgracing him, and who is a liar. Wait and see, and I shall be waiting with you.”

Not enough mercy and kindness could be found to save the men, women, and children of Midian for their leaders expressing doubts as to how Shu’ayb made his money.

11:94 And when Our Decree came, We delivered Shu’ayb and those who believed with him by a mercy of Ours, and the wrongdoers were overtaken by the [thundering] Cry, and they lay prostrate in their homes,

11:95 As if they never dwelt therein. Away with Midian [It perished] as did Thamud before.

³¹ Salih is the only Arab prophet mentioned in the Koran. His story is told in *Getting to Know Allah*, Boreal Books.

Day of the Parasol

In this retelling, the inhabitants of Midian are referred to as the “companions of the Thicket.” The central theme of this account of the destruction of Midian and its people is weights and measures. In some revelations, Shu’ayb is referred to using an alternate spelling: Shu’aib.

26:176 The companions of the Thicket denounced the Messengers as liars.

26:177 When Shu’aib said to them: “Do you not fear God?

26:178 “I am a faithful Messenger to you.

26:179 “So fear Allah and obey me.

26:180 “I do not ask you for any wage. My wage is with the Lord of the Worlds.

26:181 “Fill up the measure and do not be swindlers.

26:182 “And weigh with the just scales,

26:183 “Do not stint people their things and do not work corruption in the land.

26:184 “Fear Him who created you and the generations of old.”

26:185 They said: “Surely, you are one of those bewitched.

26:186 “And you are only a mortal like us, and we think you are simply a liar.

The Meccans had asked God to “rain down upon us brickstones from heaven” to help them to believe³²; for the “companions of the Thicket,” any piece of heaven would do, the meaning of “chips” in the following revelation:

26:187 “Do, then, bring down upon us chips from heaven³³ if you are truthful.”

26:188 He said: “My Lord knows best what you do.”

³² 8:32 And when they said: “O Allah, if this is indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us brickstones from heaven, or inflict upon us a very painful punishment.”

³³ In the Koran, Paradise is just above the clouds, held up by invisible pillars and containing structures similar to those found on Earth, but much bigger (recommended reading *The Islamic Hereafter*, Boreal Books).

In this account of the destruction of Midian, the city's destruction occurred on what God refers to as the "Day of the Parasol."³⁴ A sturdy umbrella might have been more appropriate than a parasol, but still would have offered little protection against what Allah had in mind.

26:189 They denounced him as a liar, and so the punishment of the Day of the Parasol seized them. It was, indeed, the punishment of a Great Day.

26:190 In that, there is a sign, but most of them were not believers.

26:191 And your Lord is truly the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

In a two-verse retelling of the tale of Shu'ayb, it is an earthquake that destroys Midian, if "tremor" in Revelation 29:37 is given its everyday meaning.

29:36 And to Midian We sent their brother, Shu'ayb, who said: "O my people, worship Allah and hope for the Last Day, and do not spread corruption in the land."

29:37 They denounced him as a liar and so the tremor overtook them, and they were left in their home prostrate.

In still another account of the labours of Shu'ayb, there is no doubt that Midian was destroyed by an earthquake: Revelation 7:91.

7:85 And [to the people of] Midian We sent their brother Shu'ayb, who said: "O my people, worship Allah, you have no other god but He. A clear proof as now come to you from your Lord; so fulfil the measure and the weight; and do not withhold anything of what is due to people; and do not make mischief in the land after it has been put in order. That is better for you if you are true believers.

7:86 "And do not sit down at every roadside, and threatening and barring from Allah's Path those who have believed, seeking to make it crooked. And remember when you were few in number and He multiplied you, and see what was the fate of those who sought to corrupt.

³⁴ The "Day of the Parasol," in five other translations consulted, is referred to as "a day dark with shadows," "day of overshadowing gloom," "day of gloom," and "day of covering."

7:87 "And if one group of you believes in the message I have been sent with, and another group does not believe, wait then until Allah judges between us; for He is the Best of Judges."

7:88 The arrogant dignitaries of his people said: "O Shu'ayb, we will surely drive you, together with those who believe, out of our city, unless you return to our religion." He said: "Even if we were unwilling?"

7:89 "We would actually be fabricating lies about Allah, if we were to return to your religion, after Allah has delivered us from it. It is not given to us to return to it, unless Allah our Lord wills it. Our Lord embraces all things in knowledge. In Allah we have put our trust. Our Lord, judge between us and our people in truth, for you are the Best of Judges."

7:90 The dignitaries of his people who disbelieved then said: "If you follow Shu'ayb then, you are the losers."

7:91 Thereupon the earthquake overtook them, and so they lay prostrate in their homes.

7:92 Those who denounced Shu'ayb were as thought they had never dwelt there; those who denounced Shu'ayb were the losers.

7:93 So he turned away from them and said: "O my people, I have delivered to you the revelations of my Lord and given you advice. How should I then grieve for an unbelieving people?"

Moses 1

33:69 O believers, do not be like those who injured Moses, but Allah exonerated him from what they said, and he was highly regarded in Allah's Sight.

61:5 When Moses said to his people: "O my people, why do you injure me, although you know that I am Allah's Messenger to you?" When they swerved, Allah caused their hearts to swerve. Allah does not guide the sinful people.

Don't be alarmed; the man who led his people out of Egypt was not physically harmed in any way in Allah's varied accounts of the story of Moses.

A Favourite of Allah

The story of Moses is one of, if not God's favourite. Moses gets more verses, and by a wide margin, than any other shared prophet. We get our first glimpse of the man early in the second surah, *The Cow*, in a series of revelations in which Allah reminds the Children of Israel of all He has done for them.

2:47 O Children of Israel, remember the grace which I bestowed on you, and that I preferred you to all nations.

2:48 And guard yourselves against the Day when no soul shall avail any other soul and no intercession will be accepted from it, nor will a ransom be taken from it, and they will not be supported.

2:49 And [remember] how we saved you from Pharaoh's people who tormented you cruelly, slaying your children but sparing your women. Therein was a great trial from your Lord.

2:50 And [remember] how for your sake, We split the sea, rescued you and drowned the people of Pharaoh while you were watching.

The first mention of the Ten Commandments:

2:51 And [remember] how we promised Moses forty nights (at the end of which Moses received the scriptures); and you took the calf after him, thus becoming evildoers.

2:52 But We pardoned you after that, so that you might give thanks.

2:53 And when We gave Moses the Book (the Torah) and the Criterion ("Al-Furqan"³⁵ which distinguishes right from wrong).

For taking a calf as a god, they should kill themselves if they expect Allah to forgive them.

2:54 When Moses said to his people: "My people, you have wronged yourselves by taking the calf [as god]. Repent to your creator. Kill yourselves (let the innocent kill the evildoers); that would be better for you in the sight of your Creator." Then He forgave you. He is the All-Forgiving, Merciful.

Before the calf-worshippers had time to respond to Moses' request that they commit suicide, a thunderbolt killed them all.

2:55 And when you (Moses' people) said: "O Moses, we will not believe in you until we see Allah with our own eyes", whereupon you³⁶ were struck by a thunderbolt while you looked on.

God brought them back to life so that they might be thankful, after which He made sure they were fed.

2:56 Then We raised you up after you had died, so that you might give thanks.

³⁵ A reference to the Qur'an as the decisive factor between Good and Evil; this begs the question as to whether Moses was given all or part of the Koran.

³⁶ In another recollection of a variation of the same event, it is much clearer as to who is killed by the thunderbolt from heaven. In this revelation, the mass immolation occurs before the golden calf incident, unless it is the first of two.

4:153 The People of the Book ask you to bring down a book from heaven for them; indeed, they asked Moses for greater than that, saying: "Show us God face to face." Thereupon the thunderbolt struck them for their wickedness. Then, they worshipped the calf, after they had received the clear proofs. Yet we pardoned all that and we gave Moses clear authority.

2:57 And We caused the clouds to overshadow you and sent to you manna and quails [saying]: “Eat from the good things we have provided for you.” They did not wrong Us; they only wronged themselves.

Fast forward:

2:58 And when We said: “Enter this city (Jerusalem or Jericho)³⁷ and eat wherever you wish from its abundant provision”, and enter the gate while bowing and say: “Forgiveness.” We will [then] forgive you your sins and increase the reward of the righteous.

A plague out of nowhere for those who changed God knows what.

2:59 The evil-doers changed what was said to them into something else; and We sent down upon the evil-doers a plague from heaven as a punishment for their transgression.

Rewind to Moses in the desert praying for some desperately-needed drinking water.

2:60 And when Moses prayed for water for his people, We said: “Strike the rock with your staff.” Thereupon twelve springs gushed out from it, and each tribe recognized its trough. [We said:] Eat and drink from Allah’s provision and do not make mischief in the land.”

Manna and quail from heaven were not enough for the Children of Israel. They wanted a varied, balanced diet with lots of vegetables, a demand that infuriated Moses and caused God to reminisce about the punishment He must inflict on an unruly lot.

2:61 And when you said: “O Moses, we will not put up with one kind of food; so pray to your Lord to bring forth for us some on what the earth produces: green herbs, cucumbers, corn, lentils and onions.” He said: “Would you exchange that which is better for that which is worse? Come down to Egypt where you will get what you asked for.” Humiliation and abasement were inflicted on them and they incurred Allah’s

³⁷ “It has not yet been possible to arrive at any conclusion about the identity of the locality mentioned here. The series of events in the context of which God’s command to enter the city is mentioned belong to the period of the exodus of the Children of Israel in the Sinai peninsula. It is therefore probable that the place mentioned in this verse is some Sinaitic city. Another plausible suggestion is that it is Shattim, which was located opposite Jericho on the eastern bank of the river Jordan.” *Moududi*

wrath. That was because they disbelieved in Allah's Revelations and unjustly killed the Prophets, thus committing disobedience and aggression.

For continuity, the next revelation in this series, which has little or nothing to do with the story being told, is included here:

2:62 The believers (Muslims), the Jews, the Christians and the Sabians – whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does what is good, shall receive their reward from their Lord. They shall have nothing to fear and they shall not grieve.³⁸

You will be grateful for what I give you or I will drop this mountain on you!

2:63 And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain above you [saying]: "Take what we have given you earnestly and keep in mind what is in it so you might guard yourselves against evil."

They were not impressed.

2:64 But after that you turned away; and had it not been for Allah's Grace and Mercy on you, you would surely have been among the losers.

In another recollection of the lifting of Mount Sinai, God asks all Hebrews to prostrate themselves as they enter what may be an extra-large Ark of the Covenant, or else the door is simply a metaphor for acknowledging their pledge to Allah. As to why Allah would admonish the Jews for transgressing the Sabbath on such a momentous, inspiring occasion, only God knows.

4:154 And We raised the Mount [Sinai] over them, in view of their covenant, and We said to them: "Enter the door prostrate", and We also said: "Do not transgress on the Sabbath", taking from them a solemn pledge.³⁹

³⁸ Revelation 2:62 was later abrogated, i.e., nullified, by the following immutable fact:

3:85 Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.

³⁹ The verses about the lifting of Mount Sinai may have been inspired by a story told in a second century Jewish apocryphal book *The Abodah Zarah* about God lifting the mountain and holding it over the head of the Jews as a threat if they reject His law.

As can be expected, some broke the Covenant, especially by killing prophets, prompting Allah to seal their hearts so that they should never wish to enter into an agreement again.

4:155 But because they broke their covenant, disbelieved in Allah's Revelations, killed the Prophets unjustly, and said: "Our hearts are sealed", Allah has sealed them on account of their disbelief. So, they do not believe, except for a few.

He also sealed their hearts because of something to do with Mary.

4:156 And for their disbelief and their imputing to Mary a great falsehood;⁴⁰

The Golden Calf and Want of a Death Wish

The golden calf is again mentioned in another harangue of the Jews.

2:91 And when it is said to them: "Believe in what Allah has revealed", they say: "We believe in what was revealed to us (the Torah)," denying thereby what has been revealed thereafter (the Qur'an), although it is the Truth which confirms what they have (their scriptures). Say: "Why, then, did you kill Allah's Prophets in the past if you are true believers?" – Allah knows well the evil-doers.

2:92 Surely Moses came to you with clear signs (miracles); then, in his absence you made of the calf a god, and thus you became evil-doers.

Because the Hebrews did not believe in revelations *yet to be brought down by Moses*, God caused them to become infatuated with a golden calf.

2:93 And [remember] when we made a covenant with you and raised the mountain over you saying: "Take what we have given you with earnestness and obey." They said: "We have heard. We disobeyed." They were made to imbibe the love of the calf into their hearts because of their unbelief. Say: "Evil is what your faith bid you, if you are true believers. (the implication here is that they are not believers)."

⁴⁰ The remaining revelations in this series in the story of Jesus in this book.

If the Jews were really the chosen people, they would have wished for death.

2:94 Say: "If the abode of the Hereafter with Allah is for you alone to the exclusion of all other people, then wish for death if you are truthful."

They must not be in a hurry to leave the here-and-now and join God in the Hereafter because of former evil deeds they had committed.

2:95 But they will never wish for it, because of what they did earlier. Allah knows well the evil-doers.

A long life "will not spare them the punishment" in the end.

2:96 Indeed you will find them of all people the most attached to life, even more attached than those who associated other gods with Allah. Every one of them wishes to live for one thousand years. This long life, however, will not spare them the punishment. And Allah sees what they do.

The Burning Bush

27:7 When Moses said to his family: "I have sighted a fire and will bring you news of it, or bring you a flaming spark that you might warm yourselves."

27:8 Then, when he approached it, he was told loudly: "Blessed is he who is in the fire⁴¹ and those around it (Moses and the other Prophets), and glory be to the Lord of the Worlds.

27:9 "O Moses, I am truly Allah, the All-Mighty, Wise;

⁴¹ Moududi, by his capitalization of pronouns in "He Who is in the fire," believes it to be Allah.

27:8 When he came to it, a voice called out: "Blessed is He Who is in the fire and the one who is around it. Glorified is Allah, Lord of the worlds."

Others, like Fakhry, would not commit themselves to the same conclusion:

27:8 But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard: "Blessed are those in the fire and those around: and glory to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."

Yusuf Ali

27:8 But when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is whosoever is in the fire, and whosoever is round about it! And glorified be Allāh, the Lord of the 'Alamīn (mankind, jinn and all that exists)."

Mohsin Khan

27:10 "Cast your staff"; but when he saw it shaking, as though it was a serpent, he turned around not looking back. "O Moses, do not fear; the Messengers do not fear in My Presence;

27:11 "Except for him who has done wrong, then changed, doing good after evil. For I am indeed All-Forgiving, Merciful.

27:12 "Introduce your hand into your bosom and it will come out white, without blemish, as one of the nine signs to Pharaoh and his people. They are, indeed, a wicked people."

27:13 Then, when Our Signs came to them fully visible, they said: "This is manifest sorcery."

27:14 And they repudiated them, although their souls acknowledged them as certain, wrongfully and arrogantly. Behold, then what was the fate of the workers of corruption.

Moses and Pharaoh's Magicians

The lack of a chronological ordering of the verses in the Koran means that we learn of Moses meeting with Pharaoh before his meeting with God where he is given his marching orders in Surah 27.

7:103 Then after them⁴², We sent Moses with Our Revelations to Pharaoh and his people, but they repudiated them. See then what was the fate of the mischief-makers.

7:104 Moses said: "O Pharaoh, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds.

7:105 "It is only proper that I should not say about Allah anything other than the truth. I have brought you a clear sign from your Lord; so send forth the Children of Israel with me."

7:106 He said: "If you have brought a sign, produce it if you are really truthful."

⁴² Civilizations He has annihilated in the past.

7:101 Those cities, We relate to you some of their tales; their Messengers came to them with clear signs; but they would not believe in what they had denied earlier. Thus Allah seals the hearts of the unbelievers.

7:102 And We have not found among most of them any who honours a covenant; but We found most of them evildoers.

The first sign is a snake.

7:107 So he cast his staff and, behold, it was a manifest serpent⁴³.

7:108 And he drew his hand; and, behold, it appeared white to the onlookers.

7:109 The dignitaries among Pharaoh's people said: "This, indeed, is a shrewd magician.

7:110 "He wishes to drive you out of your land; so what do you advise?"

The dignitaries suggest to Pharaoh that he send for his own magicians.

7:111 They said: "Leave him and his brother for a while, and send forth summoners (sic) to the cities;

7:112 "To bring you every shrewd magician."

Before performing their magic, Pharaoh's magicians obtain a promise that they will be rewarded if they better Moses.

7:113 The magicians then came to Pharaoh and said: "We shall surely have a reward, if we are the winners."

7:114 He said: "Yes, and you will be, indeed, among those I favour."

After a short discussion as to who would begin, the magicians produced something we can assume is a snake, or the illusion of a snake.

7:115 They said: "O Moses, either you cast or we will be the first to cast."

7:116 He said: "You cast"; but when they cast, they put a spell upon the eyes of the people and frightened them, producing a mighty feat of magic.

Moses would again cast his staff, which would again change into a snake which proceeded to eat whatever Pharaoh's magicians had produced. The magicians were impressed and prostrated themselves before Moses.

⁴³ In the Bible, it is Aaron who casts his staff. Exodus 7:10: "Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials and it became a snake."

7:117 We revealed to Moses: "Cast your staff", and behold, it proceeded to devour what they faked.

7:118 So the truth was vindicated and what they were doing was nullified.

7:119 And they were vanquished there and then, and they turned away humiliated.

7:120 And the magicians fell down prostrate.

7:121 They said: "We believe now in the Lord of the Worlds;

7:122 "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

Pharaoh was not pleased!

7:123 Pharaoh then said: "Do you believe in Him before I give you leave? This is indeed a plot you contrived in the city, in order to drive its people out. Now you shall know.

Pharaoh then described what he will do to his magicians for switching their allegiance to Allah.

7:124 "I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides; then I will crucify you altogether."

7:125 They said: "Unto our Lord we surely shall return."

7:126 "You only resent from us that we have believed in the Signs of our Lord when they came to us. Lord, grant us patience and let us die as men who submit to You."

The second time around, God was more specific as to the type and condition of the trees Pharaoh suggested to crucify his magicians for changing sides.

20:71 He (Pharaoh) said: "Do you believe in him before I give you leave? It must be your chief who has taught you magic. I shall then cut your hands and feet on alternate sides, and I will crucify you upon the trunks of palm trees, and you will certainly know whose punishment is sterner and more lasting."

20:72 They said: "We cannot prefer you to what came to us of clear proofs and to Him Who created us. So, decide what you will decide regarding this present life.

20:73 “We have believed in our Lord, that He may forgive us our sins and what you forced us to practice of magic. Allah is best and most abiding.”

The third time around:

26:49 He (Pharaoh) said: “You have believed before I gave you leave. He (Moses) is indeed your chief, who taught you sorcery, and so you will learn. I shall cut off your hands and feet alternately and will crucify you all.”

The fourth time around Pharaoh does not crucify his magicians, and his dignitaries appear to have switched sides as well. He simply wanted his administrator, Haman, to build him a tower; the Tower of Babel perhaps?

28:38 Pharaoh then said: “O my dignitaries, I did not know that you had any god but me. So kindle for me, O Haman, a fire upon the clay and build me a tower that I might behold the God of Moses. I really think he is a liar.”⁴⁴

The fifth time, there is no mention of crucifixion, but Pharaoh still wants his tower.

40:36 And Pharaoh said: “O Haman, build me a tower that I may perchance reach the pathways,

40:37 “The pathways of heaven; and then look upon the God of Moses. For I think he is a liar.” That is how embellished for Pharaoh was his evil deed and how he was barred from the Path. Pharaoh’s guile was only destined to fail.

Which recollection of the meeting between Moses and Pharaoh is the most accurate? In three of the five recollections, the magicians are put to death; in the other two, this is less likely. But wait—there is one more account of Moses and his encounter with Pharaoh’s magicians, or should I say, *sorcerers*.

Magicians as Sorcerers

This retelling begins after God makes a general statement about all the messengers He sent starting with Noah, but before Moses.

10:71 And relate to them the story of Noah when he said to

⁴⁴ Remember, the Koran’s version of Paradise, where Allah sits on His Throne, is just above the clouds, so what Pharaoh asked was not unrealistic if he wanted to prove Moses a liar.

his people: "O my people, if my dwelling [among you] and my reminding you of the Revelations of Allah, is too much for you, then in Allah I have put my trust. Agree upon a course of action with your associates; then let not that course of action be a burden to you; then pass to me [your decision] and give me no respite.

10:72 "If you turn away, I have asked for no reward from you. My reward is only with Allah. I have been ordered to be one of those who submit."

10:73 But they denounced him; so We delivered him and those with him in the Ark and made them successors, while drowning those who denied Our Signs. See then what was the fate of those who were warned!

10:74 Then We sent forth after him (*Noah*) Messengers to their people. They brought them clear proofs; but they would not believe in what they had denied earlier. Thus We seal the hearts of the aggressors.

10:75 Then We sent forth after them Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his dignitaries, but they were arrogant; they were sinful people.

10:76 Then when the truth came to them from Us, they said: "This indeed is manifest sorcery."

10:77 Moses said: "Do you say to the truth, when it has come to you: 'This is sorcery?' Sorcerers will never prosper."

10:78 They said: "Have you come to us to turn us away from that (the faith) in which we found our fathers so that sovereignty may be yours (Moses and his brother), in the land? We shall not believe in you both.

10:79 Then Pharaoh said: "Bring me every skillful magician."

10:80 Then, when the magicians came, Moses said to them: "Cast down what you intend to cast down."

10:81 Then, when they cast down, Moses said: "What you brought forward is real sorcery. Allah will bring it to naught. Allah indeed does not uphold the work of the mischief-makers.

10:82 "Allah vindicates the truth by His Words, even if the wicked sinners dislike it."

10:83 And so only a handful of his people believed in Moses for fear that Pharaoh and his dignitaries would persecute them. Pharaoh was truly a tyrant in the land and one of the transgressors.

10:84 And Moses said: "O my people, if you believe in Allah, then in Him put your trust, if you submit [to Him]."

10:85 Whereupon they said: "In Allah we have put our trust. Our Lord, do not let us be tried by the wrongdoing people.

10:86 "And deliver us by Your Mercy from the unbelieving people."

Moses and the Hidden Believer

Of all the strange stories told by Allah about the meeting between Moses and Pharaoh, none is stranger than that of the hidden believer at Pharaoh's Court.

40:23 We have indeed sent Moses forth with Our Signs and a manifest authority,

40:24 Unto Pharaoh, Haman and Korah but they said: "A lying sorcerer."

40:25 When he brought them the Truth from Us, they said: "Slay the sons of those who have believed with him, but spare their women." However, the cunning of the unbelievers is in error.

The hidden believer revealed himself by coming to the defence of Moses after Pharaoh threatened to kill him.

40:26 And Pharaoh said: "Let me kill Moses, and let him call upon his Lord. I fear that he may change your religion and cause corruption to spread in the land."

40:27 Moses said: "I seek refuge with my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant one who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning."

40:28 Then a believing man of Pharaoh's folk, who kept hidden his belief, said: "Will you kill a man for saying: 'My Lord is Allah', and he has brought you the clear proofs from

your Lord? If he is a liar, his lying will recoil upon him, but if he is truthful, you will be smitten with some of what he is promising you. Allah will not guide one who is an extravagant imposter⁴⁵.

This defence of Moses is followed with the old scare tactic of God being quick to anger when His Messengers are denied. Pharaoh tells the hidden believer that he does not accept his idea of a bogeymen and that he is a righteous ruler.

40:29 “O my people, yours is the dominion today, supreme in the land; but who will protect us against Allah’s Might, if it should smite us?” Pharaoh said: “I do not show you except what I see, and I do not guide except in the path of rectitude.”

The hidden believer reminds the assembled of the fate of the Confederates, desert tribes that joined the Meccans in the siege of Medina in 627 AD, more than two thousand years into the future, and whom God would burn in Hell.

40:30 Then the one who had believed said: “O my people, I fear for you the like of the day of the Confederates.

He reminds them of the people and cities Allah has destroyed, including Thamud, whose existence was known from “the 1st millennium BC to near the time of Muhammad,” therefore may not have even existed—let alone been destroyed—when Moses met Pharaoh.

40:31 “Like the wont of the people of Noah, ‘Ad, Thamud and those who came after them. Allah does not intend wronging the servants.

The threat is escalated with mention of the *Day of Altercation*, a day of destruction like that visited on the people mentioned in the previous revelation.

40:32 “And, O my people, I fear for you the Day of Altercation.

40:33 “The Day you will turn away in flight, having no defender against Allah. Whomever Allah leads astray will have no one to guide him.

⁴⁵ Pharaoh’s magicians were not the first believers after all. Remember Revelation 26:51: “We hope that our Lord will forgive our sins, as we are the first believers.”

They are reminded of Joseph, who some considered the last Messenger because that is what God wanted them to believe.

40:34 "Joseph brought you the clear proofs before, but you continued to doubt what he brought you. Then, when he perished you said: 'Allah will never send forth a Messenger after him.' That is how Allah leads astray whoever is extravagant and suspicious.

40:35 "Those who dispute concerning Allah's Signs without any authority given to them – how hateful is that in the sight of Allah and the believers. That is how Allah places a seal on the heart of every arrogant bully."

The hidden believer's long-winded, messenger-like exhortation was interrupted by Pharaoh, who again asked Haman to build him a tower.

40:36 And Pharaoh said: "O Haman, build me a tower that I may perchance reach the pathways,

40:37 "The pathways of heaven; and then look upon the God of Moses. For I think he is a liar." That is how embellished for Pharaoh was his evil deed and how he was barred from the Path. Pharaoh's guile was only destined to fail.

Moses takes up the refrain of the hidden believer, ending his exhortation with the familiar reminder of Allah's Fire.

40:38 Then he who had believed said: "O my people, follow me and I will guide you to the path of rectitude.

40:39 "O my people, this present life is a fleeting pleasure, but the world to come is the abode of permanence.

40:40 "Whoever does an evil deed will only be rewarded its like; but whoever does a righteous deed, whether male or female, being a believer – those shall enter Paradise receiving therein provision without measure.

40:41 "And, O my people, do I call you unto salvation, while you call me unto the Fire?

40:42 "You call me to disbelieve in Allah and associate with Him that whereof I have no knowledge, while I call you unto the All-Mighty, the All-Pardoner.

40:43 "No wonder that what you call me unto has no callers in this world, nor in the Hereafter; and that our ultimate

return is unto Allah; and that the extravagant are the true companions of the Fire.

40:44 "You will remember what I am saying to you. I entrust my fate to Allah. Allah is surely Well Aware of the servants."

God cleverly followed the story of the hidden believer with one about Hell and the fate of "Pharaoh's folk," explaining why the weak would not be forgiven for believing in their leaders instead of His Messengers.

40:45 Then, Allah guarded him (Moses) against the evils of their scheming; and the evil punishment encompassed Pharaoh's folk;

40:46 The Fire to which they shall be exposed morning and evening. And the Day the Hour shall come to pass, it will be said (to the angels): "Admit Pharaoh's folk to the worst punishment."

40:47 And while they dispute in the Fire, and the weak will say to those who waxed proud: We were followers of yours. Will you, then, withhold from us part of the Fire?"

40:48 Those who waxed proud will say: "We are truly all in it. Allah has judged between the servants."

40:49 Those in the Fire will say to the keepers of Hell: "Call on your Lord that He may remit a day of punishment for us."

40:50 They will reply: "Did not your Messengers bring you clear proofs?" They will say: "Yes indeed." They will reply: "Call then, although the call of the unbelievers is in vain."

40:51 We shall support Our Messengers and the believers in the present life and on the Day the witnesses shall arise;

40:52 The Day when their excuses will not profit the wrongdoers, and the curse will be upon them and they will have the worst dwelling.

In case you missed it:

40:53 We have indeed given Moses the guidance and bequeathed to the Children of Israel the Book,

40:54 As a guidance and a reminder to people of understanding.

40:55 So stand fast; Allah's Promise is true. Seek the forgiveness of your sin and proclaim the praise of your Lord evenings and mornings.

Pharaoh would never attain 'grandeur'.

40:56 As for those who dispute regarding Allah's Signs without any authority given to them, there is nothing in their breasts but the desire for grandeur, which they will never attain. So, seek refuge with Allah for He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

The Tenth Plague

In the first version of the competition between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians, the dignitaries want to know what he will do about Moses and the Hebrews.

7:127 And the dignitaries among Pharaoh's people said: "Will you leave Moses and his people to make mischief in the land and to abandon you and your gods?" He said: "We will massacre their sons, but spare their women, and over them we shall surely triumph."

The massacre referenced in the above revelation may have already occurred during the reign of Pharaoh Seti I when Moses was just a baby. Whatever, Moses tells his people to be patient and put their trust in Allah.

7:128 Moses said to his people: "Seek Allah's assistance and be patient; the earth is Allah's and He gives it to whomever of His servants he pleases; and for the righteous is the happy end."

7:129 They said: "We were persecuted before you came to us and after you came to us." He said: "Perchance your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the land and, then, observe what you will do."

Bring on the plagues! Except for perhaps the deluge and the slaughter of the Egyptian firstborn males, the Koran and the Bible are in basic agreement on the Plagues of Egypt, including that they were all God's doing.

7:130 And We made Pharaoh and his people suffer from drought and shortage of fruit that perchance they may take heed.

7:131 So, when a good fortune came to them they said: "This is ours", but if a misfortune befell them, they ascribed the evil omen to Moses and his companions. In fact, their omen is with Allah; but most of them do not know.

7:132 And they said: "Whatever sign you may bring us in order to cast a spell upon us, we will not believe in you."

7:133 So, we let loose upon them the deluge, locust, lice, frogs and blood as explicit signs; but they grew arrogant and were a sinful people.

Pharaoh agreed to let the Hebrews leave if Moses could get his god to stop the scourge.

7:134 And when the scourge descended on them, they said: "O Moses, call upon your Lord for us in virtue of the covenant He made with you. If you lift the scourge from us, we will surely believe you and send forth the Children of Israel with you."

They never learn!

7:135 But when We lifted the scourge from them for a period We accorded them, behold, their broke their pledge.

7:136 Then We exacted retribution from them and drowned them in the sea, because they denounced Our Signs and failed to pay heed to them.

Allah's Gift to the Jews

7:137 And We bequeathed to the people who were held to be weak the eastern and western parts of the land which we had blessed (the Holy Land); and the fairest Word of your Lord in regard to the Children of Israel was fulfilled, because of their endurance; and We destroyed the houses and towers which Pharaoh and his people were building.

7:138 And We caused the Children of Israel to cross the sea, and they came upon a people devoted to idols of their own. They said: "O Moses, make us a god as they have gods of their own." He said: "You are indeed an ignorant people.

7:139 "Surely what those [people] are engaged in is doomed to destruction, and what they are doing is vanity."

Moses reminded the Israelites that they were God's preferred people, followed by a reminder from Allah that He brought them out of Egypt.

7:140 And he said: "Shall I seek for you a god other than Allah, Who has preferred you to all mankind?"

7:141 And [remember] how We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who inflicted the worst punishment on you, killing your sons and sparing your women. In that was a grievous trial from your Lord.

The Death of Pharaoh

God, if He doesn't like you, will make sure you never believe in Him. This is to ensure that you end up in His Hell where He can torture you at His leisure. He will do this for His own benefit or as a favour; in this instance, as a gift to Moses who wants Pharaoh Rameses II to burn in Hell.

The archaeological record—the Egyptians were real sticklers in accurately documenting the life and death of their Kings—is clear: Rameses II died in his bed of natural causes. God would beg to differ, maybe? In Revelation 10:92, Allah appears to save Pharaoh from drowning as he is chasing Moses and the Israelites across the Red Sea, but not before advising Moses to invest in some Egyptian real estate.

10:87 And we revealed to Moses and his brother: "Take for your people dwellings in Egypt and make your dwellings places of worship, perform the prayer and announce the good news to the believers."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Moududi is not helpful in ascertaining why Allah would leave the impression that He wanted Moses and his people to settle in Egypt after making space for them by drowning Pharaoh and his people. He ignores the inconsistency, only speculating that the message was a warning for the "mushriks" (a derogatory term for those who associate other gods with Allah) of Mecca.

This part of the story of Pharaoh has been related here because it applied exactly to the mushriks of Makkah who were doing their worst to uproot the Holy Prophet and the Believers from the land of Arabia. This story, so to say, tells them, "Pharaoh resolved to uproot Moses and the Israelites but was himself completely annihilated along with his followers and Moses and his followers settled down in the land. Likewise, if you persist on the same way, you will surely meet with the same end."

Moses, like all the other Messengers, asked his Patron to do serious harm to his detractors; and like for all His Messengers—with the possible exception of Muhammad—Allah was happy to answer what He considered a prayer.

10:88 Moses then said: “Lord, you have given Pharaoh and his dignitaries adornment and wealth in the present life, with which they lead people away from Your Path. O Lord, obliterate their wealth and harden their hearts so that they will not believe, till they see the very painful punishment.”

10:89 He said: “Your prayer is answered; carry on both with your call and go straight, and do not follow the path of those who do not know.”

10:90 And We brought the Children of Israel across the sea. Pharaoh and his troops followed them insolently and aggressively; but when he was about to drown, he said: “I believe that there is no god but He in Whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of those who submit [to Allah].”

10:91 [It was said to him]: “Now [you believe]! But you disobeyed earlier and you were one of the mischief-makers.

10:92 “Today then, We shall save you bodily, so you may become a sign to those who come after you. Indeed, many people are heedless of Our Signs.”

Did God really save Pharaoh from drowning and accept his late conversion after His promise to Moses? The answer is in another surah. First, the intriguing end to this account of Moses and Pharaoh: in this reiteration, the Hebrews don’t appear to have spent much time in the Sinai desert.

10:93 And We have established the Children of Israel in a dignified domain⁴⁷ and provided them with good things. Thus they did not differ among themselves until the certain knowledge came to them (*the Qur’an?*). Surely, your Lord shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection regarding that about which they differed.

God tells Muhammad to ask those who recite the Torah in his presence, i.e., the Jews, to confirm the veracity of His recollection of these events if he has doubts.

⁴⁷ “That is, in Palestine after their exodus from Egypt.” *islamicstudies.info*

10:94 So, if you (the person addressed here, according to some commentators, is Muhammad) are in doubt concerning what We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Book (the Torah) before you. Indeed, the truth has come to you from your Lord; so do not be one of the doubters.

10:95 And do not be one of those who deny Allah's revelations and thus become one of the losers.

So, did Allah drown Pharaoh? According to Revelation 17:103, He surely did!

17:101 And We gave Moses nine clear signs. Ask the Children of Israel, then, how when he came to them and Pharaoh said to him: "I really think you are bewitched, O Moses."

17:102 He (Moses) said: "You know that these [signs] have not been sent down by any one other than the Lord of the heavens and the earth as clear proofs, and I think that you, Pharaoh, are doomed."

17:103 So, he wanted to scare them out of the land, but We drowned him, together with all those who were with him.

17:104 And after him, We said to the Children of Israel: "Dwell in the land, and when the promise of the Hereafter comes, We shall bring you all together."

Drowned or not, they are still cursed in this life!

11:99 And they are followed in this life with a curse and on the Day of Resurrection too. Wretched is the support they shall be given.

Allah's punishment may be "painful and hard," (Revelation 11:102), but the men, and women and children He indiscriminately murders in numbers unimaginable have only themselves to blame.

11:100 That is part of the tidings of the towns We recount to you; some of them are still standing and some We have reduced to rubble.

11:101 And We have not wronged them, but they have wronged themselves. Their deities, upon whom they called, apart from Allah, did not avail them anything when the

Decree of your Lord came; but they only added to their destruction.

11:102 And such is your Lord's punishment when He punishes the cities which are unjust. His punishment is indeed very painful, very hard.

11:103 There is surely in this a sign for him who fears the punishment of the Hereafter. That is a Day on which men will be gathered together, and that is a Day to be witnessed.

11:104 And We shall not delay it, but for an appointed term.

Pharaoh's wife abandoned her husband before Allah drowned him.

66:11 Allah has given as an instance of believers the wife of Pharaoh, when she said: "Lord, build for me, with You, a house in Paradise and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from the wrong-doing people."

Egypt Changes Ownership

From God's revisionist, historical perspective, the Egyptians mentioned after the departure of the Hebrews may not be the same people: Revelation 44:28.

44:17 In fact, We have tried the people of Pharaoh before them), and a noble Messenger came to them [saying]:

44:18 "Deliver to me Allah's servants (the Children of Israel), for I am unto you a faithful Messenger.

44:19 "Do not rise arrogantly against Allah; for I come to you with manifest authority.

44:20 "I seek refuge with my Lord and your Lord, lest you stone me.

44:21 "And if you do not believe me, then leave me alone."

44:22 Then he called out to his Lord: "These are indeed a criminal people".

44:23 (Allah said): "Set out then, with My servants at night; for you are being followed.

44:24 "Leave the sea behind as still as ever; for they are a drowning host."

44:25 How many gardens and well-springs did they leave behind?

44:26 And plantations and a noble station;

44:27 And prosperity which they thoroughly enjoyed.

44:28 So it was, and We bequeathed them to another people⁴⁸.

44:29 Neither the heavens nor the earth cried for them and they were given no respite.

44:30 And thus We saved the Children of Israel from the demeaning punishment;

44:31 From Pharaoh; for he was haughty and extravagant.

Allah actually used the word “chosen” when referring to the Children of Israel.

44:32 We have indeed chosen them knowingly, above all other peoples;

44:33 And given them many Signs wherein there was a manifest trial.

44:32 We have indeed chosen them knowingly, above all other peoples;

44:33 And given them many Sign wherein there was a manifest trial.

Why Forty Years in the Wilderness

5:20 And when Moses said to his people: “O my people, remember Allah’s grace upon you, how He raised up Prophets among you, made you kings and gave you what He has not given any other nations.

5:21 “My people, enter the Holy Land which Allah ordained for you (that you should enter), and do not turn back, lest you become losers.”

⁴⁸ Who are these “another people” is the subject of much controversy:

“Hasan Basri says that ‘other people’ here implies the children of Israel, whom Allah made heirs of the land of Egypt after Pharaoh’s people, and Qatadah says it implies the other people who inherited Egypt after the people of Pharaoh, for the history does not make any mention that the Israelites ever returned to Egypt after the exodus and inherited it. This same point has been disputed by the later commentators also.” *islamicstudies.info*

5:22 They said: "O Moses, there is in it a mighty people; we shall not enter it until they leave it. If they leave it, then we shall enter."

5:23 Two men of those who feared [Allah] and whom Allah favoured said: "Enter the gate and [fall] upon them; if you enter it, you will be victorious. In Allah put your trust, if you are true believers."

5:24 They said: "O Moses, we shall never enter it, so long as they are in it. So, go forth, you and your Lord, and fight; we are staying put here."

5:25 He said: "Lord, I have no power over anybody other than myself and my brother; so separate us from the ungodly people."

5:26 Allah said: "It shall be forbidden them (the Promised Land) for forty years, during which they shall wonder aimlessly in the land; so do not grieve for the ungodly people!"

Forty years in the desert is Moududi's best explanation for the following mystifying verse.

2:243 Have you not considered those (the Israelites) who fled their homes in thousands for fear of death? Allah said to them: "Die." Then He brought them back to life. Surely Allah is gracious to mankind, but most people do not give thanks.

Moududi:

This refers to the exodus of the Israelites. The Israelites had left Egypt in large numbers and were wandering in the desert, eager to find a home. But when at God's command Moses ordered them to drive the Canaanites out of Palestine and conquer that land, they showed cowardice and refused to proceed. Eventually God let them wander about for forty years till one full generation of Israelites had died and been replaced by a new one reared in the tough conditions of desert life. It was only, then that God enabled the Israelites to overcome the Canaanites. Their former condition is described as death, whereas the later development is seen as their restoration to life.

The Ten Commandments

An account of the life and times of Moses such as this would not be complete without mention of the Ten Commandments. Yes, they are referenced in the Koran. In the Bible, Moses spent forty days and forty nights with God on Mount Sinai; in the Koran, in a revelation that seems intent on proving that the narrator can count, it was thirty nights plus ten more at an unspecified location.

7:142 And We appointed to Moses thirty nights to which We added ten, and thus the term appointed by His Lord was forty nights. And Moses said to his brother Aaron: "Succeed me at the head of my people, set matters right and do not follow the path of the mischief-makers."

In response to a request from Moses that He show himself, Allah revealed his presence by crushing a mountain.

7:143 And when Moses came on Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: "Lord, show me [Yourself] so that I may look at You." He said: "You will not see Me; but look at the mountain. If it stays in its place, You shall see Me." But when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He levelled it to the ground, and Moses fell down unconscious. When he woke up, he said: "Glory be to You, I repent unto You and I am the first of the believers."

7:144 Then He said: "O Moses, I have chosen you above all men for My Messages and My words; so take what I have given you and be one of the thankful."

This is unlike in the Bible where God offered no specifics as to what was written on the tablets given to Moses. Allah did, however, take the time to give Moses a glimpse of what appears to be Hell, "the abode of the wicked."

7:145 And We wrote for him in the Tablets (this is a reference to the tablets of the Torah) about everything, providing exhortation and a clear exposition of everything: "So [We said] take it resolutely and bid your people to take the best part of it. I will show you the abode of the wicked.

God also confided to Moses, during the delivery of the Commandments, that He deliberately leads astray the "unjustifiably arrogant" who deny "the truth of Our Signs" and that whatever they

do will be nullified on the day He never fails to mention on occasions of any significance: Judgement Day.

7:146 "I will turn away from My Signs those who are unjustifiably arrogant on earth, and who, if they see each sign, will not believe in it; and if they see the path of rectitude will not follow it, but if they see the path of error, will follow it as their path. That is because they denied the truth of Our Signs and failed to pay heed.

7:147 "Those who deny Our Signs and the Meeting of the Hereafter – their works are nullified. Will they be rewarded except according to what they do?"

Like in the Bible, when Moses returned with the Tablets, he found his people worshipping a calf made with jewelry that actually produces cow-like sounds, and cast down the Tablets.

7:148 And the people of Moses took, after he went away, a calf made of their jewellery – a mere body which lowed. Did they not see that it did not speak to them and could not guide them to any path? They took it [for worship] and were wrongdoers.

7:149 And when they felt deep regret, and saw that they had gone astray, they said: "If our Lord will not have mercy on us and will not forgive us, we will certainly be among the losers."

Aaron's justification for letting them build the calf is that they would have killed him otherwise.

7:150 And when Moses returned to his people, angry and very sad, he said: "Evil is what you did following my departure. Were you in a hurry regarding your Lord's Commandment?" He cast the Tablets down and took hold of his brother's head, dragging him towards him. He (Aaron) said: "Son of my mother, the people deemed me weak and were about to kill me, so do not let the enemy rejoice at my plight, and do not reckon me one of the unjust people."

Moses asked Allah's forgiveness for himself and his brother along with a humiliating punishment for his people, though perhaps not for those who repented.

7:151 He (Moses) said: "Lord, forgive me and my brother and

admit us into Your Mercy; for you are the Most Merciful of all.”

7:152 Surely, those who worshipped the calf will be visited by wrath from their Lord and humiliation in the present life; and thus We recompense those who invent lies.

7:153 And those who perpetrated the evil deeds and repented thereafter and believed – surely your Lord is thereafter All-Forgiving and Merciful.

In the Bible, Moses smashed the Tablets in anger and had to make another trek up Mount Sinai to receive a new; this does not occur in the Koran.

7:154 And when the anger of Moses abated, he took up the Tablets, in the text of which are guidance and mercy for those who fear their Lord.

In the Bible, the delivery of the Commandments was followed by another visit with God so that Moses could get final instructions as to how He is to be worshipped, including the specifications for the accompanying paraphernalia, e.g., the size of the altar, what priests should wear, etc. On this visit, Moses was accompanied by seventy elders who are told to stay at a discreet distance (Exodus 24:1). In the Koran, this story is just one more opportunity for Allah to remind the believers of His Might and that He does as He pleases.

7:155 And Moses chose from his people seventy men for Our appointed time. When the earthquake overtook them, he said: “Lord, had you pleased, You would have destroyed them, together with me, before this time. Will you destroy us for what the fools among us have done? This is only Your Trial, with which You lead astray whomever You will and guide whomever You will. You are our Protector; so forgive us and have mercy on us. You are the Best Forgiver of all.

Forgive, yes, but first you must believe in ‘Our Signs’.

7:156 “And ordain for us good in this world and in the Hereafter; we turn repentant to You.” He said: “I smite with my punishment whomsoever I please, and My Mercy encompasses all things; and I will ordain it to those who are pious and give the alms, and to those who believe in Our Signs.

The delivery of the Ten Commandments was a watershed event for both Christians and Jews. This may explain God inserting Muhammad – the *unlettered Prophet* in Revelation 7:157 and 7:158, His greatest and ultimate spokesman – into the proceedings.

7:157 “And to those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet whom they find mentioned in the Torah and Gospel. He enjoins them to do good and to forbid evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and unlawful to them the impure things. And He relieves them of their heavy burden and the shackles that were upon them. Thus those who believe in him and who honour and support him and follow the light which has been sent down with him – those are the prosperous.”

7:158 Say: “O people, I am Allah’s Messenger to you all; He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and causes to die; so believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His Words; and follow him, that perchance you may be well guided.”

Back to Moses and his people:

7:159 And of the people of Moses, there is a group who guide by the truth, and by it act justly.

7:160 And We divided them into twelve nation-tribes; and We revealed to Moses, when his people asked him for water: “Strike the rock with you staff”; whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it, with each tribe recognizing its drinking place. And We spread the clouds over them to shade them and sent down upon them the manna and quails [saying to them]: “Eat from the good things We have provided you.” They did not wrong us, but they wronged themselves.

The Torah, from the beginning, according to God, was a subject of controversy.

41:45 We have given Moses the Book, but it was the subject of controversy. Had it not been for a Word that preceded from your Lord, a decision between them would have been made. Yet they are, with respect to it, in disquieting doubt.

Moududi's comments (partial):

It has two meanings: (1) If Allah had not already decreed that the people would be given enough respite for consideration the disputants would have long been destroyed; (2) if Allah had not already decreed that the disputes would finally be decided on the Day of Judgement, the reality would have been made plain as to who is in the right and who is in the wrong.

The Never-Ending Punishment of the Jews

If only Allah had deigned to give us the time and place associated with the events He describes in the Koran, this would have made it a lot easier to make sense of many of His Revelations. When Jerusalem was rebuilt after the Babylonian captivity, a "Fish Gate" was built into its wall (Nehemiah 3:3). While Jerusalem is not near any sea, this may be the gate and city God had in mind in the following revelation.

7:161 And it was said to them: "Dwell in this city and eat from it whatever you please. Seek forgiveness and enter the gate prostrate, so that We may forgive your sins. We shall give more to the beneficent."

One reason why the Torah and the Koran are not identical:

7:162 But the evildoers among them replaced what was said to them with other words; and so We sent upon them a punishment from heaven, on account of their wrongdoing.

Allah put an end to a miraculous fishery on the Sabbath because of an unsubstantiated claim that the Jews violated their day of rest and worship.

7:163 And ask them about the city which stood close to the sea, when they violated the Sabbath. Their fish which used to come floating on the sea on the Sabbath did not appear when they violated the Sabbath. Thus We tried them because they transgressed.

God gives His reasons for persecuting so many Jews until "the Day of Resurrection."

7:164 And when one group of them said: "Why do you exhort a people whom Allah has doomed to destruction or to a

terrible punishment?", they replied: "As an excuse for your Lord, and that perchance they fear God."

7:165 Then, when they neglected what they were reminded of, We saved those who were forbidding evil and inflicted upon the wrongdoers a terrible punishment, on account of their sinfulness.

7:166 Then, when they disdained arrogantly what they were forbidden, We said to them: "Be miserable monkeys."

7:167 Thereupon your Lord made it known that He would send against them one who would inflict on them the worst punishment until the Day of Resurrection. Your Lord is Quick in Retribution, and He is indeed All-Forgiving, Merciful⁴⁹.

7:168 And We split them up throughout the land into groups, some of them righteous and some otherwise. Then We tried them with prosperity and adversity that perchance that they might desist [from sinning].

7:169 Then there succeeded them [an evil] posterity who inherited the Book (the Torah), but chose the vanities of this world saying: "We shall be forgiven." And should similar vanities come their way, they would again seize them. Are they not bound by them. Are they not bound by the covenant of the Book, that they should not say about Allah except the truth? They studied what is in it and the world to come is better for those who fear God. Do they not understand?

7:170 As for those who hold fast to the Book and perform the prayer – surely We do not dissipate the reward of the righteous.

Allah ends this series of revelations ostensibly, about the creation of the first "Jewish State" and the aftermath, with a recollection of His mountain-lifting exploit.

⁴⁹ "Since the 8th century B.C. the Israelites were warned consistently. This is borne out by the contents of the Books of the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and their successors. Jesus too administered the same warning which is borne out by many of his orations in the New Testament. This was also later confirmed by the Qur'an. History bears out the veracity of the statement made both in the Qur'an and the earlier scriptures. For throughout history, since the time the Jews were warned, they have continually been subjected to abject persecution in one part of the world or another." *Moududi*

7:171 And [remember] when We raised the mountain over them, as though it was a canopy; and they thought that it was about to fall down on them. Hold on firmly to what We have given you, and remember what is in it, that perchance you may be God-fearing.

We return to the story of the post-Moses Israelites in Surah 7, which tells the story of Balaam and the lesson to be learned. The Jews consider Balaam to have been a gentile prophet sent by the King of Moab to curse (which he later reconsidered) the Israelites shortly before the death of Moses (Numbers 22-24; see *Allah's Covenant with Adam's Progeny* for Verses 7:172-174).

7:175 And tell them [O Muhammad] about the man (Balaam) to whom We gave our revelations, but he renounced them and was followed by the Devil. Thus he became one of those condemned to perdition.

7:176 And had We pleased, We would have elevated him through them (the revelations), but he clung to earth and followed his fancy. His case is similar to that of a dog; if you attack it, it will pant, and if you leave it, it will pant too. Such are those who deny our Revelations. So relate to them these narratives, that per chance they may reflect.

7:177 How evil is the example of the people who deny Our Revelations. They only wrong themselves.

7:178 Whomever Allah guides is well-guided; and whomever He leads astray – those are the losers.

Fear My Presence and My Threats

14:6 And when Moses said to his people: "Remember Allah's favour to you, when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people who were inflicting upon you the worst punishment, slaughtering your sons and sparing your women. In that, there was truly a great trial from your Lord."

14:7 [Remember] when your Lord proclaimed: "If you give thanks, I will increase you; but if you disbelieve, My punishment is certainly severe."

14:8 And Moses said: "If you are thankless, together with everyone on earth, surely Allah is all sufficient, Praiseworthy.

14:9 "Have you not heard the story of those who preceded you – the People of Noah, of 'Ad and Thamud, and those who came after them, whom none but Allah knows? Their Messengers came to them with the clear proofs, but they put their hands in their mouths saying: "We disbelieve in what you have been sent forth with, and we are certainly in disturbing doubt regarding what you are calling to us."

14:10 Their Messengers said: "Is there any doubt about Allah, Maker of the heavens and the earth? He calls you that He may forgive you some of your sins and reprieve you until an appointed term." They said: "You are only humans like ourselves; you want to turn us away from what our fathers worshipped. Bring us then a manifest authority."

14:11 Their Messengers said to them: "We are only humans like yourselves. However, Allah bestows His Grace on whom He pleases of His servants. It is not in our power to bring you an authority, save by Allah's Leave; and in Allah let the believers put their trust.

14:12 "And why should we not put our trust in Allah, when He has guided us on our ways? We will surely endure patiently the harm you cause us; and in Allah let those who trust put their trust."

14:13 The unbelievers said to their Messengers: "We will certainly expel you from our land, unless you return to our religion." Then their Lord revealed to them: "We shall destroy the wrongdoers.

14:14 "And We will make you dwell in the land after them. That is for him who fears My presence and fears My threats."

Moses and Pharaoh from Beginning to End

The most complete retelling of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in one surah.

STORYTELLING

28 Al-Qasas

*In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful*

28:1 Tah – Sin – Mim⁵⁰

28:2 Those are the verses of the Manifest Book,

28:3 We recite to you part of the news of Moses and Pharaoh truthfully, for a people who believe.

28:4 Pharaoh waxed proud in the land and reduced its habitants into factions, subduing a group of them, slaughtering their sons and sparing their women. He was truly a corruption-worker.

The meek may inherit the Earth after all.

28:5 We wish to favour the downtrodden in the land and make them leaders and make them the inheritors;

28:6 And establish them firmly in the land and show Pharaoh and Haman and their troops what they used to fear.

28:7 We revealed to Moses' mother: "Suckle him; but if you fear for him, cast him into the water and do not fear or grieve. We shall return him to you and make him one of the Messengers."

28:8 Then the folk of Pharaoh picked him up, to become an enemy and a source of sorrow for them. Pharaoh, Haman (the minister of Pharaoh), and their troops were surely sinful.

28:9 Pharaoh's wife said: "He is a comfort to you and me. Do not kill him; perhaps he will profit us or we will take him for a son." Yet they were not well aware.

28:10 The heart of Moses' mother became vacant; she almost exposed him, but for Our fortifying her heart, so that she might be one of the believers.

28:11 She said to his sister: "Follow his tracks", and so she observed him from a distance, while they were unaware.

28:12 And We forbade him earlier from being nursed by foster-mothers; so she (Moses' sister) said: "Shall I lead you to a household who will take charge of him for you and will take good care of him?"

⁵⁰ "The same letters occur at the beginning of Surah 26; the significance of this is not clear." Fakhry

28:13 Then We returned him to his mother, so that she might be comforted and not grieve, and that she might know that Allah's Promise is true; but most of them do not know.

Growing up, Moses may not have been that bright.

28:14 When he was fully grown, and became an adult, We conferred on him judgement and knowledge. That is how We reward the beneficent.

28:15 And he entered the city at a time when its inhabitants were unheeding; and so he found in it two men fighting, one of his own sect, the other from his enemies. Whereupon the one of his sect solicited his assistance against the one from his enemies; so Moses struck him and killed him. He said: "This is the work of Satan; he is a manifestly misleading enemy."

28:16 He said: "Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me." Then He forgave him. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, the Merciful.

28:17 He said: "Lord, in as much as you have favoured me, I will not be a supporter of the criminals."

28:18 The next morning, He became fearful and vigilant; and lo and behold, the man who had sought his assistance on the previous day was calling out to him. Moses said to him: "You are clearly in error."

The man from his sect is now his enemy. Go figure!

28:19 So, when he (Moses) was about to kill the one who was their enemy, he said: "O Moses, do you wish to kill me as you killed another living soul yesterday? You only wish to become a tyrant in the land and do not wish to be one of the righteous."

28:20 And a man came from the farthest part of the city running. He said: "O Moses, the dignitaries are conspiring to kill you. Depart then, I am one of your sincere advisors."

28:21 So, he departed from it fearful and vigilant. He said: "Lord, deliver me from the wrongdoing people."

28:22 And when he headed towards Midian, he said: "Perhaps, my Lord will guide me unto the Right Path."

28:23 And when he arrived at the water of Midian, he found

there a company of men watering their cattle, and he found, apart from them, two women holding back. He said: "What is the matter with you both?" They said: "We will not water our flock until the cattle-herders leave off, and our father is a very old man."

28:24 So, he watered their flock for them, and then moved towards the shade and said: "Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good You might send down to me."

28:29 Then, one of the two women came to him walking coyly. She said: "My father is calling you in order to reward you for watering our flock." So, when he came to him and told him the story, he said: "Do not fear, you have escaped from the wrongdoing people."

28:30 One of the two women said: "Father, hire him. Surely, the best one you can hire is the strong and faithful one."

28:27 He said: "I want to marry you to one of these two daughters of mine, provided you serve me for eight years. If you complete ten years, that will be of your own accord; and I do not wish to make things hard for you. You will find me, if Allah wishes, one of the righteous."

28:28 He said: "This is a compact between you and me; whichever term I complete, my action will not be impugned, and Allah shall vouchsafe what we are saying."

28:29 So, when Moses completed the term and set out with his family, he observed a fire on the side of the Tur Mountain (Sinai). He said to his family: "Stay here, I have observed a fire. Perhaps, I can bring you some news of it or a brand of fire that you might warm yourselves."

28:30 When he approached it, he was summoned from the right side of the valley, on the sacred spot by the tree: "O Moses, it is I Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;

28:31 "Cast your staff", but when he saw it shaking like a snake, he turned away running not looking back. "O Moses, come forward and do not fear, you are certainly safe.

28:32 "Slip your hand into your bosom and it will come out white, without blemish; then press [your arm] to your side so as not to fear. Those, then, are two proofs to Pharaoh and his

dignitaries from your Lord. Indeed, they have been a sinful people.”

28:33 He said: “Lord, I have killed from them a living soul, and I fear that they might kill me.”

28:34 “My brother Aaron is more eloquent than I; so send him with me as a supporter to vouch for me. I fear that they will denounce me as a liar.”

28:35 He [Allah] said: “We will strengthen your arm with your brother and We will give you authority; so that they will not touch you. By Our Signs, you and those who follow you will be the victors.”

28:36 But when Moses came to them with Our Clear Signs, they said: “This is only faked sorcery and we never heard of this among our forefathers.”

28:37 Moses then said: “My Lord knows better him who brings the guidance from Him, and him who will have the reward of the ultimate abode. The wrongdoers shall never prosper.”

A verse previously identified as perhaps referring to the Tower of Babel.

28:38 Pharaoh then said: “O my dignitaries, I did not know that you had any god but me. So kindle for me, O Haman, a fire upon the clay and build me a tower that I might behold the God of Moses. I really think he is a liar.”

28:39 And he and his troops waxed proud in the land unjustly, and thought that they will not be returned to Us.

28:40 Then We seized him and his troops and cast them into the sea; so behold what was the end of the wrongdoers!

Adding insult to injury:

28:41 And We made them leaders calling to the Fire; and on the Day of Resurrection (Judgement Day), they will not be supported.

28:42 And We pursued them in this world with a curse, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the despised.

Why God gave Moses “the Book”:

28:43 We have given Moses the Book, after We had destroyed the former generations, to serve as examples to mankind and as guidance and mercy, in order that they may remember well.

Moses Uninterrupted I

This long variation of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in Surah Taha, a word for which there is no translation, is a long meandering mishmash of what has already appeared, with a few additional oddities to keep things interesting. One of these peculiarities is Revelation 20:59 where Moses sets “the Day of the Feast” as the time and place he will challenge Pharaoh’s magicians. It all starts with God asking Muhammad if he has heard the story of Moses.

20:9 Has the story of Moses reached you?

20:10 When he saw a fire, he said to his people: “Stay. I see a fire. Perhaps I can bring you a lighted torch therefrom or find guidance by the fire.”

20:11 Then, when he came to it, a voice called out: “O Moses,

20:12 “I am truly your Lord; so take off your shoes, you are in the holy valley, Tuwa.

20:13 “And I have chosen you; so listen to what is being revealed.

20:14 “I am truly Allah; there is no god but I; so worship Me and perform the prayer for my Remembrance.

20:15 “Surely, the Hour is coming – but I keep it almost hidden – so that each soul may be rewarded for its work.

20:16 “Let no one who does not believe and follows his own desires, bar you from it lest you perish.

20:17 “And what is that in your right hand, O Moses?”

20:18 He said: “It is my staff. I lean on it and I beat leaves for my sheep with it and I have other uses for it.”

20:19 He (Allah) said: “Cast it down, O Moses.”

20:20 So he cast it down, and lo and behold, it was a serpent, sliding.

20:21 He (Allah) said: "Pick it up and do not fear; We shall restore it to its original condition.

20:22 "And press your hand to your side; it will come out white, without blemish, as another sign,

20:23 "That We may show you some of our Greatest Signs.

20:24 "Go to Pharaoh; for he has transgressed."

20:25 He said: "Lord open (literally, expand) my breast for me,

20:26 "And make my task easy for me.

20:27 "And unravel the knot of my tongue.

20:28 "That they may understand my words.

20:29 "And give me, from my own family, a supporter (literally, a minister),

20:30 "Aaron, my brother.

20:31 "And increase through him my strength.

20:32 "And associate him with me in my task.

20:33 "So that we may glorify you;

20:34 "And remember you often.

20:35 "You have surely been observant of us."

20:36 He (Allah) said: "You have been granted your request, O Moses.

20:37 "And We have favoured you another time.

20:38 "When We revealed to your mother a revelation [saying]:

20:39 "'Put him in a chest and cast him into the river. The river will then cast him off on the shore, and he will be taken by an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his. And I bestowed upon you a love from Me, so that you may be reared before My Eyes.

20:40 "When your sister went and said: 'Shall I tell you about one who will take charge of him (that is, will nurse him)?' So We turned you over to your mother, that she may rejoice and not grieve. Then you killed a living soul, but We delivered

you from anguish; and We tried you repeatedly; so you stayed years among the people of Midian. Then you came as decreed, O Moses.

20:41 "And I chose you for myself.

20:42 "Go, then, you and your brother, with My Signs, and do not tire of remembering Me.

20:43 "Go forth to Pharaoh; for he has surely transgressed.

20:44 "Speak to him gently, that perchance he may take heed or fear."

20:45 They said: "Our Lord, we fear that he may hasten to do us harm, or transgress."

20:46 He (Allah) said: "Do not fear. Surely I am with you hearing and seeing.

20:47 "So go forth to him and say: 'We are your Lord's Messengers; so send the Children of Israel along with us and do not torture them. We have brought you a sign from your Lord. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance.'"

20:48 "It has been revealed to us [Moses and Aaron] that punishment shall afflict who disbelieves and turns back."

20:49 He (Pharaoh) said: "Who, then, is your Lord, O Moses?"

20:50 He (Moses) said: "Our Lord is He who gave everything its nature, then guided it."

20:51 (Pharaoh) said: "What about the former generations?"

20:52 (Moses) said: "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Book. My Lord neither errs nor forgets."

20:53 He who made the earth a bed for you, and opened routes for you in it, and sent down water from the sky; from it we bring forth diverse pairs of plants.

20:54 Eat and pasture your cattle. In that there are signs for people of understanding.

20:55 From it We have created you, and into it We shall return you, and from it We shall raise you a second time.

20:56 And We have shown him (Pharaoh) all Our Signs, but he denied them and refused [to believe].

20:57 He (Pharaoh) said: "Have you come, Moses, to drive us out of our land by means of your sorcery?"

20:58 "We shall bring you similar sorcery; so make an appointment between us and you, which neither we nor you shall break, in a central place."

20:59 He (Moses) said: "Your appointment is set for the day of the Feast, so let the people be gathered together before noon."⁵¹

20:60 Pharaoh turned away and gathered [his men] of guile, then came along.

20:61 Moses said to them: "Woe to you. Do not lie about Allah lest He should destroy you with punishment. Indeed, he who lies shall fail."

20:62 So, they disagreed among themselves with respect to their affairs and conferred secretly.

20:63 They said: "Those are the two sorcerers who want to drive you out of your land with their sorcery and put an end to your ideal tradition.

20:64 "So gather your guile and then come forward in your battle array; for today he who has the upper hand shall prosper."

20:65 They said: "O Moses, either you cast down, or we will be the first to cast down."

20:66 He said: "You had better cast down"; and behold, their ropes and staff appeared to him, by reason of their sorcery, to glide.

20:67 So, Moses felt apprehensive within himself.

⁵¹ "The object of Pharaoh was this: 'Once the sorcerers are able to transform the staffs and ropes into serpents, the entire effect of the miracle performed by Moses would disappear from the people's minds. That was exactly to Moses' advantage, who suggested that it was no good fixing an ordinary day or place for the purpose. The Day of the Feast was at hand. People would flock on that occasion from all corners of the empire. Therefore, the encounter should be held in the open so that all might witness it, and in the day time so that everyone should be able to see it clearly.'" *Moududi*

20:68 We (Allah) said: "Do not be afraid, you certainly have the upper hand.

20:69 "Cast down what is in your right hand and it will swallow what they have faked. They have only faked the guile of a magician, and the magician will never prosper wherever he goes."

20:70 Then the magicians fell down prostrate. They said: "We believe [now] in the Lord of Aaron and Moses."

(Revelations 20:71-73 was quoted earlier in *Moses and Pharaoh's Magicians*.)

20:74 For him who comes to his Lord, as a wicked sinner, is Hell, where he neither dies nor lives.

20:75 But those who come to him as believers, who have done good works will have the highest ranks;

20:76 Gardens of Eden, beneath which rivers flow, dwelling therein forever. That is the reward of him who purifies himself.

20:77 And We revealed to Moses (saying): "Set out at night with My servants and strike for them a dry path in the sea, not fearing to be overtaken nor dreading anything."

20:78 Then Pharaoh pursued them with his troops and so they (Pharaoh's troops) were overwhelmed by the water.

20:79 Pharaoh thus led his people astray and did not guide them rightly.

20:80 O Children of Israel, We have delivered you from your enemy and We made a covenant with you on the right side of the Mount, and sent down to you the manna and quails.

20:81 Eat of the good things We have provided you with, but do not be excessive therein, lest My Wrath descent upon you. Those upon whom my wrath descends shall be ruined.

20:82 I am, indeed, All-Forgiving unto him who repents, does the righteous deed and is well-guided.

Moses Uninterrupted II

Surah 26, *The Poets*, contains the second-longest uninterrupted story of Moses' meeting with Pharaoh and the aftermath. It is mostly, to quote Yogi Berra, *déjà vu* all over again. What follows include perplexing revelations about driving people out of gardens and springs, treasures and such. Most notable is the disclosure that Moses and Pharaoh matter-of-factly discussed who had committed the greater crime: Moses by slaying an Egyptian or Pharaoh by enslaving the Hebrews.

26:10 When Your Lord called Moses: "Go forth to the wrongdoing people;

26:11 "The people of Pharaoh; will they not fear God?"

26:12 He said: "Lord, I fear that they will denounce me as a liar;

26:13 "And my chest would be constricted and my tongue will not be loosed. So, send for Aaron.

26:14 "And they accuse me of guilt (slaying the Egyptian, whom Moses saw smite an Israelite); so I fear they might kill me."

26:15 He said: "Never; so go both of you with Our Signs; We are with you listening.

26:16 "So go both of you to Pharaoh and tell him: 'We are the Messengers of the Lord of the Worlds';

26:17 "'So send with us the Children of Israel.'"

26:18 He (Pharaoh) said: "Did we not raise you (Moses) among us as a child, and you lingered among us for many years of your life?

26:19 "And you committed the crime you committed, being one of the thankless?"

26:20 He said: "Indeed, I did it then while I was one of the perverse.

26:21 "So I fled from you when I feared you. Then my Lord granted me wisdom and made me one of the Messengers.

26:22 "And this is a grace you reproach me with, having enslaved the Children of Israel."

26:23 Pharaoh said: "And what is the Lord of the Worlds?"

26:24 He (Moses) said: "The Lord of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them, if you have any kind of certainty."

26:25 He (Pharaoh) said to those around him: "Do you not hear?"

26:26 He (Moses) said: "Your Lord and the Lord of your Fathers."

26:27 He (Pharaoh) said: "Surely your Messenger who has been sent forth to you is truly mad."

26:28 He (Moses) said: "The Lord of the East and the West and what is between them, if only you understand."

26:29 He said: "If you take a god other than me (Pharaoh), I will certainly make you a prisoner."

26:30 He (Moses) said: "Even if I should bring you something manifest?"

26:31 He (Pharaoh) said: "Bring it, then, if you are truthful."

26:32 Then he cast his staff down, and behold, it was a manifest serpent.

26:33 And he held out his hand, and, behold, it appeared white to the onlookers.

26:34 He (Pharaoh) said to the dignitaries around him: "This man is, indeed, a cunning sorcerer,

26:35 "He wants to drive you out of your land by his sorcery; so what do you command?"

26:36 They said: "Leave him and his brother alone for a while and send out to the cities summoning agents,

26:37 "To bring you every cunning sorcerer."

26:38 And so the sorcerers were gathered together for an appointment on a fixed day.

26:39 And it was said to the people: "Will you come together?

26:40 "So that we might watch the sorcerers, if they should be the winners."

26:41 So when the sorcerers came they said to Pharaoh: "Will we have a wage, if we are the winners?"

26:42 He said: "Yes, and you shall be, then, among those favoured."

26:43 Moses said to them: "Cast down what you wish to cast down."

26:44 So, they cast their ropes and staff and said: "By the might of Pharaoh, we shall be the winners."

26:45 Then, Moses cast down his staff and, behold, it swallowed forthwith what they had simulated.

26:46 Then the sorcerers fell on their faces prostrate.

26:47 They said: "We believe now in the Lord of the Worlds;

26:48 "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

Revelation 26:49 quoted earlier in *Moses and Pharaoh's Magicians*.

26:49 He (Pharaoh) said: "You have believed before I gave you leave. He (Moses) is indeed your chief, who taught you sorcery, and so you will learn. I shall cut off your hands and feet alternately and will crucify you all."

26:50 They said: "No harm; we are returning unto our Lord.

26:51 "We hope that our Lord will forgive our sins, as we are the first believers."

26:52 And We revealed to Moses: "Go forth with My servants at night; for you are being followed."

26:53 Then Pharaoh sent out summoning agents to all the cities;

26:54 "These, indeed, are a small band;

26:55 "And they are enraging us;

26:56 "And we are all on our guard."

26:57 Then, We drove them out of gardens and springs;

26:58 And treasures and a noble abode.

26:59 That is how We bequeathed them to the Children of Israel.

26:60 So they followed them at sunrise.

26:61 Then when the two hosts (*armies*) sighted each other, the companions of Moses said: "We shall be overtaken."

26:62 He said: "Never; my Lord is with me, He will guide me."

26:63 So, We revealed to Moses: "Strike the sea with your staff;" whereupon it split, so that each part was like a huge mountain.

26:64 And there We brought the others closer.

26:65 And We delivered Moses and those with him, all together.

26:66 Then, We drowned the others.

26:67 Surely, in that is a sign; yet most of them were not believers.

26:68 Your Lord is surely the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

Moses Uninterrupted – Six Short Variations

43:46 We have in fact sent Moses with Our Signs to Pharaoh and his dignitaries. He said: "I am the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds."

43:47 But when he brought them Our Signs, lo they laughed at him.

43:48 Yet, We did not show them a sign but it was greater than its counterpart. Then We seized them with punishment, that perchance they might retract.

43:49 And they said (to Moses): "O Sorcerer, call upon your Lord for us, by the pledge He made with you. We shall, then, be well guided."

43:50 But when We lifted the punishment from them, behold, they broke their pledge.

43:51 And Pharaoh called out to his people: "O my people, do I not have the kingdom of Egypt, and these rivers flow beneath me? Do you not see, then?"

43:52 "Or, am I not better than this weakling who cannot speak clearly?"

43:53 "Why, then, no bracelets of gold were cast down upon him or angels came with him in company?"

43:54 Thus, he incited his people and so they obeyed him. They were indeed a sinful people.

43:55 Then when they roused Our anger, We wrecked vengeance upon them and drowned them all.

43:56 And so, We made them a people gone by, and an example to the others.

37:114 And We have favoured Moses and Aaron;

37:115 And delivered them and their people from the great calamity.

37:116 And We supported them, and so they were the victors.

37:117 And We gave them both the clarifying Book.

37:118 And We guided them unto the Straight Path.

37:119 And We left them both for future generations;

37:120 "Peace be upon Moses and Aaron."

37:121 Thus We reward the beneficent.

37:122 They are indeed among our believing servants.

79:15 Have you heard Moses' story?

79:16 When His Lord called out to him in the sacred valley, Tuwa?

79:17 Go forth to Pharaoh; indeed he has waxed arrogant.

79:18 Say: "Do you wish to be cleansed?

79:19 "And that I might lead you to your Lord, so that you might fear [Him]?"

79:20 Thereupon he (Moses) showed him the great sign⁵²;

79:21 But he (Pharaoh) denounced and disobeyed.

79:22 Then he turned back striving.

⁵² "Turning of the staff into a serpent." *Moududi*

79:23 He summoned (his people) and proclaimed.

79:24 He said: "I am truly your supreme Lord."

79:25 Then Allah seized him with the punishment of the last world and the first.

79:26 Surely, there is in that a lesson to him who fears.

The full story as told in five revelations:

23:45 Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our Signs and a decisive authority;

23:46 To Pharaoh and his dignitaries; but they were an arrogant people.

23:47 And so they said: "Shall we believe in two mortals like ourselves, while their own people are serving us?"

23:48 Then they denounced them both as liars, and so they were destroyed.

23:49 And We gave Moses the Book, that perchance they may be guided.

The full story in only three revelations:

51:38 And in Moses, [is a sign] when We sent him forth to Pharaoh with the manifest authority.

51:39 He (Pharaoh) turned away with his retinue and said: "A sorcerer and a madman."

51:40 So, We seized him and his hosts (*armies*) and cast them into the sea; for he was blameworthy.

The full story summarized in two revelations:

25:35 We have indeed brought Moses the Book and appointed his brother Aaron with him as minister.

25:36 Then We said: "Go forth to the people who denounced our signs as lies"; and so We destroyed them fully.

It is a wonder we find so many Egyptians alive today.

Moses 2

Three more stories about Moses, for those who, like Allah, can't get enough of the guy that could not be neatly fitted into the Koran's Exodus narrative.

Moses vs. the Bad Samaritan

The Bad Samaritan story is somewhat atypical of tales from the Bible that have made into the Koran in one respect: the transposition is in both place and time. The Good Samaritan of the New Testament becomes the Bad Samaritan of the Koran during the Exodus. The Samaritans emerged as "an ethnic and religious community distinct from other Levant peoples... after the Assyrian conquest of the Israelite Kingdom of Israel in approximately 721 BCE" (Wiki) at least two thousand years after Moses. The idea that a Samaritan would be part of the Hebrew exodus out of Egypt is not realistic to say the least. The story of Moses and the Bad Samaritan reads a bit like a play from antiquity, so I will present it that way (the Koran as a play—now, there's an idea!). It begins with God asking Moses what he is doing, rushing headlong ahead of his people?

Allah: 20:83 "What has led you to go ahead of your people, O Moses"

Moses: 20:84 He said: "Those people are on my tracks, so I have hastened towards You, O Lord, that you may be well-pleased.

Allah: 20:85 He said: "We have tried your people after you left and the Samaritan has led them astray."

Hearing this, Moses decides to go back and give his people a piece of his mind.

20:86 So, Moses went back to his people furious and sorrowful. He said: "O my people, has not your Lord made a fair promise to you? Has the promise, then, been protracted for you? Or did you want your Lord's anger to overtake you, and so you broke your promise to me?"

It was all the Samaritan's fault.

The People: 20:87 They said: "We have not broken the promise to you by our choice, but we have been forced to carry loads of the people's finery and so we threw them away, as the Samaritan also did."

That finery was obviously not thrown away but used by the Samaritan to make that infuriating calf of gold.

Allah: 20:88 Then he produced for them a calf – a mere body which lowed; and so they said: "This is your god and the god of Moses, but he has forgotten." 20:89 Do they not see that it does not return any reply to them and does not have the power to harm or profit them?

Aaron: 20:90 Aaron had said to them before: "O my people, you have been tried by it and your Lord is truly the Compassionate. Follow me, then and obey my order."

The People: 20:91 They said: "We will not stop worshipping it, till Moses comes back to us."

Moses seizes his brother by the beard.

Moses: 20:92 He said: "O Aaron, what prevented you, when you saw them going astray, 20:93 "From following me. Have you, then, disobeyed my order?"

Aaron: 20:94 He said: "Son of my mother, do not seize me by the beard or the head, I feared that you would say: 'You have caused division among the Children of Israel and did not observe my words.'"

Moses then turns his attention to the Samaritan.

Moses: 20:95 He said: "What is the matter with you, O Samaritan?"

Samaritan: 20:96 He said: "I perceived what you did not perceive, and so I grasped a handful of dust from the messenger's (Gabriel⁵³) trail and threw it down. That is what my soul prompted me to do."

⁵³ In Islamic traditions, God did not mean for the home of His greatest Messenger to be mostly a vast desert of sand. This was the Devil's doing. After Allah created the heavens and the earth, He noticed something was missing; that something was sand. He sent His do-it-all angel, Gabriel, with a bag of sand to spread evenly over His creation. As Gabriel was flying over present-day Arabia, the Devil came up behind him and

Moses: 20:97 He said: "Begone; it shall be given you in your lifetime to say: 'Do not touch'⁵⁴ and you shall be given a promise which you shall not break. Look then at your god, whom you continued to worship. We shall burn him; then We shall scatter his ashes in the sea."

Moses (or Allah): 20:98 Surely, your God is only Allah; there is no god but He. He has knowledge of all things.

Allah: 20:99 That is how We relate to you some of the stories of things past; and We have imparted to you a reminder from Us (this Qur'an). 20:100 Whoever turns away from it will bear a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection; Abiding therein (in this state) forever. And what a wretched burden they will bear on the Day of Resurrection!

Moses vs. Karoon, a.k.a. Korah

In the Bible (*Numbers* 16, I-35), Korah is a leader of the Israelites challenging the leadership of Moses and Aaron and who, with his household and followers, is swallowed up by the earth for his act of defiance.

Numbers 16:33 "They went down alive into Sheol with all that belonged to them. The earth closed over them, and they vanished from the assembly."

In the Koran, the defiant Korah becomes the wealthy and ostentatious Karoon. The real story of Korah, a.k.a. Karoon, as was revealed by God to Muhammad, as well as the lesson to be learned:

28:76 Now Karoon belonged to the clan of Moses⁵⁵, then he lorded it over them. We have given him treasures, the keys of

ripped open his bag, causing most of the sand to drop onto the Peninsula. Therefore, what the Samaritan threw down was probably a handful of sand.

⁵⁴ "The words ('Do not touch') show that he was not only made an outcast for life but was made to inform the people himself that he was an outcast. We conclude from this that either he was inflicted with leprosy as a scourge by Allah; or the punishment inflicted on him was that, being a moral leper." *Moududi*

⁵⁵ In another remembrance of mass murders, Karoon is an Egyptian official.

29:38 And [remember] 'Ad and Thamud. It has become clear to you from their dwellings [what their fate was]. Satan embellished for them their deeds, barring them from the Path, while they were clear-sighted.

29:39 And [remember] Karoon, Pharaoh and Haman. Moses came to them with the clear proofs, but they waxed proud in the land and they did not outstrip Us.

which would weigh down the mighty band. When his people said to him: "Do not exult; Allah does not like the exultant;

28:77 "But seek, thanks to what Allah gave you, the Hereafter, and do not forget your portion of the herebelow. Be charitable, as Allah has been charitable to you, and do not seek corruption in the land; for Allah does not like the seekers of corruption."

28:78 He said: "What I have been given is due to knowledge I possess." Did he not know that Allah has destroyed, before him, generations of men stronger than he and richer? However, the criminals shall not be questioned regarding their sins.

28:79 And so he went out unto his people in his finery. Those who desire the present life said: "Would that we possessed the like of what Karoon has been given. He is indeed a very fortunate man."

28:80 But those possessed of knowledge said: "Woe betide you; the Reward of Allah is better for him who believes and acts righteously, and that is not accorded except to the steadfast."

28:81 Then, We caused the earth to cave in on him and his household; and so he had no company to support him against Allah; and he was not one of the winners.

28:82 And those who had wished they were in his place yesterday were saying: "No wonder that Allah increases the provision to whomever He wishes of His servants and restricts it. Had Allah not been Gracious to us, He would have caused the earth to cave in on us. No wonder that the unbelievers will never prosper."

28:83 That is the Last Abode; We assign it to those who do not desire exaltation on earth or corruption; and the happy outcome belongs to the God-Fearing.

29:40 Each, We seized for his sin. Upon some We loosed a squall of pebbles, some were overwhelmed with the Cry, some we caused the ground to cave in under and some we drowned. Allah did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves.

28:84 Whoever comes up with a good deed will receive a reward better than it, but whoever comes up with an evil [should know] that the evildoers will not be rewarded except for what they have done.

In the Old Testament, Korah, his household, and his followers are killed for challenging Moses and his brother's authority; in the Koran, Karoon and his household are suffocated under tons of sand because he flaunted his wealth. Wealth, who has it, and what they do with it is a preoccupation, almost an obsession of Allah's. Just being rich is reason enough for God to cause your complete destruction, as He explains in the following revelations sent prior to Karoon becoming an example of what not to do with your wealth.

28:58 And how many a city We have destroyed that had grown prodigal in its living⁵⁶. There are its dwellings, left uninhabited after they were gone, except for a few. We became the inheritors.

On the Road with Moses and Khidr

Moses and Khidr is about an expedition to the Red Sea during which Moses would be joined by a mysterious fellow by the name of Khidr. During their time together, they encounter a boy whom Khidr was to kill without any hesitation or apparent provocation. The story of Moses and Khidr begins with Moses determined to find where out the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez meet. Why Moses would want to do this is not mentioned.

18:60 And [remember] when Moses said to his servant (he is believed to be Joshua): "I will not give up until I reach the confluence of the two seas (the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez in the Red Sea), or else walk on for years."

⁵⁶ Allah is not into trivial accusations; neither are Islamic critics of Western civilization, who would argue that a civilization that produces so much wealth is, by God's definition, an evil civilization that must be destroyed. In the words of Hassan al Banna, the Egyptian founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, a fraternity that has spawned a global web of Islamist movements, parties and terrorist groups:

Doomed be the Western civilization which follows us at every step. It is constantly at war with us. It started an awful battle, and this battle it is fighting with such bewitching and enchanting objects as knowledge, wealth, civilization, plans and politics, luxury goods and articles of enjoyment and pleasure, with which we have not thus far been familiar.

18:61 Then, when they reached their confluence, they forgot their fish, and thus it slipped into the sea unhindered.

18:62 But when they had passed on, he said to his servant: "Bring us our food; we have been exposed in our travels to a lot of fatigue."

18:63 He (the servant) said: "Do you see; when we repaired to the rock, I forgot the fish. It was only the Devil who made me forget it; and so it slipped away into the sea in a strange way."

18:64 He (Moses) said: "This is what we were seeking"; and so they turned back retracing their steps.

On their way back they encountered Khidr, a servant of Allah with the ability to know God's mind.

18:65 And so they found one of Our servants whom We had accorded a mercy of our Own and had imparted to him knowledge from Ourselves.

What happened next requires little or no explanation.

18:66 Moses said to him (Khidr): "Shall I follow you so that you may teach me of the good you have been taught."

18:67 He (Khidr) said: "You will not be able to bear with me."

18:68 "And how will you bear with what you have no knowledge of?"

18:69 He (Moses) said: "You will find me, Allah willing, patient and I will not disobey any orders of yours."

18:70 He said: "If you follow me, do not ask me about anything, until I make mention of it."

18:71 So, they set out; but no sooner had they boarded the ship that he made a hole in it. He (Moses) said: "Have you made a hole in it so as to drown its passengers? You have indeed done a grievous thing."

18:72 He (Khidr) said: "Did I not tell you that you will not be able to bear with me?"

18:73 He (Moses) said: "Do not reproach me for what I have forgotten, and do not overburden me with hardship."

18:74 Then they departed; but when they met a boy, he (Khidr) killed him. Moses said: "Have you killed an innocent person who has not killed another? You have surely committed a horrible deed."

18:75 He (Khidr) said: "Did I not tell you that you will not be able to bear with me?"

18:76 He (Moses) said: "If I ask about anything after this, do not keep company with me. You have received an excuse from me."

18:77 So they went on, until they reached the inhabitants of a town. Whereupon they asked its inhabitants for food, but they refused to offer them hospitality. Then, they found in it a wall about to fall down, and so he (Khidr) straightened it. He (Moses) said: "Had you wished, you could have been paid for that."

After they reached the town mentioned in Revelation 18:77, Khidr explained why he sunk a ship, drowning everyone on board, and why he killed a seemingly innocent boy.

18:78 He (Khidr) said: "This is where we part company. [Now] I will tell you the interpretation of that which you could not bear patiently with.

The reason Khidr gave for sinking the ship appears, on the surface (no pun intended), to justify taking the lives of the innocent if it means denying your enemy a sought-after prize.

18:79 "As for the ship, it belonged to some poor fellows who worked upon the sea. I wanted to damage it, because, on their trail, there was a king, who was seizing every ship by force.

As for the killing of the boy:

18:80 "As for the boy, his parents were believers; so we feared that he might overwhelm them with oppression and unbelief.

18:81 "So we wanted that their Lord might replace him with someone better in purity and closer to mercy.

To paraphrase Khidr or to paraphrase God: the boy was killed because we feared he would convince his believing parents to abandon Islam. We killed him so his parents might have another child who would not

abandon the path of Allah and condemn his parents to the torments of hell by association. For Allah, protecting the believers by killing unbelievers with whom they might come into contact and who might inadvertently lead them astray, even their own children, is an act of mercy. The boy that Khidr murdered may not have been actively trying to convert his parents, but his normal familial contact meant his parents were regularly exposed to other beliefs and points of view. For an insecure god, this was a dangerous thing and ample justification for murder.

During his time with Moses, Khidr did what most of us would consider a good deed. Remember the verse about fixing a wall but not requesting payment? Below is the reason Khidr did not request compensation:

18:82 "And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphaned boys in the town; and beneath it was a treasure for both of them. Their father was a righteous man; so your Lord wanted them to come of age and dig up the treasure, as a mercy from the Lord. What I did was not of my own will. This is the interpretation of what you could not bear with patiently."

Khidr is assumed to be alive and well, continuing to guide the perplexed and those who invoke his name. Some believe he is an angel who functions as a guide to help those that seek God; others believe he is a perfect Wali, meaning a Saint or the one whom God has taken as a friend.

Saul

In the Bible, Saul was proclaimed king by God after He received a request from the prophet Samuel. In the Koran, the request was made by Moses to an anonymous prophet.

2:246 Have you not considered the leaders of the Children of Israel who after Moses said to one of their Prophets: "Set up a king for us and we will fight in the Way of Allah." He replied: "What if you refuse to fight when you are ordered to fight?" They said: "How could we refuse to fight when we have been driven, along with our children, from our homes?" But when they were ordered to fight, they turned away except for a few of them. And Allah knows the wrongdoers.

2:247 Then their Prophet said to them: "Allah has set up Saul to be your King." They replied: "How can he be given the kingship over us when we have a better right to it, and when he is not rich enough?" He said to them: "Allah has chosen him [to rule] over you and caused him to have greater knowledge and better stature. Allah bestows His Sovereignty on whom He wills. He is Munificent and All-Knowing."

In bestowing the kingship upon Saul, Allah revealed some of the contents of the Ark of the Covenant.

2:248 Their Prophet also said to them: "The proof of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquility from your Lord and the relics of Moses and the family of Aaron borne by the angels. In this there is a proof for you if you are real believers."

David and Goliath

God's revelations about the encounter between David and Goliath are brief and lacking details such as the weapon used by David to slay the giant. In the Bible, Goliath is the champion of the Philistine army; in the Koran, he is the leader of an army of unbelievers. It begins with Saul leading his army against Goliath and his forces; before he could engage

them, however, Allah further reduced the number of fighting men by submitting them to a loyalty test in the form of quenching their thirst.

2:249 And when Saul set out with [his] troops he said: "Allah will test you with a river. He who drinks from it is no part of me (is not one of my followers), but he who does not drink from it is part of me, except for him who scoops up with his hand a handful from it." They drank from it except for a few of them; but when he, along with those who believed, crossed it, they said: "Today we are unable to face Goliath and his troops." But those of them who believed that they would meet Allah said: "How many a small band has defeated a large one by Allah's Leave." Allah is with the steadfast.

2:250 And when they confronted Goliath and his troops, they said: "Lord, fill us with forbearance, enable us to stand fast, and help us against the unbelievers."

2:251 And so they defeated them by Allah's Leave. David killed Goliath and Allah bestowed on him the kinship and the wisdom, and taught him what he pleased. Had Allah not caused some people to repel others, the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah bestows his Favours on all mankind.

2:252 These are Allah's revelations. We recite them to you (*O Muhammad*) in all truth, and surely you are one of the Messengers.

David

David's story in the Koran is short, mostly contained in Surah 38 with a title of three symbolic letters, 'Sâd', about which Fakhry is silent. David is famous in the Bible for sleeping with the wife of a soldier in his army and, when she becomes pregnant, arranging for her husband, Uriah, to be killed in battle. This is not mentioned in the Koran. In Allah's revelations about the prophets, they are all, not unlike the Pope, considered infallible in matters of faith. His Messengers are also mostly free from any sin, although, as in the story of David, God would forgive them for minor transgressions which were mainly in their own minds. The story of David begins shortly after the Meccan audience, to whom Muhammad was speaking, taunt him with a specious request that God hasten their share of the punishment.

38:16 They say: "Our Lord, hasten for us our share before the Day of Reckoning."

38:17 Bear patiently with what they say (O Muhammad) and remember Our Servant, David, the mighty one; he was a true penitent.

38:18 We have subjected the mountains together with him, to glorify in the evening and at daybreak;

38:19 And the birds were mustered; all obedient to him (David).

38:20 And we strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and the decisive speech.

Two brothers, labelled enemies by Allah but claiming to want to be guided "to the Straight Path" (Revelation 38:22), raided David's sanctuary for the sole purpose of getting him to settle a dispute about ewes that even the densest, but morally aware, individual could have resolved.

38:21 Have you heard the news of the enemy when they scaled the sanctuary?

38:22 When they entered upon David and he was afraid of them. They said: "Do not fear. We are two adversaries, one of us encroached on the other unjustly; so judge between us with justice and do not transgress, and guide us to the Straight Path.

38:23 "This is my brother, who has ninety-nine ewes and I have only one. So he said; 'Let me take charge of it,' and he overcame me in the argument."

Was the owner of ninety-nine ewes within his rights? The answer is obvious, but David worried it was a test from God. Not taking any chances, he begged forgiveness from Allah after giving the correct answer.

38:24 He⁵⁷ said: "He has wronged you by asking for your ewes on top of his ewes. Indeed, many partners have encroached one on the other, except for those who believe and do the righteous deeds; and how few they are?" David thought that We had tried him, so he asked forgiveness from His Lord and fell down on his knees and repented.

Even if it was all in David's head, God, of course, forgave him, perhaps because of their close relationship.

38:25 So, We forgave him that. Indeed, he has a close relationship with Us and a fair recourse.

A close relationship or not, Allah had a warning for David.

38:26 O David, We have appointed you a vicegerent on earth; so judge justly among men and do not follow your fancy, lest it lead you away from the Path of Allah. Indeed those who lead others away from the Path of Allah will have a terrible punishment, because they have forgotten the Day of Reckoning.

The Psalms

It is difficult to imagine that the same deity is the inspiration for both the Psalms and the Koran since the style and tone are so different. Allah mentions the Psalms on at least three occasions. The first is part of a trio of verses where He reminds Muhammad of all the Messengers

⁵⁷ "David, possible reference to Nathan's report of a dispute he submitted to David. cf II, Samuel, 12." *Fakhry*

who came before him and that he is not guardian of the people He intends to torture.

4:163 We have revealed to you, as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes; and to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Salomon; and We gave David a Book (the zabûr, i.e., the psalms).

4:164 And [We sent forth] some Messengers We have already told you about, and some We have not told you about. And Allah spoke to Moses directly.

4:165 Messengers, who were bearers of good news (for the believers) and warners (to the unbelievers), so that mankind will have no plea against Allah, after the Messenger's coming. Allah is Mighty and Wise!

You may find the juxtaposition of revelations about the Psalms and Allah's casual attitude to torture to be significant.

17:54 Your Lord knows you best. If He pleases, He will have mercy on you, and if He pleases He will torture you. We have not sent you to be their guardian.

17:55 And your Lord knows best what is in the heavens and on earth. We bestowed on some of the Prophets more gifts than on the others, and We gave David the Psalms.

Allah revealed that, in the Psalms, He bequeathed life on Earth to His "righteous servants"; this is a promise He intends to keep upon restoring it—in other words, making Earth habitable once again after completely destroying it on Judgement Day.

21:104 The day when We will fold heaven like a scroll of writing, just as We began Our First creation, We shall bring it back – a promise [binding] on Us that We shall fulfil.

21:105 We have written in the Psalms that, after the Reminder, My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.

The Psalms was not the only bounty Allah bestowed on David.

34:10 We have given David a bounty from Us; "O mountains, proclaim the praise with him; and you birds", and We softened the iron for him.

34:11 "Fashion ample coats of arms and measure well the links; and do you all the righteous deeds. I am fully observant of what you do."

David and Solomon Together

21:78 And David and Solomon, when they gave judgement, regarding the tillage, when the people's sheep wandered therein by night; and We bore witness to their judgement.⁵⁸

21:79 And so We made Solomon understand it, and to each We gave judgment and knowledge. And with David, We subjected the mountains and the birds so as to glorify God (*instead of Me?*); and that We accomplished.

21:80 And We taught him the craft of making coats of mail for you, so as to protect you from your own might. Are you, then, thankful?

21:81 And to Solomon We subjected the stormy wind blowing at his command towards the land which We have blessed, and We have knowledge of everything.

21:82 And some of the devils dived for him and did other work besides that and We were watching them.

⁵⁸ "There is no mention of this event in the Bible nor in the Jewish literature. According to the Muslim commentators, it happened like this: The goats of one person entered into the field of another person at night. The latter brought his complaint to Prophet David who decided that the strayed goats should be given to the owner of the field. Prophet Solomon, however, differed with this and opined that the goats should remain with the owner of the field up to the time that the former tilled and prepared the field as before. In regard to this Allah says, 'We led Solomon to the right decision' (Revelation 21:79). As regards the legal aspect of the matter we cannot say with certainty what is the Islamic law in such a case nor is there any Tradition of the Holy Prophet to explain or support it. That is why the jurists have differed about it." *Moududi*

Solomon

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

Most of the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba is told in Surah 27, *The Ants* – yes, there is a verse about ants, and talking ones no less.

27:15 And We gave David and Solomon knowledge. They said: “Praise be to Allah Who preferred us over many of His believing servants.”

Solomon’s people could also talk to birds.

27:16 Solomon inherited David, and he said: “O people we have been taught the speech of birds and have been given part of everything. This is indeed the manifest bounty.

Both birds and the jinn served in Solomon’s armies. When this mass of men, jinn and birds were about to trample over some ants, God held them in check until the ants could find safety.

27:17 And Solomon’s troops, jinn, men and birds, were mustered and duly held in check.

27:18 Until they reached an ants’ hill, when an ant said: “O ants, enter your dwellings, lest Solomon and his troops crush you, without noticing it.”

The ants’ words reminded Solomon to be grateful for small mercies.

27:19 Then he (Solomon) smiled, laughing at its words, and said: “Lord, inspire me to be thankful for Your Blessing, with which You blessed me and my parents, and to do the right pleasing to You. Admit me, by Your Mercy, into the company of Your righteous servants.”

Back at the palace, Solomon couldn’t locate his hoopoe, a colourful bird that is found in Africa and Eurasia.

27:20 He inspected the birds, then said: “Why do I not see the hoopoe? Or is it gone away with the absent ones⁵⁹?

⁵⁹ “The birds that were on an expedition with the troops of men and jinns.” *Moududi*

The hoopoe better have a good reason for being absent or he could be dinner. He did, as his flight plan came from God Himself, the “manifest authority” in the following verse:

27:21 “I will punish it grievously or slaughter it, unless it brings me a manifest authority.”

The hoopoe returned with news of a land ruled by a woman.

27:22 He lingered not for long, and so it (the hoopoe) said: “I have learnt what you have not learnt and have brought from Sheba news which is certain.

27:23 “I have found a woman ruling over them and she has been given a share of everything and she has a great throne.

Not only that, the hoopoe reported, but the people of Sheba do not worship Allah. This must be Satan’s doing!

27:24 “I found her and her people prostrating themselves to the sun, instead of Allah, and Satan has embellished their actions, barring them from the Path. Therefore they are not well-guided;

27:25 “So that they may not prostrate themselves to Allah, Who brings out what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and knows what you conceal and what you reveal.”

Solomon didn’t believe the bird and asked it to deliver a letter, an ultimatum in effect, requesting the Queen’s presence⁶⁰.

27:26 Allah, there is no god but He, the Lord of the Great Throne.

27:27 He (Solomon) said: “We will see if you are telling the truth or are a liar.

27:28 “Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them; then turn away from them and see what they will give back in response.”

⁶⁰ In the Bible, the Queen of Sheba seeks out Solomon because of his reputed wisdom, although a rabbinical embellishment known as a *Midrash* has Solomon requesting the Queen come to his court after, as in the Koran, being informed by a bird of the existence of the kingdom of Sheba.

No sooner said than done.

27:29 She said (the Queen of Sheba): "O my dignitaries, a gracious letter has been delivered to me.

27:30 "It is from Solomon and it says: 'In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful,

27:31 "Do not rise against me, and come to me submissively.'"

The Queen of Sheba was gracious in labelling a letter which demanded that she, a Queen, come crawling to the sender. Fakhry explains in a footnote that this was the equivalent of insisting that the Queen of Sheba become a Muslim. What to do? The queen consulted her dignitaries.

27:32 She said: "O my dignitaries, give me your counsel in this, my affair. I will make no decision until you bear witness to me."

It's your call, was essentially her dignitaries' response.

27:33 They said: "We are endowed with force and great might, but the command is yours; so see what you will command."

The Queen decided to send Solomon a tribute to avoid appearing before him 'submissively'. Before doing so, she paused to reflect on what absolute rulers like her and Solomon do to a people when they enter a city.

27:34 She said: "When kings enter a city, they ruin it and reduce its proud inhabitants to subjection. Thus they will always do.

27:35 "I am sending them a gift and will see what the envoys will bring back."

Solomon was not interested in her money.

27:36 When [the emissary] came to Solomon, he said: "Are you supplying me with money? What Allah has given me is better than what He gave you. You are rather rejoicing in your gift.

Solomon threatened to invade and not only defeat the people of Sheba, but, like Allah, humiliate and demean them.

27:37 "Go back to them (the people of Sheba); for we shall array against them troops which they cannot resist and we shall drive them out of it degraded and abased."

Solomon then hit upon the idea of stealing the Queen's throne. A jinn by the name of 'Ifreet volunteered to steal it, and did so in the blink of an eye.

27:38 He said: "O dignitaries, which of you will bring me her throne, before they come forward submitting?"

27:39 A 'Ifreet of the jinn said: "I will bring it to you, before you rise from your seat, and I am indeed capable of it and faithful."

The jinn was true to his word; of course, Solomon knew who conjured up the throne and who to thank. Like David, he feared this to be a test from God.

27:40 He who had knowledge of the Book said: "I will bring it to you, before your glance returns to you." So when he (Solomon) saw it ensconced before him, he said: "This is a bounty from my Lord, to test me, whether I am grateful or ungrateful. He who gives thanks, only gives thanks to his own credit, and he who is ungrateful will find my Lord All Sufficient and Generous."

With the throne in his possession, Solomon decided to test the Queen—who obviously decided to accept his invitation—in her faith. If she recognized her disguised throne, it would mean the Queen of Sheba believed in Allah.

27:41 He said: "Disguise her throne for her, so that we might see whether she will be well-guided or will be one of those who are not well-guided."

27:42 When she arrived, it was said (to her): "Is your throne like this one?" She said: "It looks like it." "We (Solomon) were given the knowledge before her and were submissive."

Her hesitancy in identifying her throne seemed to confirm that the Queen did not bow before any man, not even God.

27:43 However, what she worshipped, apart from Allah, barred her; she was indeed one of the unbelieving people.

During her visit, the Queen of Sheba committed another faux pas that, when pointed out to her by Solomon, caused her to change her mind about Allah.

27:44 It was said to her: "Enter the mansion"; but when she saw it, she thought it was a deep pond, and she bared her legs. He (Solomon) said: "This is actually a mansion made of glass." She said: "Lord, I have wronged myself and have submitted, along with Solomon, to Allah the Lord of the Worlds."

The Queen might have seen the light, but her people did not, for Allah visited a punishment upon them reminiscent of the great flood.

34:15 For Sheba there also was a sign in their dwelling two gardens, to the right and the left: "Eat of your Lord's provision and give thanks to Him; a good land and an All-Forgiving Lord."

34:16 But they turned away; and so We loosed upon them the Overwhelming Flood, and We substituted for their two gardens another two gardens bearing bitter fruit and having fir trees and a few lotus trees.

34:17 Thus We penalized them for their disbelief; and do We ever penalize any but the unbeliever?

34:18 We established between them and between the cities, which we blessed, other visible cities, and We determined the measure of travel therein; "Travel therein for nights and days in perfect security."

34:19 Then they said: "Lord, prolong the stages between our travels. "They wronged themselves, so we reduced them to mere tales and tore them up utterly. Surely, there are in that signs for every steadfast and thankful man.

Why would God penalize humans for asking to extend their travel time? If that is why He utterly "tore them up" then the *personification of pettiness* is not adequate to describe Allah. The pettiest of gods was not above giving credit where credit was due; in this instance, it meant praising the devil for being a good judge of character.

34:20 And Iblis definitely proved right his opinion of them, and so they followed him, except for a group of believers.

34:21 Yet he had no authority over them; but that We might

distinguish him who believed in the Hereafter, from him who was in doubt regarding it. Your Lord is watchful over everything.

Solomon and the Light-Footed Horses

38:30 And We granted David, Solomon, a blessed servant. Indeed, he was penitent.

38:31 When the light-footed horses were presented to him in the evening,

38:32 He said: "I have preferred the love of earthly good to the mention of my Lord, till the sun disappeared behind the veil."

38:33 "Bring them back to me." Then he proceeded to wipe their shanks and necks.

38:34 And We tried Solomon and cast upon his throne a dead body⁶¹; then he repented.

38:35 He said: "Lord, forgive me and grant me a kingdom that no one after me will deserve; you are indeed the All-Giver."

38:36 So, We subjected the wind unto him, to blow at his command softly, wherever he wished;

38:37 And of the demons every builder and diver;

38:38 And others shackled in fetters.

38:39 "This is Our Bounty; so give or withhold without account."

38:40 And he has to Us a close relationship and a fair recourse.

Death

Solomon died watching the jinns that, as a punishment from God, were commanded to help build his famous temple. Others might not have noticed his passing had it not been for a worm gnawing at his staff which, when it broke, caused Solomon's dead body to fall over.

⁶¹ Did Allah forget that it was David who engineered the murder of Uriah?

34:14 When We decreed his death, nothing indicated to them that he was dead except an earth-worm gnawing away at his staff. Then, when he fell down, the jinn realized that, had they known the Unseen, they would not have continued in the demeaning punishment.

Job, Elijah, Ezekiel and Enoch

Job

Remember Job?

21:83 And [remember] Job, when he called upon his Lord saying: "Affliction has touched me and you are the Most Merciful of the Merciful."

21:84 And so, We answered him and lifted the affliction which he suffered; and We gave him his people and the like thereof along with them, as a mercy from Us and a Reminder to the worshippers.

In the Koran, Job's misfortunes are all Satan's doing.

38:41 And remember Our servant Job when he called out to his Lord: "Satan has visited me with weariness and torture."

38:42 "Stamp with your foot, and behold, here is a cool washing-place, and water to drink."

38:43 And we granted to him his family and the like of them also, as a Mercy from Us and a Reminder to people of understanding.

38:44 "And take with your hand a bundle of twigs and strike with it, and do not break your oath." We have indeed found him steadfast, a blessed servant. He was truly penitent.

God, however, has been known to make life miserable for believers to see if they would despair of His Mercy. To despair of Allah's Mercy is the second gravest sin (the first being to associate other gods with Allah).

11:9 And if We let man have a taste of mercy from Us, then wrest it from him, he yields to despair and becomes ungrateful.

11:10 And if We let him taste prosperity after an adversity has afflicted him, he will say: "Misfortunes have gone away from me", and becomes joyful and proud.

11:11 Except for those who are patient and do the good deeds; for those are forgiveness and a great reward.

Good news!

2:155 We will certainly test you with some fear and hunger and with some loss of property, lives and crops. Announce the good news to those who endure patiently.

2:156 Those who upon being visited by adversity say: "We are Allah's [servants] and to Him we shall return."

2:157 Upon such people are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the well-guided.

Elijah

37:123 And Elias (the biblical Prophet Elijah) too was one of the Messengers.

37:124 When he said to his people: "Do you not fear God?

37:125 "Do you call upon Baal (the Phoenician god of fertility), forsaking the Best of Creators,

37:126 "Allah, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers?"

37:127 But they denounced him as a liar; and behold they shall be brought forward.

37:128 Except for Our sincere servants.

37:129 And We left him for the later generations;

37:130 "Peace be upon the family of Elias."

37:131 Thus, We reward the beneficent.

37:132 He is one of our believing servants.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel, or Dhul-Kifl as he is known in the Koran, is mentioned in passing on two occasions, along with more famous prophets, at the end of both brief accounts of the trials of Job.

21:85 And (remember) Isma'il and Idris and Dhul-Kifl; each was one of the steadfast.

21:86 And We admitted them into Our Mercy; there were all truly righteous.

38:45 And remember Our servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men of might and perception.

38:46 We have favoured them with the pure trait of remembering the Abode (Paradise).

38:47 They are surely for Us among the well-chosen, the pious.

38:48 And Isma'il, Elias and Dhul-Kifl; each was one of the pious.

Enoch

19:51 And [remember] in the Book Moses; he (Moses) was sincere, a Messenger and a Prophet.

19:52 We called him from the right side of the Mount, and brought him closer in communication.

19:53 And We granted him, out of Our Mercy, his brother Aaron, a Prophet.

19:54 And mention in the Book Isma'il; he was true to his promises and was a Messenger and a Prophet.

19:55 He enjoined on his people prayer and almsgiving and was well-pleasing to his Lord.

Praise for Idris, the presumed biblical Enoch.

19:56 And mention in the Book Idris; he was truthful and a Prophet.

19:57 And We raised him to a high place.

19:58 Those are the ones whom Allah favoured from the prophets of the progeny of Adam, of those We carried with Noah, of the progeny of Abraham and Israel and of those We have guided and elected. When the Revelations of the Compassionate were recited to them, they fell down prostrate and weeping.

19:59 Then there came after them a posterity who forgot all about prayer and followed their lusts. They shall face perdition.

19:60 Except for those who repent, believe and do what is right. Those shall enter Paradise and will not be wronged at all.

19:61 Gardens of Eden that the Compassionate has promised His servants in the Unseen. His Promise will certainly be accomplished.

Jonas

37:139 And Jonas was one of the Messengers.

37:140 When he fled towards the laden Ark⁶².

Jonas made it onto the ship only to be tossed overboard.

37:141 He cast lots, but was one of the losers.

37:142 Then the whale swallowed him, and he was to blame.

37:143 Had he not been one of those who glorified [Allah];

37:144 He would have stayed in its belly until the Day they will be resuscitated.

37:145 Then We cast him out into the wilderness.

37:146 And made to grow over him a gourd tree.

37:147 And We sent him forth to hundred thousand or more.

37:148 They believed so We accorded them enjoyment for a while.

Jonas, in the following, is spelled Dhun-Nun:

21:87 And Dhun-Nun (another name for Jonah), when he went out enraged, and he thought that We will have no power over him. So he called out in the darkness: "There is no god but You; glory be to You; I have certainly been one of the wrongdoers."

21:88 So, We answered him and delivered him from distress; and thus We deliver the believers.

The fate of the people of Jonas/Jonah:

10:96 Surely, those against whom the Word of your Lord will be fulfilled are not going to believe;

⁶² After consulting seven other translations, six of which use the word 'ship', it is safe to assume that it is not Noah's Ark referred to in Fakhry's translation.

10:97 Even if every sign comes to them, till they see the very painful punishment.

10:98 How is it, then, that no town believed so that its belief would profit it, except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in the present life and allowed them to enjoy life for a while.

10:99 Had your Lord willed, everybody on earth would have believed. Will you then compel people to become believers?

10:100 It is not given to any soul to believe, except by Allah's Leave. And He lays the scourge on those who do not understand

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Mary

66:12 And Mary, daughter of Imran, who guarded her womb, and so We breathed into it of Our Spirit; and she believe in the truth of her Lord's Words and His Book and was one of the pious.

In the Koran, Mary is born into the family of Imran (Amram in the Bible), father of Moses. This means Mary was a descendent of Moses, unless Allah was under the impression that Imran was her father.

3:33 Allah chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imran above all mankind;

3:34 Descending one from another; and Allah is All- Hearing, All-Knowing!

3:35 [Remember] when the wife of 'Imran said: "Lord, I have vowed to You what is in my womb to be devoted [to Your service]. Accept it from me, for You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."

Mary's mother, in the next verse, gives the impression of disappointment at having birthed a female; however, God knew she was no ordinary female and that there was nothing to be disappointed about. He even gave Mary her name.

3:36 And when she delivered her, she said: "Lord, I have given birth to a female", - and Allah knew best what she gave birth to; the male is not the same as the female - "I have named her Mary and I commend her and her descendants to You to protect her from the accursed Devil."

Allah, during Mary's development, entrusted the care and feeding of the future mother of Jesus to Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist and one of Mary's relatives. Zachariah would later discover that God himself looked after her welfare.

3:37 Then her Lord accepted her graciously and made her to grow into a fine child, entrusting her to Zachariah. Whenever Zachariah went to see her in the sanctuary, he found that she

had some provision. "Mary," he asked, "where did you get this?" She replied: "It is from Allah, and Allah provides for whom he wishes without measure."

Mary's last statement prompted Zachariah to ask God for a favour of his own.

3:38 Thereupon, Zachariah prayed to his Lord saying: "Lord grant me from Your Bounty fine descendants. Indeed You hear every prayer!"

3:39 Then the angels called him while he was at prayer in the sanctuary, saying: "Allah bids you rejoice in John, confirming a word (Jesus) from Allah, a master, chaste and a Prophet and one of the righteous."

3:40 He said: "Lord, how will I have a son, seeing I have been overtaken by old age and my wife is barren?" "This is how Allah does whatever He pleases," He replied.

Allah did for the barren old wife of Zachariah what He had done for Abraham's equally compromised no-name spouse; she would give birth to a son, and that son would grow up to be John the Baptist. The old man asked God to give him a sign to prove to those around him that He had granted his wish.

3:41 He said; "Lord give me a sign." Allah said: "Your sign is that you will not speak to anybody for three days, except by signs; and remember your Lord often and give praise evening and morning."

The angels visited Mary with the good news that she had been purified (she would no longer experience menses), and that she should do what God demanded of her.

3:42 And when the angels said: "O Mary, Allah has chosen you and purified you, preferring you to all womankind."

3:43 "O Mary be obedient to your Lord, prostrate yourself and bow down with those who bow down."

For reasons that are unclear in the next verse, Allah revealed that lots were thrown to see who would take care of Mary.

3:44 This is part of the tidings of the Unseen which We reveal to you. You were not in their midst when they cast their pens

(casting lots) to see who will take charge of Mary, and you were not in their midst when they were disputing.

Returning to the angels with the good news:

3:45 When the angels said: "O Mary, Allah bids you rejoice in a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary. He shall be prominent in this world (through prophethood) and the next (through intercession) and shall be near to God."

3:46 "He shall speak to people from the cradle and while an old man⁶³ and will be one of the righteous."

Mary was somewhat sceptical until Allah assured her that, like in the Bible, having a virgin give birth is an easy matter for God and that He would teach her offspring all he needed to know before sending him as His Messenger to the Jews.

3:47 She said "Lord, how can I have a child when I have not been touched by any man?" Allah said: "Thus Allah creates whatever He pleases. Whenever He decrees a matter, He simply says to it: 'Be', and it comes to be."

3:48 And He will teach him the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel.

3:49 And [send him forth as a] Messenger to the Children of Israel [saying]: "I bring you a sign from your Lord. I will create for you out of clay the likeness of a bird; then I will breathe into it and it will become a bird, by Allah's leave. And I will heal the blind and the leper and will raise the dead, by Allah's leave. And I will inform you concerning what you eat and what you hoard in your homes. In all this there is surely a sign for you, if you are believers!"

Jesus Conceived

For the actual impregnation, Allah sent His do-it-all angel Gabriel, the "Spirit" in Revelation 19:17, in the form of an attractive man.

19:16 And remember [the account] of Mary in the Book when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place.

⁶³ In Islamic traditions, Jesus, after defeating the forces of evil during the end days, will marry, have children and live to a ripe old age and upon his passing be buried in Medina next to Muhammad.

19:17 She screened herself away from them, and We sent to her Our Spirit and it appeared to her in the form of a well-shaped human being.

19:18 She said: "I seek refuge with Allah from you, if you do fear Allah."

19:19 He said: "I am only the messenger of your Lord to grant you a boy most pure."

19:20 She said: "Shall I have a boy, when no man has touched me and I have not been an unchaste woman?"

19:21 He (the angel) said: "Thus [it will be], your Lord has said: 'This is an easy matter for Me; that We may make him (the boy Jesus) a sign unto mankind and a Mercy from Us.'" And thus it was decreed.

Birth of Jesus

23:50 And We made Mary's son and his mother a sign, and We sheltered them on a lofty ground which had [settled] meadows and a spring.

In Allah's account of the birth of Jesus, the Christian Messiah comes into this world under a palm tree on a desert oasis. Like other major events which the Bible describes as occurring in Palestine, and which the Koran centres in or around Mecca, Allah may have wanted to leave the impression that Jesus was born near the city.

19:22 So, she conceived him and she withdrew with him to a distant place.

19:23 Then labour pangs drove her towards the trunk of a palm tree. She said: "I wish I had died before this and had become completely forgotten."

With no Joseph in sight, Jesus, perhaps with the assistance of Gabriel, helped in his own delivery.

19:24 Whereupon [the babe (Jesus) or (Gabriel)] called her from beneath her: "Do not grieve. Your Lord has created below you a stream.

19:25 "Shake the trunk of the palm tree towards you and it will drop upon you fresh ripe dates."⁶⁴

Is Mary, in the next revelation, being told to lie about eating?

19:26 "Eat, drink and rejoice. Then if you see any human say: 'I have vowed to the Compassionate to fast, and so I shall not talk today to any human being.'"

Jesus' First Words

The infant Jesus, only hours after his birth, as Allah said he would, at the request of his mother who is being accused of having been unchaste, loudly proclaimed that he was not the Son of God but a prophet sent by Allah, who praises Allah and does as He commands.

19:27 Then she brought him (the child) to her people, carrying him. They said: "O Mary, you have surely committed a strange thing.

19:28 "Sister of Aaron, your father was not an evil man and your mother was not unchaste."

Was Mary, like Zacharia, expected to announce the birth of her son à la Marcel Marceau? Pointing to her son in response to accusations of having a child out-of-wedlock would indicate that she was.

19:29 Whereupon she pointed to him. They said: "How will we talk to one who is still an infant in the cradle?"

Jesus:

19:30 He [Jesus] said "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah, Who gave me the Book and made me a Prophet.

19:31 "And He made me blessed wherever I am and has commanded me to pray and to give the alms, so long as I live;

19:32 And be devoted to my mother; and He did not make me arrogant and mischievous.

19:33 "Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die and the day I rise from the dead."

⁶⁴ Dates ripen in the Middle East to the point of falling off the tree in late September or early October, which would indicate that this was the period of Jesus' birth.

Allah echoed the baby Jesus' claim:

19:34 Such was Jesus, son of Mary; it is the truth which they (the Christians) dispute.

19:35 It is not fitting for Allah to have a son⁶⁵. Glory be to Him; when He decrees a thing, He simply says: "Be", and it comes to be.

19:36 Allah is truly your Lord and my Lord; so worship him. That is a straight path.

How wrong the wrongdoers, i.e., Christians, were. They will be held to account.

19:37 Yet, the sects among them differed. Woe to those who have disbelieved from the spectacle of a great Day!

19:38 How well they will hear and how well they will see, on the Day they will come onto Us; but the wrongdoers today are in manifest error.

19:39 And warn them of the Day of sorrow, when the issue is decided, while they are heedless and do not believe.

Jesus said the meek would inherit the Earth; not so, says Allah.

19:40 It is We Who shall inherit the earth and whomever is on it, and to Us they shall be returned.

In a conversation He will have with Jesus on Judgement Day, Allah has the son of Mary denying he ever claimed his mother was a god—a claim that, to my knowledge, does not appear in the New Testament.

5:116 And when Allah said: "O Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to the people: 'Take me and my mother as gods, apart

⁶⁵ Or a girl for that matter:

37:149 Ask them: "Are the daughters your Lord's and theirs the sons?"

37:150 "Or have We created the angels as females, while they were witnesses?"

37:151 It is out of their perversion that they will say:

37:152 "Allah has begotten", but they are liars.

37:153 Has He preferred daughters over sons?

37:154 What is the matter with you; how do you judge?

37:155 Do you not remember?

37:156 Or do you have manifest authority?

37:157 Produce your Book, if you are truthful.

from Allah?" He said: "Glory be to You. It is not given me to say what is untrue. If I said it, You would have known it; You know what is in my soul, but I do not know what is in Thine⁶⁶. You are indeed the Knower of the Unseen.

5:117 "I only told them what You commanded me: 'Worship Allah, your Lord and mine', and I was a watcher over them while I was among them, but when You took me to yourself, You became the Watcher over them; for you are the witness of everything.

5:118 "Should you punish them, they are surely your servants; but should You forgive them, You are truly the Mighty, the Wise."

5:119 Allah said: "This is a Day in which their truthfulness shall profit the truthful; they will have Gardens beneath which rivers flow; dwelling therein forever; Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with him. That is the great triumph."

Who is the father of Jesus? Is it the "well-shaped human being" that visited Mary when she conceived Jesus? In the Koran, when a physical presence is required when dealing with mortals, including Muhammad, God uses angel intermediaries—Gabriel almost exclusively—and Mary would not have been the exception.

21:91 And she who guarded her chastity (Mary), and so We breathed into her Our Spirit and made her and her son (Jesus) a sign unto the world.

Based on this simple observation, the "Spirit" breathed into Mary's womb is that of Gabriel, and a "spirit" that needs a functioning, anatomically correct male facsimile to be administered can only mean one thing.

⁶⁶ God has a soul?!

John the Baptist

In this more focused, lengthier retelling of the genesis of John the Baptist, Zacharia is spelled without the “h” at the end.

MARY

19 Maryam

*In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful*

19:1 Kaf - Ha -Ya - 'Ain - Sâd.

19:2 This is the story of your Lord’s Mercy unto His servant Zacharia;

19:3 When he called upon his Lord secretly.

19:4 He said: “Lord, my bones have weakened and my head is aflame with grey hair, I have not, Lord, in vain called upon You.

19:5 “In truth I fear my kinsmen⁶⁷, after I am gone, as my wife is barren. Grant me, then, from Your Bounty, a successor.

19:6 “To inherit me and inherit the house of Jacob, and make him, Lord, well pleasing to you.”

19:7 [It was said to him]: “O Zacharia, We announce to you the good news of a boy whose name is John; We have not hitherto given the same name to anyone else.”

19:8 He said: “Lord, how shall I have a boy, seeing that my wife is barren and I have reached an advanced old age?”

19:9 He said: “That is what your Lord says. It is easy for Me. Indeed I created you formerly, when you were nothing.”

⁶⁷ “That is, ‘I see none among my kinsmen, the family of Abiah, who is religiously and morally sound and capable of carrying on the work of the mission that has been entrusted to me.’” *Moududi*

19:10 He said: "Lord, give me as sign." He said: "Your sign is that you will not talk to anybody for three nights, although you are sound of body."

It must have been a sight to behold: an old man with bad knees, mimicking instructions to his kin as a sign that God had granted him a favour.

19:11 He came out to his people from the sanctuary and told them by signs: "Pray and glorify morning and evening."

As soon as John the Baptist became self-aware, or perhaps sooner, he was told about "the Book" – probably the Torah, as both the Gospels and the Koran had yet to be revealed.

19:12 It was then said to John: "O John, hold fast to the Book."
And We granted him wisdom when he was still a child;

19:13 And tenderness from Us and purity; he was devout;

19:14 And devoted to his parents; and he was not arrogant or disobedient.

19:15 Peace be upon him the day he was born, the day he dies and the day he is raised from the dead.

A final reminder of the favour God granted Zacharia:

21:89 And Zacharia, when he called upon his Lord [said]
"Lord, do not leave me alone; for you are the best of the inheritors."

21:90 So, We answered him and gave him John and set his wife right for him (fit to bear a child, *Moududi*). Indeed, they vied with each other in good deeds, and they called upon Us out of affection and out of fear; and they were submissive to Us.

Jesus

112:1 Say: "He is Allah, the only One,

112:2 "Allah, the Everlasting.

112:3 "He did not beget and is not begotten,

112:4 "And none is His equal."

2:116 And they say: "Allah has begotten a son." Glory be to Him. His is everything in the heavens and the earth; all are obedient to Him.

2:117 Creator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, He only says to it: "Be," and there it is.

4:171 O People of the Book, do not exceed the bounds of your religion nor say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only Allah's Messenger and His Word, which he imparted to Mary, and is a spirit from Him! So believe in Allah and His Messenger and do not say "three" [gods]. Refrain; it is better for you. Allah is truly One God. How - Glory be to Him - could He have a son To him belongs what is in Heaven and on earth? Allah suffices as a Guardian!

4:172 The Messiah does not disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels nearest to Him. And those who disdain to worship Him, and are arrogant, He shall gather all unto himself!

10:68 They say: "Allah has taken a child." Glory be to Him! He is the self-sufficient; His is everything in the heavens and on the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know?

10:69 Say: "Those who invent lies about Allah will not prosper."

10:70 [It is only] a little enjoyment in this life; then unto Us is their return; then We will make them taste the terrible punishment, on account of their disbelief.

5:72 Those who say that Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary, are unbelievers. The Messiah said: "O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Surely, he who associates other gods with Allah, Allah forbids him access to Paradise and his dwelling is Hell. The evildoers have no supporters!"

The entire concept of the Koran is based on a simple premise: God was fed up with sending instructions on how we should live and how He should be worshipped via prophets who miscommunicate His message or were misunderstood by a less than receptive audience. God's patience had run out. He would send one last messenger, his greatest spokesman, with his final instructions for mankind: the Koran. Anyone who did not heed the advice of this ultimate messenger was doomed. There was only one problem with this latest divine plan for getting humanity to behave: *Jesus*. If God had already come delivered his message on Earth in the person of Jesus, sending another messenger with a final message made no sense. The Christian claim that Jesus was the Son of God had to be discredited. There was also a positive side to Jesus' status. His reputation could be used to enhance the reputation of an aspiring prophet like Muhammad. Jesus of Nazareth, before the advent of Islam and during the time of Muhammad was a much-revered figure, even among the pagan tribes of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Prophet Jesus

In many verses, Allah praised the *Prophet Jesus* as a worthy pre-cursor to His greatest prophet. Muslims believe that the "Comforter" promised in the Gospel of St. John, 16:7 is the Prophet Muhammad, not Jesus.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for me that I go away; for if I go not away; the Comforter would not come onto you; but if I depart, I would send him unto you."

John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus; Jesus would announce the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. Whoever says otherwise is a wrongdoer that only wishes to extinguish Allah's Lights.

61:6 And when Jesus, son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel, I am Allah's Messenger to you, confirming what came before me of the Torah, and announcing the news of a Messenger who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad." Then when he (Ahmad i.e. Mohammad) brought them the clear proofs, they said: "This is manifest sorcery."

61:7 And who is a greater wrongdoer than he who imputes falsehoods to Allah, when he is summoned to submission (to Allah)? Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

61:8 They wish to extinguish Allah's Lights with their mouths. But Allah will perfect His Light, even though the unbelievers might be averse.

Jesus would even get his disciples to pledge their allegiance to Allah after explaining his mission to them.

3:50 "I have come to confirm what came before me of the Torah and make lawful to you some of the things that were forbidden to you. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord; so fear Allah and obey me."

3:51 "Allah is indeed your Lord and my Lord; so worship Him. This is the straight path!"

3:52 When Jesus sensed their disbelief, he said: "Who are my supporters in Allah's Way?" the disciples said: "We are Allah's supporters; we believe in Allah, so bear witness that we submit."

3:53 "Lord, we believe in what You have revealed, and we have followed the Messenger; write us down with those who bear witness."

Jesus is an example for the believers:

61:13 And another thing you (*Muhammad*) love: support from Allah and an imminent victory. So announce the good news to the believers.

61:14 O believers, be supporters of Allah, as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples: "Who are my supporters unto Allah?" The disciples replied: "We are Allah's supporters"; and so a group of the Children of Israel believed, while another group disbelieved. Then, We supported those who believed against their foe; and so they were triumphant.

This negative/positive side of Jesus may explain the schizophrenic nature to many of the revelations concerning his person. Unlike when He is praising Jesus the Prophet, whenever Jesus Son of God is mentioned you can almost feel Allah's rage.

18:4 And to warn those who say: "Allah has taken a son."

18:5 They have no knowledge thereof, nor do their fathers. What a dreadful word that comes out of their mouth! They only utter a lie.

18:6 You may destroy yourself with grief, sorrowing after them (following after them in their wake), they do not believe in this revelation.

An even more vehement denunciation can be found at the end of Surah 19, the surah ostensibly dedicated to Mary that documents most of the events surrounding Jesus' birth. In these revelations, Allah is shocked and all His creation appalled by the claim that Jesus was not His servant like everyone else; like everyone else, Jesus will appear before Him by himself, on Judgement Day.

19:88 And they say: "The Compassionate has taken Himself a son,"

19:89 You have indeed made a shocking assertion,

19:90 From which the heavens are almost rent asunder, the earth is split and the mountain fall to pieces.

19:91 For they ascribe a son to the Compassionate.

19:92 Whereas, it is not fitting that the Compassionate should have a son.

19:93 Everyone in the heavens and on earth will surely come to the Compassionate as a servant.

To God, everyone is a number.

19:94 He keeps count of them and has numbered them.

19:95 And every one of them will come to Him on the Day of Resurrection alone.

If God Had Wanted a Son

If Allah had wanted children, He would first have taken a wife, which He didn't.

6:101 [He is] the Creator of the heavens and the earth; how could He have a child when He has no consort, and has created everything and has knowledge of everything?

6:102 That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but He, Creator of all things. Worship Him then; He is the Guardian of all things.

If Allah had wanted a son, He would simply have picked one out of the multitude of male children He created.

39:4 Had Allah wanted to take to Himself a child, He would have chosen from what He has created whomever He pleases. Glory be to Him; He is Allah, the One, the Conqueror.

As for the angels, He has not taken a son from among them either; they are only privileged servants who know their place.

21:26 They say: "The Compassionate has taken to Himself a son." Glory be to Him; they (the angels) are [merely] honoured servants.

21:27 They never speak until He has spoken; they only act on His Command.

21:28 He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves; and they tremble for fear of Him.

If an angel, or any being for that matter, makes false claims about being a god, Hell will be their reward.

21:29 And whoever of them says: "I am a god besides Him" – that one We shall reward with Hell. That is how We reward the wrongdoers.

A Mere Servant

43:57 And when the son of Mary was held up as an example, behold, your people turned away from him.

43:58 They said: "Are our deities better or he?"⁶⁸ They only cited it to you disputatiously. Indeed, they are a contentious people.

⁶⁸ "When this discourse was being presented before the people of Makkah, a person called Abdullah ibn az-Zibara in the traditions, put forward the objection: Well, is it not

43:59 He was merely a servant whom We favoured and set up as an example to the Children of Israel.

43:60 Had We wished, We would have made of you angels to be successors on earth.

43:61 And it is surely the knowledge of the Hour (Judgement Day); so do not doubt it and follow Me. This is a Straight Path.

43:62 And let not Satan bar you. He is, indeed, a manifest enemy of yours.

43:63 When Jesus brought the clear proofs, he said: "I have come to you with the Wisdom and to make clear to you (the Jews) part of that whereon you are differing. So fear Allah and obey me.

43:64 "Allah is, indeed, my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him. This is a Straight Path."

43:65 Then the factions among them fell apart⁶⁹. Woe undo the wrongdoers, from the punishment of a painful Day.

43:66 Are they only waiting for the Hour to come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware.

The Last Supper

The last supper, which Allah Himself catered, may have begun with a Freudian slip, with Jesus erroneously referring to himself as God (Fakhry's explanation notwithstanding).

5:111 And when I revealed to the disciples (ordering them through Jesus): "Believe in Me and My Messenger", they replied: "We believe, and You bear witness that we submit."

5:112 When the disciples said: "Jesus, son of Mary, is your Lord able to bring down for us a table [spread with food]

a fact that the Christians regard the son of Mary as the son of God and worship him? What is then wrong with our gods?" *islamicstudies.info*

⁶⁹ "That is, one group of the people denied him and in their antagonism went to the extent of accusing him of illegitimate birth and got him crucified as they thought; the other group believed in him but owing to exaggerated reverence made him son of God, and then the question of man being God became such a riddle for it that every effort to resolve it caused it to be divided into countless sects." *Moududi*

from heaven?"; he said: "Fear Allah, if you are true believers."

5:113 They said: "We would like to eat from it so that our hearts may be reassured and know that you have told us the truth and be witnesses thereof."

5:114 Jesus, son of Mary, then said: "O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a table spread with food from heaven that it may be a festival for the first and last of us and a sign from You; and provide for us, for You are the Best Provider."

If Allah performs a miracle for someone who later renounces their faith, that person will be in for some serious pain in the afterlife, and perhaps this one.

5:115 Allah said: "I will send it down to you, so that whoever of you disbelieves thereafter I will inflict on him a punishment I do not inflict on any other being."

The Crucifixion Myth

Allah is adamant that Jesus was not crucified, nor did he physically die.

4:157 And their saying: "We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary and the Messenger of Allah." They neither killed nor crucified him; but it was made to appear so unto them. Indeed, those who differ about him are in doubt about it. Their knowledge does not go beyond conjecture, and they did not kill him for certain;

4:158 Rather Allah raised him unto Him. Allah is Mighty and Wise.

Jesus will also be there on Judgement Day to bear witness against those who did not believe he was a Messenger of God.

4:159 None of the People of the Book will believe him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he (Jesus) will be a witness against them.

Resurrection?

The verses about how Jesus might have been brought back to life is in Surah 2, *The Cow*, the longest surah; it is a rambling narrative where the Jews figure prominently, as they do throughout the Koran. The revelation in question appears at the end of a discussion involving

Moses about the type of cow most appropriate to offer as a sacrifice.

2:67 And when Moses said to his people: "Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow", they replied: "Do you make a mockery of us?" He said: "God forbid that I be one of the ignorant (that is, one of the mocking people)."

2:68 They said: "Call on your Lord to explain what [cow] it is." He replied: "He (Allah) says: 'Let it be neither too old nor too young, but in between.' Therefore do what you are commanded to do."

2:69 They said: "Call on your Lord to tell us what its colour should be." He replied: "He (Allah) says: 'Let it be a yellow cow which has a striking colour and which pleases the beholders.'"

2:70 They said: "Call on your Lord to tell us what it (the cow) is; for to us all cows seem to be alike. Thus if Allah wills, we will be rightly guided."

2:71 He said: "He says: (Allah) 'It is a cow which is neither harnessed to plough the land nor to water the field, but rather sound with no blemish.'"

Then they said: "Now you speak the truth." Thereupon they slaughtered it after they had been reluctant to do so.

Most commentators on the Koran agree that the following verse is about the Jews arguing among themselves as to whether it was the Messiah who is alleged to have died on the cross.

2:72 And when you (the Jews) slew a man and fell out among yourselves regarding him, Allah brought forth to light what you had concealed.

How Jesus' followers would have brought him back from the dead,

2:73 We said: "Strike him with a part of it (the cow)."⁷⁰ Thus Allah brings the dead to life, and shows you His Signs so that you may understand.

The Holy Spirit

What are we to make of Allah saying He strengthened Jesus with the Holy Spirit not once, but on at least three occasions? Whose Spirit

⁷⁰ "This could be its tongue or the end of its tail." *Fakhry*

could it be, unless God is referring to Himself? (Highly unlikely considering His rants against those who would claim He is one of three.) Could it be that He overheard someone talking about the Christian celebration of the Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the twelve disciples and misunderstood who was, or were the recipients? The first reference to the Holy Spirit is found in a diatribe against the Jews for refusing to accept Muhammad as His legitimate spokesman.

2:87 We have indeed given Moses the Book, and after him We sent one Messenger after another. We also gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear signs (miracles) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. Do you, then, whenever a Messenger brings you what you do not desire, become puffed up with pride accusing some [of them] of lying and killing others?

2:88 They said: "Our hearts are sealed." Nay, Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief; for they have very little faith.

2:89 And when a book (the Qur'an) came to them from Allah confirming that which they had (the Torah), and though they used hitherto to pray for assistance against those who disbelieved; yet when there came to them what they already knew (that Muhammad would be sent as the Messenger of Allah) they disbelieved in it. So may Allah's curse be on the unbelievers.

The second reference is found in a revelation in which God substantially elevates Muhammad above all His other spokepersons.

2:253 [Of] those Messengers, We have made some excel the others; to some of them Allah spoke (Moses and Muhammad) and He exalted some (Muhammad) many degrees [above the others]. We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. Had Allah so willed, those who succeeded them would not have fought one another after they had received the clear signs. But they disagreed [among themselves]; some of them believed and some did not. Had Allah pleased they would not have fought each other, but Allah does what He wills.

The third reference to the Holy Spirit is in a revelation in which Allah claims that on Judgement Day, He will take credit for the miracles

perform by Jesus. In the same breath, He reveals that it was the Holy Spirit that made it possible for Jesus to speak and be understood as soon as he was born, which is eerily reminiscent of what the Holy Spirit actually did for the apostles: allowing them to be understood by those who spoke a different language.

5:110 When Allah will say: "O Jesus, son of Mary, remember My Grace upon you and upon your mother, how I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit, so that you could speak to people in the cradle and as an old man; how I taught you the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel; and how, by My Leave, you created out of clay the likeness of a bird, and breathed into it, and then, by My leave, it turned into a bird. And you could heal the blind and the leper by My Leave and you could raise the dead by My Leave. And [remember] how I restrained the Children of Israel from harming you, when you brought them the clear signs (the miracles); whereupon the unbelievers among them said: "That indeed is nothing but manifest sorcery."

The True Story

3:54 And they (the Jews) contrived and Allah contrived; Allah is the Best of the contrivers.

3:55 When Allah said: "O Jesus, I will cause you to die, will lift you up to Me, purify you from those who have disbelieved and place those who followed you above those who have disbelieved, till the Day of Resurrection. Then unto Me is your return, so that I may judge between you regarding what you were disputing."

Again "what you were disputing" is said to refer to the Jews who argued among themselves as to whether it was the Messiah who died on the cross.

3:56 "But as for those who disbelieved, I will sternly punish them in this world and the Hereafter, and they shall have no supporters."

3:57 And as for those who believed and done the good deeds, He will pay them their rewards in full. Allah does not love the evildoers.

3:58 This is what we recite (reveal) to you (Muhammad) of the Revelations and Wise Reminder (the Qur'an).

3:59 Jesus in Allah's sight is like Adam; He created him from dust, then He said to him: "Be", and there he was.

3:60 [This is] the truth from your Lord; so do not be one of the doubters.

A revelation that begins on a conciliatory tone only to end with a curse upon the lying Christians:

3:61 To those who dispute with it (the truth regarding Jesus) after the knowledge which has come to you, say [to them]: "Come now; let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, ourselves and yourselves. Then let us pray to Allah and so call down Allah's curse upon the liars."

3:62 This is indeed the true story, and there is no God but Allah, and Allah is truly the Mighty, the Wise!

3:63 And if they turn their backs, then Allah certainly knows the mischief-makers.

Muhammad's Petition

If Jesus was Allah's son, Muhammad would be the first to worship Him.

43:81 Say (O Muhammad): "If the All-Compassionate has a child, I would be the first worshipper."

43:82 Exalted be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, above what they (*Christians*) describe.

43:83 So leave them to romp and frolic till they encounter their Day (*Judgement Day*) which they have been promised.

43:84 It is He Who in heaven is God, and on earth is God; and He is the All-Wise, the All-Knowing.

43:85 Blessed is He Who has the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and Who has the knowledge of the Hour, and unto Him you shall be returned.

Jesus will have the power of intercession on behalf of believers who don't quite have enough good behavior points to get into Paradise⁷¹, since he spoke the truth about his human origin.

43:86 Those upon whom they call, apart from Him, do not have the power of intercession, except he who bears witness to the Truth knowingly.

Are Christians perverts?

43:87 If you ask them: "Who creates them?", They will say: "Allah." Why, then, are they perverted?

Muhammad petitioned God to label Christian unbelievers.

43:88 And his (Muhammad's) petition is: "Lord, these are surely a people who do not believe."

43:89 So turn away from them, and say: 'Peace.' For they will certainly come to know.

That can't be good.

⁷¹ On Judgment Day, your points for good behavior will be weighed against those for bad behaviour. If your good behavior points outweigh your bad, you're in!

THE RELIGION OF TRUTH

Allah and People of the Book

57:28 O believers, fear Allah and believe in His Messenger, so that he might show you His Mercy twofold, give you a light by which you might walk about and forgive you. Allah is All-Forgiving, Merciful;

57:29 That the People of the Book may know that they have no power over anything of Allah's Bounty, and that Bounty is in Allah's Power; He gives it to whoever He pleases. Allah is the Great Bounty.

Allah is a god Who is very much into threats, as you may now appreciate, even threatening to annihilate Jesus and his mother along "with all those on the face of the earth"—and who is going to stop Him?

5:17 Unbelievers are those who say: "Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary." Say (O *Muhammad*): "Who could prevent Allah, if He wished, from destroying the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother too, together with all those on the face of the earth?" To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them. He creates whatever He pleases, and Allah has power over everything!

In a radical departure from Christian doctrine, God makes it clear that you are not His children; not literally, not metaphorically. The word He uses most often to describe humanity is servants. Would a father punish His children the way He has?

5:18 The Jews and the Christians have said: "We are Allah's children and His beloved." Say: "Why then does He punish you for your sins? You are rather human beings, part of those Whom He has created. He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases." And to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is in between, and unto Him is the final return!

Moududi writes that Revelation 5:19, which introduces the Prophet Muhammad to the Jews and Christians, is also a warning “not to treat the message of this warner and bearer of glad tidings lightly.”

5:19 O People of the Book, Our Messenger has come to you to make clear to you [the religious tenets] after a cessation of Messengers, lest you should say: “No bearer of good news and a warner has come to us.” So now of a bearer of good news and a warner has come to you; and Allah has power over everything!

Christians and Jews have no proof that they will be allowed into Paradise, unlike those who “submit themselves to Allah.”

2:111 They say: “None will enter Paradise except those who are Jews and Christians.” Such are their vain wishes. Say: “Bring forth your proof if you are truthful.” If I have not given you the answer, Muhammad, it is because it will be revealed on Judgement Day (Resurrection Day).

2:112 Indeed, those who submit themselves to Allah, while doing good work (believing in the unity of Allah), will have their reward with Allah (Paradise). They will have nothing to fear and will not grieve.

God will decide on Judgement Day, between the Christians and Jews, as to which group followed anything substantial.

2:113 The Jews say: “The Christians follow nothing [substantial]” and the Christians say: “The Jews follow nothing [substantial],” while both recite the Book. Thus say too, those who know not. Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection regarding what they differ on.

Reading the following series of revelations, you might think that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all believe in the same thing; they don't. Jews and Muslims don't believe in the Christian Messiah, and both Jews and Christians don't believe the Koran supersedes the Torah and the Gospels respectively, i.e., what Muhammad believes (Revelation 2:137).

2:135 They say: “If you become Jews or Christians you shall be well-guided.” Say: “Rather, we follow the religion of Abraham, who was upright and no polytheist.”

2:136 Say: "We believe in Allah, in what has been revealed to us, what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and in what was imparted to Moses, Jesus and the other Prophets from their Lord, making no distinctions between any of them, and to Him we submit."

2:137 If they believe in what you (*Muhammad*) have believed, they will be well guided; but if they turn away: they are indeed dissenting: and Allah will protect you against them; for He is All-Hearing, Omniscient.

Allah's Colours:

2:138 [We take on] Allah's Own Colour (religion); and what colour is better than Allah's? And we do worship Him.

By what you believe you shall be judged!

2:139 Say: "Do you dispute with us concerning Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? We have our works (by which we shall be judged) and you have your works (by which you shall be judged). To Him alone we are devoted.

Jesus, Abraham and his progeny are Muslims.

2:140 Or do you say: 'Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes were Jews and Christians?' Say: "Who knows better, you or Allah?" And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony which he has received from Allah? Allah is not unaware of what you do."

On Dealing with People of the Book

3:186 You shall be tried in your possessions and yourselves, and shall hear from those who received the Book before you (the Jews and Christians) and from the idolaters, a lot of abuse; but if you forebear and guard against evil, that indeed is a mark of great determination.

3:187 And when Allah made a covenant with those who were given the Book: "You shall reveal it to mankind and not conceal it", they simply cast it behind their backs, and sold it for a small price (rejecting God's directives, *Moududi*). Evil then is their deal.

3:188 Do not think those who are pleased with what they have done and loved to be praised for what they have not

done, immune from punishment; a painful punishment is in store for them.

The following revelations were meant to guide Muhammad in his dealings with Jews and Christians who questioned what he preached.

42:13 He has enacted for you as a religion that which He charged Noah with and that which We revealed to you (Muhammad), and what We charged Abraham, Moses and Jesus with: "Perform the religion and do not diverge therein." Outrageous in the sight of the idolaters is what you called them to. Allah elects onto Himself whomever He pleases and guides to Himself whoever repents.

42:14 They did not split except after the Knowledge came to them out of contention among themselves. Yet, but for a Word which preceded from your Lord deferring them until an appointed term, judgement would have been pronounced upon them. Indeed, those to whom the Book was bequeathed, after them, are in disquieting doubt concerning it.

42:15 Therefore, summon and be upright as you were commanded, and do not follow their fancies, but say: "I believe in whatever Book Allah has sent down. I have been commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord; we have our deeds and you have your deeds. There is no dispute between us and you; Allah will gather us together and unto Him is our ultimate return."

42:16 Those who argue concerning Allah, after His call was answered, their argument is null and void in the sight of their Lord, and upon them is a scourge, and a terrible punishment awaits them.

29:46 Do not dispute with the people of the Book save in the fairest way; except for those of them who are evildoers. And say: "We believe in what has been sent down to us and what has been sent down to you. Our God and your God are one and to Him we are submissive."

29:47 And thus We have sent down to you the Book. Those to whom We gave the Book (the people of the Book, Jews and Christians) believe in it, and of these (the Prophet's Meccans

contemporaries) some believe in it. Our Signs are only denied by the unbelievers.

A reminder that God authored two previous books before the Koran: the Torah and its sequel, the Gospels.

5:46 After them (the prophets of the Torah) We sent Jesus son of Mary, confirming what he had before him of the Torah, and We gave Him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light, confirming what he had before him of the Torah and a guidance and admonition to the God-fearing.

In the following revelation, Allah gives the impression that He is okay with Christians living according to what He revealed in the Gospels.

5:47 And let the People of the Gospel judge in accordance with what Allah has revealed in it. He who does not judge according to what Allah has revealed those are the transgressors.

Yes, but what God revealed to you through Muhammad is the *superseding Truth* from which you, and everyone else, must not diverge (Verse 5:48). In the same revelation, Allah acknowledges that He considered making Jews and Arabs one nation, but did not because He wanted to see what they would do with His Revelations.

5:48 And We have revealed to you (Muhammad) the Book in truth, confirming the scriptures that preceded it and superseding it. Judge between them, then, according to what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their illusory desires, diverging from what came to you of the Truth. To each of you (Arabs and Jews), We have laid down an ordinance and a clear path; and had Allah pleased, He would have made you one nation, but [He wanted] to test you concerning what He gave to you. Be, then, forward in good deeds. To Allah is the ultimate return of all of you, that He may instruct you regarding that on which you differed.

More cautionary advice about following the fancies of Christians and Jews:

5:49 And judge between them in accordance with what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their fancies. Beware of them lest they lure you away from part of what God has revealed to you. Should they turn away, know that Allah only wishes

to afflict them for some of their sins, and that many people are indeed grave sinners!

There would be no turning back, no returning to what Islam considers the “time of Ignorance”, the pre-Islamic time when speculation about the Divine and our place in His Creation was a source of much discussion. The Koran ushered in a new age where ignorance, i.e., uncertainty, has been banished forever.

5:50 Now, is it the judgement of the “period of ignorance” that they desire? Yet who is a better judge than Allah for a people who believe with certainty?

The True Religion

3:19 The [true] religion with Allah is Islam. Those who were given the Book (the Jews and the Christians) did not disagree among themselves, except after certain knowledge came to them, out of envy among themselves. Whoever disbelieves in Allah’s Revelations will find Allah Swift in retribution!

3:20 So, if they dispute with you, say: “I have submitted myself to Allah and so have those who followed me”; and say also to those who have received the Book and to the unlearned (the Arab idolaters of Mecca): “Have you submitted?” If they have submitted, then they are rightly guided; but if they have turned their backs, then your duty is simply to deliver the Message. Allah perceives His servants well.

3:21 Those who disbelieve in Allah’s Revelations and kill the Prophets unjustly, and kill those people who enjoin fair dealing, announce to them a painful punishment.

3:22 Those are the people whose works have come to naught in this world and the next, and they will have no supporters whatsoever!

3:23 Have you not considered those who have received a portion of the Book? Upon being called to let the Book of Allah decide between them, some of them turn their backs, refusing to pay attention.

3:24 That is because they say: “The Fire will only touch us for a few days.” They have been deluded in their religion by their lies.

3:25 But how will they fare when We gather them together on a Day (*Judgement Day*) which is undoubted, and each soul shall be paid in full for whatever it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly?

3:26 Say: "O Allah, Master of the Kingdom, You give the kingship to whom You please and take away the kingship from whom You please. You exalt whom You please and humble whom You please. In Your Hand is all the good, and You have the power over everything!

3:27 "You cause the night to pass into the day, and the day to pass into the night. You bring forth the living from the dead and You bring forth the dead from the living, and You provide for whomever You please without measure."

3:98 Say: "O People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the Revelations of Allah, when Allah witnesses whatever you do?"

3:99 Say: "O People of the Book, why do you debar those who have believed from the Path (the religion) of Allah, seeking to make it crooked, while you are witnesses (while you know it is the right religion)? Allah is not unaware of what you do!"

Another warning, and not the last, about those who received the prequels to the Koran:

3:100 O believers, if you obey a group of those who have received the Book, they will turn you, after you have believed, into unbelievers.

The Way: Jesus or Muhammad?

John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

3:31 Say: "If you love Allah, follow me; then Allah will love you and forgive your sins." Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Allah maintains that he sent messengers like Jesus all the time. Tired of His instructions being misinterpreted or misunderstood, he sent His last and greatest Messenger, to whom He revealed the Koran, His final, complete and unchanging instructions for mankind. When you compare Jesus' message to the one delivered by Muhammad, you are left to wonder who got God's instructions right.

- † Jesus said that you should treat other people, Christians and non-Christians, the way you would like to be treated.
-) Muhammad said that Christians and Jews, and an obscure sect called the Sabians, were to be tolerated and remain unmolested if they paid a head-tax (the jizya) while all other unbelievers were to be put to death if they refused to submit to the Will of Allah, i.e., become Muslims.
- † Jesus said that violence should be met with non-violence (that stuff about turning the other cheek).
-) Muhammad countered with a glorification of retaliation in kind:

2:179 In retaliation there is life for you, O people of understanding, that you may be God-fearing.
- † Jesus said that His Father expected us to love one another unconditionally, the way a father loves his children.
-) Muhammad revealed that on numerous occasions Allah told him that he and his followers should hate and not befriend the unbelievers.
- † Jesus told His followers to love their enemies and to forgive them any transgressions, even those against Him and His Father.

-) Muhammad answered with a revelation from Allah that demanded transgressors be horribly put to death if not “banished from the land.”

5:33 Indeed, the punishment of those who fight Allah and His Messenger and go around corrupting the land is to be killed, crucified, have their hands and feet cut off on opposite sides, or to be banished from the land. That is a disgrace for them in this life, and in the life to come theirs will be a terrible punishment.

When you compare Jesus’ message about love and forgiveness to Muhammad’s, which is all about hate, merciless revenge and intolerance for all those who do not submit to the Will of Allah, you have to wonder how Jesus could have so badly misunderstood Allah’s earlier instructions?

- † Jesus reminded us that His father is a merciful, compassionate, loving God. Like Father like Son, Jesus lived the message He was delivering. He spread His message on how to get along through completely non-violent, peaceful means and invited His followers to do the same.

-) Muhammad started a war, the first so-called *holy war*, a war that continues to this day, to make the Koran’s message supreme as allegedly commanded by the god for whom he claimed to speak.

48:28 It is He Who sent forth His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may exalt it above every other religion. Allah suffices as Witness.

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said, "I have been ordered to fight with the people till they say, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' and whoever says, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' his life and property will be saved by me except for Islamic law, and his accounts will be with Allah, (either to punish him or to forgive him.)"

Bukhari 52.196

Is it conceivable that both men could have been messengers sent by the same god when the message they delivered and the tactics that they used to convey it are so different? What about heaven, or Paradise, a

place Jesus of Nazareth called home, and in which Muhammad claimed he spent one night conversing with God?

- † Paradise in the New Testament is a spiritual place where men and women are equal and happiness comes from basking in the light and the glory of the Lord and being free of physical wants and earthly desires.
-) Paradise in the Koran is a materialist, licentious, hedonistic place where males are catered to by young boys, and freely roam, never requiring sleep, fornicating at will with houris (whorish female facsimiles), blushing maidens and cloistered wives, stopping only to visit with friends and relatives to laugh at the unbelievers below roasting in Hell (recommended *The Islamic Hereafter*, Boreal Books).
-)

AFTERWORD

2:62 The believers (Muslims), the Jews, the Christians and the Sabians – whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does what is good, shall receive their reward from their Lord. They shall have nothing to fear and they shall not grieve.

109:6 “You have your religion and I have mine.”

As Islam became a force to be reckoned with, God's position towards other religions hardened and He sent down revelations which invalidated what He said earlier about tolerance, such as the following:

3:85 Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.

Scholars have identified more than two hundred revealed truths that were abrogated by subsequent communications from Allah to Muhammad. These ephemeral immutable facts and their abrogator(s), I have documented in *Let Me Rephrase That!*, Boreal Books. I would have liked to end *Shared Prophet* on an optimistic note, but I would have had to ignore Allah's warnings to believers about taking unbelievers as friends along with His newfound intolerance for other religions. Pity...

Can We Be Friends?

Unless there is no other choice—and even then, Allah warns against it—believers must not befriend unbelievers. Unless “you guard against them fully” you will make God very angry, and you wouldn't want that.

3:28 Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends, rather than the believers. Whoever does that has nothing to do with Allah, unless you guard against them fully! Allah warns you to beware of Him (warns you of His anger); and unto Him is the ultimate return!

If you did not get the message the first time:

3:118 O believers, do not take as close friends other than your own people (other than your co-religionists); they will spare no effort to corrupt you and wish to see you suffer. Hatred has already been manifest in what they utter, but what their hearts conceal is greater still. We have made clear Our Signs to you if only you understand.

3:119 There you are, you love them, but they do not love you, and you believe in the entire book (all Scriptures). When they meet you, they say: "We believe", but when they are alone they bite their fingertips with rage. Say: "Die of your fury. Allah knows what is hidden in the hearts!"

3:120 If you are visited by some good fortune it vexes them; and if you are visited by some misfortune, they rejoice at it; but if you forbear and fear Allah, their wiles will not hurt you at all. Allah knows fully what they do!

And again for good measure:

4:144 O believers, do not take the unbelievers for friends, instead of the believers. Do you wish to give Allah a clear proof against you?

And again, with a specific warning about associating with Christians and Jews:

5:51 O believers, do not take the Jews and the Christians as friends; some of them are friends of each other. Whoever of you takes them as friends is surely one of them. Allah indeed does not guide the wrongdoers.

A specific warning about associating with family members who don't believe, even if it means losing money:

9:23 O believers, do not take your fathers and brothers as friends, if they prefer disbelief to belief. Those who take them as friends are the wrongdoers.

9:24 Say: "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your relatives, the wealth you have gained, a trade you fear might slacken, and dwellings you love are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger or than fighting in His way, then wait until Allah fulfils His Decree. Allah does not guide the sinful people.

If a believer associates with unbelievers, Allah will question their motivation, imputing to the believer a desire for the glory that rightly and only belongs to Him.

4:139 Those who take the unbelievers as friends instead of the believers – do they seek glory from them? For all glory belongs to Allah.

A believer is not an unbeliever's keeper and is not expected to participate in any conversation where the Koran is not taken seriously.

6:68 And when you see those who talk scornfully about Our Revelations, turn away from them, until they engage in another discourse. And should the devil cause you to forget, do not sit down with the evil-doing people.

6:69 The righteous are in no way accountable for them; it is only a reminder so that they may fear [Allah].

To take part in a discussion in which the Koran is not taken seriously is risk being labelled a hypocrite by Allah.

4:140 He has revealed to you in the Book that, should you hear the Revelations of Allah being denied or mocked, you should not sit with them until they engage in some other discussion. Otherwise, you are like them. Allah shall assemble all the hypocrites and the unbelievers in Hell;

Hypocrites will be confined to the worst part of the Fire unless they repent and "mend their ways."

4:145 Surely, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire, and you will not find any supporter for them.

4:146 Except for those who repent and mend their ways, hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their obedience to Allah – those will be among the believers; and Allah shall grant the believers a great reward.

4:147 Why should Allah punish you, if you are thankful and faithful? Allah Himself is Thankful, All-Knowing.

If you must leave a discussion, do so gracefully, if haughtily, while reminding those who don't share your beliefs that they are clueless.

28:55 And when they hear idle talk, they turn away from it and say: "We have our words and you have your works.

Peace be upon you; we do not desire the company of the ignorant.”

A religion is a solemn thing; don't associate with religious people who have fun worshipping God and enjoying life.

6:70 And leave those who take their religion for sport and who are deluded by the life of this world, and remind by it (the Qur'an), lest any soul should perish of what it has earned (on account of the person's deeds). Apart from Allah, it has no protector or intercessor; and if it offers any ransom, it will not be accepted from it. Such are those who are turned over [to be punished] on account of what they have earned. They will have a drink of boiling water and a very painful punishment, because they disbelieved.

A believer must not take as a friend anyone who would deny or make fun of what Allah has revealed in the Koran, whether they are *People of the Book* or your run-of-the-mill unbeliever.

5:57 O believers, do not take as friends those who take your religion as a mockery or a sport, be they from among those who received the Book before you, or the unbelievers. Fear Allah if you are true believers.

People of the Book as transgressors:

5:59 Say: “O People of the Book, do you resent anything we do other than that we believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed before, and that most of you are transgressors?”

Unbelievers are not welcome in Allah's Mosques.

9:17 The unbelievers should not enter Allah's Mosques bearing witness thereby against themselves that they are unbelievers. The works of those are vain and in the Fire they will abide forever.

9:18 Only he who believes in Allah and the Hereafter, performs the prayers, gives the alms and fears no one but Allah, shall visit Allah's Mosques. Those shall be reckoned among the rightly guided.

Believers are not expected to take orders from unbelievers, nor tend to their injuries (Revelation 33:48).

33:45 O Prophet, We have sent you as witness, a bearer of good news and a warner,

33:46 Calling to Allah by His Leave, and an illuminating beacon.

33:47 Announce to the believers that they will have a generous bounty from Allah.

33:48 And do not obey the unbelievers and the hypocrites, overlook their injury, and trust in Allah. For Allah suffices as Guardian.

Another verse reiterates not being friends with certain people, namely, all the groups previously mentioned.

60:13 O believers, do not befriend a people against whom Allah is wrathful and who have despaired of the Hereafter, just as the unbelievers have despaired of the dwellers of the tombs (those buried in graves, *Yusuf Ali*).

A believer has no friends except Allah, His Messenger, and those who bow down before His Eminence.

5:55 Your only friends are Allah, His Messenger and those who believe, performing the prayer and giving the alms, while they bow down.

5:56 Whoever takes Allah, His Messenger and those who believe as friends [must know] that Allah's party is indeed triumphant.

A believer who befriends unbelievers is an evildoer!

5:80 You (Muhammad): see many of them befriending the unbelievers. Evil is what their soul prompts them to do. They have incurred Allah's Wrath and they will suffer torment forever.

5:81 Had they believed in Allah and the Prophet, and what has been revealed to him, they would not have taken them as friends.

In Allah's history of the Jews and Christians, there was a time...

57:16 Is it not time that the believers' hearts should bow down at the mention of Allah and the truth which was sent down, and not to be like those who were given the Book

previously, but as time went by, their hearts hardened, and many of them are sinners now.

There is a type of unbeliever whom Allah considers believer-appropriate as friends, but identifying them could be problematic based on God's description, and you really would not want to make a mistake that sends you to Hell.

3:199 Of the People of the Book, there are some who indeed believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to you (the Qur'an) or has been revealed to them, humbling themselves before Allah and not selling Allah's Revelations for a small price. Those will have their reward with their Lord; indeed Allah's Reckoning is Swift.

Be afraid; be *very* afraid.

3:200 O believers, forbear and vie in forbearance and steadfastness; and fear Allah so that you may prosper.

In a 2010 BBC documentary, a leading British Islamic scholar had the following to say to his coreligionists about making nice with unbelievers:

Allah has warned us in the Koran, do not befriend the kuffar⁷², do not align yourself with the kuffar; the verses are so many and so numerous I can't recite every one of them.

From an exhortation made to students from a British madrassa by Abu Yusuf Riyadh-ul-Haq, an Islamic scholar based in the United Kingdom, not to associate with Christians and Jews.

BBC documentary, *British Schools, Islamic Rules*.

⁷² A derogatory term for unbelievers. The term refers to a person who rejects God or who hides, denies, or "covers" the truth." *Wiki*

APPENDICES

The First Korans

Narrated Zaid bin Thabit Al-Ansari who was one of those who used to write the Divine Revelation:

Abu Bakr sent for me after the (heavy) casualties among the warriors (of the battle) of Yamama (where a great number of Qurra' (reciters of the Koran) were killed). Umar was present with Abu Bakr who said, "Umar has come to me and said, 'The people have suffered heavy casualties on the day of (the battle of) Yamama, and I am afraid that there will be more casualties among the Qurra (those who know the Qur'an by heart) at other battle-fields, whereby a large part of the Qur'an may be lost, unless you collect it. And I am of the opinion that you should collect the Qur'an.'"

Abu Bakr added, "I said to Umar, 'How can I do something which Allah's Apostle has not done?'"

Umar said (to me), "By Allah, it is (really) a good thing."

So Umar kept on pressing, trying to persuade me to accept his proposal, till Allah opened my bosom for it and I had the same opinion as Umar.

(Zaid bin Thabit added:) Umar was sitting with him, Abu Bakr, and was not speaking to me).

"You are a wise young man and we do not suspect you (of telling lies or of forgetfulness): and you used to write the Divine Inspiration for Allah's Apostle. Therefore, look for the Qur'an and collect it (in one manuscript)."

By Allah, if he (Abu Bakr) had ordered me to shift one of the mountains (from its place) it would not have been harder for me than what he had ordered me concerning the collection of the Qur'an. I said to both of them, "How dare you do a thing which the Prophet has not done?"

Abu Bakr said, "By Allah, it is (really) a good thing."

So I kept on arguing with him about it till Allah opened my bosom for that which He had opened the bosoms of Abu Bakr and Umar. So I started locating Quranic material and collecting it from parchments, scapula, leaf-stalks of date palms and from the memories of men (who knew it by heart).

I found with Khuzaima two Verses of Surat-at-Tauba which I had not found with anybody else, (and they were): "Verily there has come to you an Apostle (Muhammad) from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty He (Muhammad) is ardently anxious over you (to be rightly guided)" (9:128)

The manuscript on which the Quran was collected, remained with Abu Bakr till Allah took him unto Him, and then with Umar till Allah took him unto Him, and finally it remained with Hafsa, Umar's daughter.

Bukhari 60.201

Thabit's original, which the daughter of Caliph Umar kept under her bed, was retrieved on the order of Uthman who succeeded Umar as caliph.

Narrated Anas bin Malik:

Hudhaifa bin Al-Yaman came to Uthman at the time when the people of Sham and the people of Iraq were Waging war to conquer Arminya and Adharbijan. Hudhaifa was afraid of their (the people of Sham and Iraq) differences in the recitation of the Qur'an, so he said to Uthman, "O chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book (Quran) as Jews and the Christians did before."

So Uthman sent a message to Hafsa saying, "Send us the manuscripts of the Qur'an so that we may compile the Qur'anic materials in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you."

Hafsa sent it to Uthman. Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, Abdullah bin AzZubair, Said bin Al-As and 'Abdur Rahman bin Harith bin Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies.

Uthman said to the three Quraishi men, "In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit on any point in the Qur'an, then write it

in the dialect of Quraish, the Qur'an was revealed in their tongue."

They did so, and when they had written many copies, Uthman returned the original manuscripts to Hafsa.

Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt.

Said bin Thabit added, "A Verse from Surat Ahzab was missed by me when we copied the Qur'an and I used to hear Allah's Apostle reciting it. So we searched for it and found it with Khuzaima bin Thabit Al-Ansari. (That Verse was): 'Among the Believers are men who have been true in their covenant with Allah.'" (33:23)

Bukhari 61.510

But that is still not the end of it. For how we got to the Cairo edition, the basis of all modern 20th and 21st century mainstream translations, see Appendix *Mary the Erstwhile Messenger*.

Mary the Erstwhile Messenger

Most, if not all, of the more than fifty original inscriptions on Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock are Koranic in origin. It is difficult to say which are not, if any, because Allah's book of revealed truths has gone through a number of revisions and redaction. The last, the so-called Cairo edition, was completed in the 1920s at Al-Azhar University and is the basis of all modern twentieth and twenty-first century mainstream translations.

The inscriptions in question are seventh-century in origin which, according to Estelle Whelan in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, "have generally being ignored or dismissed because of apparent departures from the 'canonical' text, as represented by the Cairo edition." This includes, it would seem, the inscription where Mary, mother of Jesus, has the status of Messenger. On the inner octagonal arcade of the Dome of the Rock, you can read the following inscription pertaining to Mary's status:

Mary, was only a Messenger of God, and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not 'Three' - Cease!

In the seventh century, Mary was considered a Messenger of God; today she is no such thing, and the Cairo edition is clear on the concept. Estelle Whelan goes on to explain how we got to the Cairo edition (lightly edited to conform to the naming convention used throughout my books on the Koran, e.g., al-Madinah changed to Medina):

In the last two decades a controversy has arisen over the period in which the text of Muslim scripture became codified. The traditional Islamic view can be summarized as follows.

Both Abu Bakr (632-34) and Umar (634-44) made efforts to gather together the scraps of revelation that had been written down by the faithful during the lifetime of the Prophet, on bones, on palm leaves, on potsherds, and on whatever other materials were at hand, as well as being preserved in "the breasts of men."

But it was the third caliph, Uthman (644-61), who first charged a small group of men of Medina with codifying and standardizing the text.

Alarmed by reported divergences in the recitation of the revelation, he commissioned one of the Prophet's former secretaries, Zayd b. Thabit, and several prominent members of Quraysh - Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr, Sa'id b. al-'As, and Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith are those most often mentioned - to produce a standard copy of the text, based on the compilation in the keeping of Hafsa, daughter of Umar.

If there was disagreement over language among members of the commission, it was to be resolved in accordance with the dialect spoken by Quraysh.

Once the standard text had been established, several copies were made and sent to major cities in the Islamic domain, specifically Damascus, Basra, Kufa, and perhaps others.

Although there are variations in detail, for example, in the list of names of those who served on Uthman's commission and in the list of cities to which copies were sent, this basic outline is not in dispute within the Muslim world.

Oral recitation nevertheless remained the preferred mode of transmission, and, as time passed, variant versions of the text proliferated - the kind of organic change that is endemic to an oral tradition.

In addition, because of the nature of the early Arabic script, in which short vowels were not indicated and consonants of similar form were only sometimes distinguished by pointing, writing, too, was subject to misunderstanding, copyist's error, and change over time.

In the early tenth century, at Baghdad, Abu Bakr Ibn Mujahid (d. 936) succeeded in reducing the number of acceptable readings to the seven that were predominant in the main Muslim centers of the time: Medina, Mecca, Damascus, Basra, and Kufa.

Some Qur'an readers who persisted in deviating from these seven readings were subjected to draconian punishments.

Nevertheless, with the passage of time, additional variant readings were readmitted, first "the three after the seven," then "the four after the ten."

The modern Cairo edition, prepared at al-Azhar in the 1920s, is based on one of the seven readings permitted by Ibn Mujahid, that of Abu Bakr 'Āsim (d. 745) as transmitted by Hafs b. Sulayman (d. 796).

What is important to retain from her article is that the Cairo edition is based, at a minimum, on a second-hand verbal transmission. Is it possible that Mary's apparent demotion in Allah's book of unchanging truths was simply an error in communication, oral transmissions being notoriously unreliable? Yes, but not so unreliable as to make a mistake of this magnitude.

Could some powerful men, e.g., caliphs, in their arrogance and to further their own agenda, have done like God—who, in His Book of immutable facts, admits to changing His mind (recommended *Let Me Rephrase That*, Boreal Books)—and removed the verse about Mary being a messenger of Allah in one of the later editions of the Koran? Her demotion had to be deliberate and may have had something to do with the sayings of Muhammad collected more than one hundred years after his passing, in which he makes his views about women abundantly and depressingly clear⁷³.

⁷³ A sample:

Narrated abu Said al-Khudri:

The Prophet said, "Isn't the witness of a woman equal half that of a man?"

The women said, "Yes."

He said: "This is because of the deficiency of the woman's mind."

Bukhari 48.286

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar:

Allah's Apostle said, "Evil omen is in the women, the house and the horse."

Bukhari 62.30

Narrated Usama bin Zaid:

The Prophet said, "After me I have not left any affliction more harmful to men than women."

Bukhari 62.33

They could, of course, demote her but not dismiss her completely, the greatest needing a lesser messenger in the person of her son to attest to his pre-eminence among God's better-known spokespersons.

Narrated Aisha:

The things which annul the prayers were mentioned before me. They said, Prayer is annulled by a dog, a donkey and a woman (if they pass in front of the praying people).

Bukhari 9.490

Aisha said [to Muhammad]: "You have made us equal to the dogs and the asses."

Sahih Muslim

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