

# Some Parascriptural Dimensions of the “Tale of Hārūt wa-Mārūt”

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Early commentators and traditionists embed and amplify Q 2:102—an enigmatic allusion to angelic complicity in the transmission of esoteric knowledge to humankind—within a rich layer of interpretive lore frequently bearing the rubric “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt.” A close study of this verse alongside its external narrative embellishments uncovers a wealth of structural and contextual motifs that suggestively link the “Tale” with biblical and parascriptural myths about “fallen angels” and their perceived role in the corruption of antediluvian humanity. The present article catalogs a representative number of these motifs, speculates about their mode of transmission, and offers some guidelines for analyzing the different versions of the “Tale” that surface centuries later in medieval Jewish interpretive and mystical literature. Particular attention is devoted to unpacking the identity of the woman who is responsible for the seduction of the angels.

“. . . dass wir in unserm AT nur ein Bruchstück  
der alten religiösen Literatur besitzen.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the more perplexing problems facing modern students of the Quran and the interpretive lore surrounding it, as embodied in early hadith, traditional commentaries, and collections of prophetic legends, involves the recovery of its oral or written sources and the literary and social contexts in which such material is rooted. There are few modern critical scholars who would deny the fundamentally generative role played by scripture (“Bible”) in the formulation and expression of Quranic discourse. Beginning in the nineteenth century with the influential prize essay of Abraham Geiger<sup>2</sup> and continuing with varying degrees of emphasis and success up to the present, Western scholars have devoted considerable effort and energy to show that it is not simply the various canonical versions of the Bible familiar from later communities of Jews or Christians that buttress the Quran’s or its interpretive tradition’s frequent appeals to scriptural characters, episodes, and exemplars; rather, it is a type of “Bible” that presupposes and operates with certain distinctive readings or traditions that are paralleled in Jewish midrashic treatments of these same characters or episodes, or in the case of Christian materials, the traditions or interpretations that are also attested in so-called apocryphal and even allegedly heterodox works. It is this broad spectrum of amplificatory materials that my titular adjective “parascriptural” embraces: communities of readers in Near Eastern

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1. H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1895), 88.

2. A. Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (Bonn: F. Baaden, 1833). For the groundbreaking nature of Geiger’s research upon Islamic literature, see especially S. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998), 52–62; R. Firestone, “The Qur’ān and the Bible: Some Modern Studies of Their Relationship,” in *Bible and Qur’ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. J. C. Reeves (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 7–11.

late antiquity performed, experienced, and transmitted “Bible” as well as other scriptures in a variety of registers and interpretive formats.<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad was not the only religious leader in late antiquity whose Bible was invested with a scope, whether material or conceptual, that transcends reputedly orthodox norms as to what that label supposedly encompassed. But he is surely our most important witness to what might constitute authentic “biblical” lore in the Hījāz during the early seventh century.

One intriguing example of this more expansive understanding of scriptural lore presents itself in the curious reference in the Quran (2:102) to two “angels” in Babylon named Hārūt and Mārūt who bear responsibility for the spread of “magic” (*sihr*) and other revelatory knowledge among the people. These two names do not figure anywhere else in the Quran or appear in any canonical version of the Jewish or Christian scriptures that would have predated or been contemporary with Muḥammad or the first few generations of Muslim scholastics.<sup>4</sup> The Quranic verse is characteristically terse: we are not, for example, told who these two particular angels are, how they came to be in Babylon, or why they would implicate themselves in the transmittal of disreputable knowledge to humanity. The verse does, however, remark that Hārūt and Mārūt “never taught anyone without first warning: We are a temptation; so do not become irreligious!”<sup>5</sup> It then goes on to affirm that while the empirical application of their teachings might produce marital discord, they remain essentially harmless except for those cases when God permits their efficacy. The unfortunate miscreants who persist in adhering to such teachings and in rejecting God “will have no portion in the World to Come.”<sup>6</sup>

The present article discusses the ways in which early Muslim commentators and traditionists have embedded and amplified this enigmatic verse within a rich layer of interpretive lore. It also seeks to show that while the extant discursive narratives of an elaborated “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt” are indubitably Muslim in their cultural identity, the fundamental building blocks out of which the “Tale” has been fashioned are “biblically” grounded and indeed

3. I borrow the useful phrase “communities of readers” from R. Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994), 1–23. For the definition of “parascriptural,” see J. E. Bowley and J. C. Reeves, “Rethinking the Concept of ‘Bible’: Some Theses and Proposals,” *Henoch* 25 (2003): 3–18.

4. The names “Hārūt” and “Mārūt” are most often explained by modern scholars as garbled reflexes of “Haurvatāt” and “Amərətāt,” Avestan entities who correspond to the later figures “Khurdād” and “Murdād” and who govern the material realms of waters and plant life respectively. See J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* (Bombay: Tata Press, 1973), 137–38; A. Bausani, *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Baha’ullah* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000), 116. The source of this suggested explanation appears to be Paul de Lagarde; see the references cited by M. Grünbaum, “Beiträge zur vergleichenden Mythologie aus der Hagada,” in idem, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Sagenkunde*, ed. F. Perles (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1901), 63 n. 5. Possible confirmation for this interreligious correlation is found in a Central Asian Manichaean lexical list (M 109 recto), where line 16 of this Middle Persian–Sogdian glossary seems to make the same identification. See W. B. Henning, *Sogdica* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1940), 16 (text) and 19 (commentary); P. J. de Menasce, “Une légende indo-iranienne dans l’angéologie judéo-musulmane: À propos de Hārūt et Mārūt,” *Asiatische Studien* 1 (1947): 17. Some (e.g., J. Horowitz, “Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 [1925]: 164–65) have nominated the Slavonic Book of Enoch’s “Ariokh and Mariokh” (2 En. 33:11), an enigmatic angelic pair who function there as the custodians of ancestral scriptures, as possible points of contact for or reflexes of the Quranic duo, but given this work’s complex linguistic background and the uncertainty surrounding its production and transmission, their suggestion has not gained much traction.

5. M. Fakhry, *An Interpretation of the Qur’an: English Translation of the Meanings. A Bilingual Edition* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2002), 19–20, slightly emended.

6. *Ibid.*, 20, slightly emended. Cf. the potentially relevant pronouncements of R. ‘Aqiva and Abba Shaul in *m. Sanh.* 10.1.

rely upon one or more versions of an articulated "Bible" that appears older than its canonical written forms currently attested among western Jewish and Christian communities.<sup>7</sup>

## I

Early Muslim tradents recount an elaborate contextual background within which to situate this problematic verse. Arguably its most artificial—by which I mean its most consciously literary—form figures in those medieval anthologies of stories culled from a variety of both written and oral sources that come to be known as "prophetic legends" (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*), encyclopaedic assemblages in which the narrative lore associated with Muḥammad's scriptural predecessors is accumulated and collated under chronologically sequenced nominative rubrics. Within such standard collections, such as those assembled by al-Thaʿlabī and al-Kisāʾī, it takes the form of a self-contained story packaged alongside legends about the prophet Idrīs and normally introduced with the incipit "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt" (*qiṣṣat Hārūt wa-Mārūt*). By way of contrast, in the *tafsīr* or traditional Quranic commentary tradition we encounter a wealth of fragmentary and dissembled clusters of narrative materials and illustrative comments associated with particular named tradents, a few of whom are even traced to the Prophet himself.<sup>8</sup> These more malleable clusters by and large can be successfully correlated with the "prophetic legends" renditions inasmuch as the latter anthologies frequently reproduce the *isnāds* of the authorities upon whom they rely.

For the purpose of this exposition and analysis, perhaps the least complicated procedure is to identify first those sources that I am using to uncover the various elements that seem to belong to the narrative complex of the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt." To date I have sifted through the most relevant of the lengthy collection of traditions assembled by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) in his *Tafsīr* to Q 2:102.<sup>9</sup> Prominent traditionists incorporated therein include the notorious Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, who is often fingered as a primary conduit of nefarious *isrāʾīliyyāt* or "Jewish stuff" into nascent Islam,<sup>10</sup> as well as Mujāhid, Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn ʿUmar, ʿAlī, Rabīʿ, and al-Suddī. I have also examined various versions of the "Tale" that figure in the later compilations of quasi-historical and legendary lore attributed to al-Maqdisī, al-Thaʿlabī, al-Kisāʾī, and al-Qazwīnī, employing the standard print editions in each case.<sup>11</sup> According to

7. The textual volatility of those compositions eventually assembled within what scholars anachronistically label "the Bible" has been increasingly recognized over the past thirty years of research by conscientious historians of late antiquity. See, e.g., Bowley and Reeves, "Rethinking," 3–18; R. A. Kraft, "Para-mania: Beside, before, and beyond Bible Studies," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007): 5–27; M. E. Pregill, "The Hebrew Bible and the Quran: The Problem of the Jewish 'Influence' on Islam," *Religion Compass* 1 (2007): 643–59; J. C. Reeves, "Problematizing the Bible . . . Then and Now," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100 (2010): 139–52; D. Selden, "Text Networks," *Ancient Narrative* 8 (2010): 1–23; E. Mroczek, "Thinking Digitally about the Dead Sea Scrolls: Book History before and beyond the Book," *Book History* 14 (2011): 241–69.

8. Comprehensive treatments of the *tafsīr* genre, coupled with copious bibliography, are C. Gilliot, "Exegesis of the Qurʾān: Classical and Medieval," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J. D. McAuliffe, 6 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001–6), 2: 99–124; idem, "Kontinuität und Wandel in der 'klassischen' islamischen Koranlegung (II./VII.–XII./XIX. Jh.)," *Der Islam* 85 (2010): 1–155.

9. Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 30 vols. (Būlāq, 1905–11; repr. 12 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifā, 1986), 1: 350–70; idem, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān (Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī)*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002), 1: 583–614.

10. See R. Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qurʾān and Muslim Literature* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2002), 90–91; also the sources cited by J. C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postbiblical Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 109–10 n. 20.

11. Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-l-taʾrikh*, ed. C. Huart, 6 vols. (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899–1919), 3: 14.1–14; Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ al-musammā bi-l-ʿarāʾis* (Cairo: al-Sharafiyya, 1880), 48–51; Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ: Vita Prophetarum auctore Muḥammed ben ʿAbdallah al-Kisāʾi*, ed. I. Eisenberg, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J.

Roberto Tottoli, the yet unpublished manuscript of Ishāq b. Bishr's early collection of "prophetic legends" held by the Bodleian Library in Oxford contains a discrete section amounting to five manuscript leaves dealing with Hārūt and Mārūt.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless al-Maqqdisī does claim to transmit some traditions emanating from Ishāq b. Bishr, and these will have to serve in the interim as representative of this early compilation.<sup>13</sup> A number of other analogous compilations in both Arabic and Persian (e.g., Mīrkhwānd) include the "Tale," but they add little beyond what is already present in the aforementioned sources.<sup>14</sup>

A synoptic examination of the aforementioned witnesses allows one to produce a skeletal outline or sequence of narrative elements for the "Tale" that serves to unite the majority of these sources despite the discrepancies in the details of their respective stories (see Table 1). These common structural elements might be listed seriatim under the following four rubrics: (A) a prolegomenon in heaven; (B) resulting in an angelic mission to earth; (C) the corruption of these emissary angels; and (D) their consequent punishment by God.

Viewed through a more powerful lens, several further sub-themes or motifs are visible within each of the four constituent elements of the larger narrative structure. For example, under (A) a prominent motif is a tension or even a rivalry that is perceived to exist between the angels and the newly created human race. This often produces an angelic reproach or reproof of God Himself for bringing such a defective group of creatures as "humans" into existence. Or under (C) the signal transgression that effects their corruption is that of actual or attempted sexual activity with a woman of unsurpassed beauty. There are, however, some crucial differences in the way this general scenario is set up and played out among the various narrative renditions (see Table 1). Most of these variant features of what is arguably an integral extra-Quranic tale point suggestively toward its essentially folkloristic character and popular appeal predicating a variety of oral and written registers,<sup>15</sup> some of which extend well beyond the boundaries of Islam.

For a closer examination of the "Tale" itself, I provide below the version associated with the traditionist Mujāhid.<sup>16</sup> I have lightly edited the text as found in the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī in order to minimize redundancy and omit obscurity:<sup>17</sup>

Brill, 1922–23), 2: 45.22–46.10, 13–17; for Qazwīnī, see *Zakariya Ben Muhammed Ben Mahmud el-Cazwini's Kosmographie*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1848–49; repr. Wiesbaden: Martin Sändig, 1967), 1: 61.18–62.9.

12. Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qurʾān*, 158–59 nn. 11–12. The accession number is Oxford Ms. Bodl. Huntingdon 388; fols. 95a–99a feature the angels Hārūt and Mārūt.

13. Note also N. Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, vol. 1: *Historical Texts* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 45–46. She speculates that her fragmentary Adam and Eve papyrus may stem from this "obscure" tradent.

14. See the references supplied by P. Crone, "The *Book of Watchers* in the Qurʾān," in H. Ben-Shammai, S. Shaked, and S. Stroumsa, eds., *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism, and Science in the Mediterranean World* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of the Sciences and Humanities, 2013), 16–17 n. 1.

15. Note the remarks of E. Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1999), 9.

16. Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 722), identified by Ibn al-Nadīm (*The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* [ed. and tr. B. Dodge, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1970), 1: 75]) as one who transmitted the "book of Ibn ʿAbbās" whose traditions are considered to be the most trustworthy. See further Gilliot, "Exegesis," 2: 105. Gilliot points out that the manuscript edition of Mujāhid's *tafsīr* is not always identical with the material that is quoted by al-Ṭabarī.

17. Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (ed. Beirut, 1986), 1: 365; idem, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (ed. Beirut, 2002), 1: 602 (no. 1692). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English in this article are mine. See also E. Littmann, "Hārūt und Mārūt," in *Festschrift Friedrich Carl Andreas zur Vollendung des siebenzigsten Lebensjahres am 14. April 1916 dargebracht von Freunden und Schülern* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1916), 78–79; L. Jung, "Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature: A Study in Comparative Folk-Lore," *Jewish Quarterly Review* n.s. 16 (1925–26): 308.

According to Mujāhid, the subject of Hārūt and Mārūt pertains to when the angels were amazed at the wickedness of human beings even after messengers, books, and explanations had been provided for them. Their Lord said to them [i.e., the angels]: "Choose from among yourselves two angels whom I will send down to adjudicate among the human beings upon the earth." They chose Hārūt and Mārūt. [God at this point issues instructions to Hārūt and Mārūt to observe the divine ordinances.]

Then they accordingly came down—and no one was more obedient to God than they—and they judged and acted justly. They would adjudicate during the daylight hours among human beings, and when it was evening they would re-ascend and remain among the angels. They would go back down [to earth] when it was morning. They continued to judge and act justly until al-Zuhara [i.e., the planet Venus] came to them in the beautiful form of a woman. She was party to a lawsuit, and they pronounced judgment against her. Passion arose in each one of them for her. One of them said to his colleague: "Do you feel similarly to how I feel?" He answered, "Yes." They sent for her [saying], "Come [back] to us and we will rule in your favor." When she returned, they spoke to her and issued a ruling in her favor. [Then they said:] "Come with us," and she came to them, and they exposed their genitals to her. However, their lechery was in their hearts, for they were not like human beings with regard to lust for women and its pleasures.

After they had finished with this, and having taken delight in her and becoming infatuated with her, al-Zuhara flew away and returned to where she formerly was. When it was evening, they tried to re-ascend, but they were repelled: it was not permitted for them to do so, nor were their wings able to carry them. They sought the help of a mortal man: they came to him and said, "Invoke your Lord for us." He answered, "How can the inhabitants of earth intercede for the inhabitants of heaven?" They said, "We heard your Lord speak well of you in heaven." He promised them he would pray for them. He prayed for them and his prayers were answered. They were made to choose between punishment in this world or punishment in the hereafter. They each looked at one another and said, "We know that the types of divine punishment in the hereafter are like such and such and are eternal, whereas in comparison [those for] this world are transient and [will eventually cease]." It was decreed that they be sent down to Babylon and endure their punishment there. It is said that they are suspended in iron [chains], upside-down [and] flapping their wings.

*Some pertinent initial observations:*

1. Angelic amazement at human wickedness and perfidy is the essential flash point that sets all the extant versions of the "Tale" into narrative motion. The setting itself, however, is manifested in several forms. Here their astonishment stems from the circumstance that even though God has already provided them with prophets, scriptures, and clear instructions outlining the difference between right and wrong, the human race persists in its sinful activities. Perhaps humans have misunderstood these particular media of communication? Direct intervention from heaven—in the form of two angelic governors, themselves paragons of virtue—should soon set humans on the straight path. They would require angelic guidance in order to learn the difference between righteous and sinful behaviors. Far more prevalent, however, are the versions of the "Tale" that link the angelic condemnation of humanity either directly or indirectly to the scriptural (i.e., Quranic) accounts of the creation of Adam. According to one form of this tradition attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, "God opened a breach in heaven for His angels to view the deeds of humanity. When they saw them committing crimes, they said: O Lord, these humans whom You created with Your hand and whom You made Your angels worship and whom You taught the names of everything are committing crimes!"<sup>18</sup> A consequence of

18. Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (ed. Beirut, 1986), 1: 362–63; idem, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (ed. Beirut, 2002), 1: 598 (no. 1684). This angelic accusation reprises certain motifs found in Quranic anthropogenic passages such as Q 2:30–34 and 38:71–85.

Table 1. “Tale of Hārūt wa-Mārūt”: Ten Exemplars

Ka'b al-Ahbar	Mujāhid	Ibn 'Umar	Ibn 'Abbās	'Alī	al-Suddī	Rabī'	al-Maqdisī	al-Tha'labī	Kisā'i
							God resolves to create Adam		
							Angels object		
							Adam created anyway		
			Adam expelled from Paradise						
			Most angels plead for mercy						
			One group upbraids Adam						
			God decides to test this group, among whom were Hārūt and Mārūt						
[Angels view humanity embroiled in sin]	Angels are amazed at human wickedness	Angels view humanity embroiled in sin	Angels view humanity embroiled in sin			[Angels view humanity embroiled in sin]	Humanity embroiled in sin	Angels view humanity embroiled in sin	
Angels reproach humans before God		Angels reproach humans before God	Angels accuse humans before God		Hārūt and Mārūt accuse humans before God	Angels reproach humans before God	Angels remind God of their initial objections to creation of humans	Angels reproach humans before God	
		They assert their superiority to humans	They assert their superiority to humans		They claim they would be righteous judges, even if endowed with human desires			They assert their superiority to humans	
God claims angels would be no better		God claims angels would be no better	God claims angels would be no better			God attributes their sins to their distance from His Presence (?)		God claims angels would be no better	

God commands angels to select (2) representatives	God commands angels to select 2 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 or 3 representatives	God commands angels to select 2 or 3 representatives
Purpose: to descend & judge human beings									
Issues commands and prohibitions									
Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris	Chronology: takes place during the time of Idris
Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night	Originally judge justly: reside on earth during day & re-ascend to Heaven at night
They are eventually corrupted	They are corrupted in less than 24 hours	After descending, they are corrupted	They are eventually corrupted	They are eventually corrupted	They are eventually corrupted				
By lust for Zuhara, a planet in the form of a woman	By lust for a woman	By lust for a woman	By lust for a woman	By lust for a woman	By lust for a woman	By lust for a woman	By lust for a woman	By lust for a woman, or by Zuhara, a planet in the form of a woman	By lust for a woman
They attempt to seduce her									

1. Their place of descent is Babylon.  
 2. Her beauty is compared to that "of Venus among the stars."

Table 1. *continued*

Ka'b al-Ahbar	Mujāhid	Ibn 'Umar	Ibn 'Abbās	'Alī	al-Suddī	Rabī'	al-Maqdisī	al-Tha'labī	Kisā'ī
	Zuhara returns to Heaven			Woman uses the name they teach her to ascend to Heaven	Woman uses the "words" they teach her to ascend to Heaven		Woman uses the name they teach her to ascend to Heaven	Woman uses the name they teach her to ascend to Heaven	
	And reassumes her original form			She is transformed into a star	She is transformed into a star		She is transformed into a star (Venus)		
Permanently banished to earth until the end of their punishment	Discover they are unable to re-ascend to Heaven		Barred from re-ascending to Heaven	Discover they are unable to re-ascend to Heaven	Discover they are unable to re-ascend to Heaven	Discover they are unable to re-ascend to Heaven		Discover they are unable to re-ascend to Heaven	Permanently banished to earth until the end of their punishment
	Seek out a mortal to intercede with God for them		Seek out Idris to intercede with God for them					Seek out Idris to intercede with God for them	Seek out Idris to intercede with God for them
	He assents to their request		He assents to their request					He assents to their request	He assents to their request
	As a result, God offers a choice between punishments	God offers a choice between punishments	God offers the angels a choice between punishments (via Solomon!)		Offered a choice between punishments	Offered a choice between punishments	God offers the angels a choice of punishments	God offers the angels a choice of punishments	As a result, God offers a choice between punishments
	They choose punishment in this world	They choose punishment in this world	They choose punishment in this world		They choose punishment in this world	They choose punishment in this world	They choose punishment in this world	They choose punishment in this world	
	Enchained & suspended upside-down in Babylon		Enchained & suspended upside-down in a pit in Babylon		Suspended in Babylon	Place of their punishment is Babylon	Suspended by their hair in a pit in Babylon	Place of their punishment is Babylon	Bound & enchained, suspended upside-down in a pit in Babylon
					Magicians learn sorcery from them		Magicians learn sorcery from them	Magicians learn sorcery from them	
		Exegetically tied to Q 2:102	Exegetically tied to Q 2:102		Exegetically tied to Q 2:102				

this type of exegetical linkage, whether intentional or inherited, is an importation into this particular narrative setting of what were each arguably once independent but are now interlocked elements or themes; namely, (1) simmering angelic resentment toward and jealousy of the exalted status of Adam;<sup>19</sup> (2) the motif of a contest pitting Adam/humanity against one or more angelic beings in order to determine who is the superior created entity;<sup>20</sup> and (3) the scriptural legend(s) recounting the fall of Iblīs and his minions.<sup>21</sup> None of these complicating elements is visible in Mujāhid.<sup>22</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās (and the parallel versions) by contrast has God respond to the angelic reproach with a forceful challenge. He asserts that the angels would fare no better than humans were they to become subject to the same kind of libidinal forces and drives that humans experience on earth. This naturally invites an angelic denial that will invoke the scene for a contest pitting angelic champions against human frailties whose outcome is tragically foreordained.

Almost all versions of the "Tale" specify the emissaries or the contest participants as two in number; more rarely they are identified as three. Citing unnamed "annalists," al-Maqdisī relates that God commanded the reproachful angels "to select three of their most worthy representatives," but the anthologist fails to inform us how we should correlate or match these unnamed three with the incipit introducing his discussion of these angels, where only two, namely, Hārūt and Mārūt, find mention. A tradition attributed to al-Kalbī and found in al-Tha‘labī also envisions three angels as involved in this setting.<sup>23</sup>

2. Hārūt and Mārūt are depicted as behaving justly for an unspecified period of time. They arrive on earth each morning, spend the day adjudicating lawsuits and disputes (al-Maqdisī says that they instructed the people in righteousness),<sup>24</sup> and return to their heavenly station at nightfall. This version of the "Tale" is formally distinct from those in which God has challenged the angels to put their assertion of their superiority to humans to the test. The crucial difference centers on the complicity of the deity in this enterprise. For Mujāhid and allied versions, Hārūt and Mārūt are emissaries of God and serve at His behest. The remaining versions represent God as reluctantly permitting Hārūt and Mārūt to descend to earth in order to confirm a point. The pedagogic mission of the angels is often absent from these versions because it is no longer a necessary component of the plot.<sup>25</sup> Instead, God is usually depicted as endowing Hārūt and Mārūt with human passions prior to their descent so that they can make good on their boast that they would never succumb to terrestrial temptations. According

19. This theme can occur in isolation from the following two in rabbinic sources. The classic exposition of the Jewish sources that feature angelic resentment for humans is P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvormstellung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975). Another especially insightful analysis is that of G. A. Anderson, "The Exaltation of Adam and the Fall of Satan," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 6 (1997): 105–34.

20. Some rabbinic and Christian sources make this theme a consequence of the preceding one.

21. It occurs almost exclusively in Christian and Muslim sources. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* is the first indubitably Jewish attestation of this theme and, given this work's undisputed post-Islamic provenance, is likely indebted to non-Jewish thought for this story.

22. The issuance of direct commands and prohibitions to the two angelic judges prior to their descent does not necessarily signal the presence of the contest-motif at this stage of the narrative since the angels nowhere explicitly aver their moral superiority to humanity (see Table 1).

23. A shift from two to three angelic antagonists is also mirrored in some analogous Jewish traditions. See *Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta*, ed. M. Friedmann (Vienna: [s.n.], 1904), 49; *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981), 5–7; and compare 2 *En.* 18:4 (long version).

24. *K. al-Badʿ* (ed. Huart), 3: 14.7–8.

25. The version attributed to al-Suddī has both, which may be representative of a transitional stage in the recountal of the story. Therein Hārūt and Mārūt criticize not human behavior but human jurisprudence and aver that they themselves could do a better job. See Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (ed. Beirut, 1986), 1: 363–64; idem, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (ed. Beirut, 2002), 1: 600 (no. 1689).

to Ka'b and to Ibn 'Abbās, God also explicitly adjures the pair to avoid specific transgressions such as idolatry, theft, bloodshed, fornication, and drinking wine. Finally, unlike those forms of the story that represent Hārūt and Mārūt faithfully discharging their divinely sanctioned educational or judicial obligations on earth among humans for an unspecified number of days, the versions that envision them as “contestants” portray them as succumbing to temptation almost immediately upon their arrival, usually within less than twenty-four hours.

3. All extant versions of the “Tale” attribute their downfall to their overwhelming infatuation with a beautiful woman. Most versions identify her by name as Zuhara (“shining star; Venus”), occasionally supplying the further Persian glosses of Anāhīd and/or Beidukht, also designations for that same heavenly body. She is in almost every case a fully human entity, no matter whether the different versions characterize her as inherently deceitful and lustful or as totally chaste. The tradition recounted by Mujāhid is atypical in that the woman who tempts and ultimately corrupts the two angelic rulers is actually the heavenly entity herself, the planet Venus (al-Zuhara), who has apparently only temporarily assumed human guise. Although it is not explicitly stated, it seems likely that she was dispatched at the behest of God in order to put His two emissaries to the test, suggesting that the independent motif of the “contest” staged between the angels and the deity or humans has entered this otherwise distinct tale-type at a different place in the story.<sup>26</sup>

There are at least three different forms of the scene featuring the encounter of Hārūt and Mārūt with the beautiful woman that produces their fateful corruption. As we have just seen, one form conceives of the woman also as a heavenly messenger whom God has apparently dispatched in order to test His angelic judges. This form, representing a conflation of distinct tale-types, is found only in Mujāhid. The remaining two forms, however, are much more common and appear to be equally distributed among the versions. They can be basically distinguished by their variant depiction of the moral character of the beautiful woman so attractive to the bedazzled angels. One form conceives of her as an inherently wicked creature who reciprocates their lust for her and who then coyly effects their ruin by tempting them with a series of criminal or apostate acts, all the while promising to submit to their sexual advances provided they participate in these other forbidden behaviors. The other form similarly exploits their consuming passion, but the woman, who is actually virtuous and desperately attempting to evade their attentions, manages to hoodwink the hopelessly enamored angels into disclosing to her a mechanism by which she can escape from their clutches, namely, the correct articulation of the Ineffable or Most Powerful Name of God, the very means by which Hārūt and Mārūt themselves re-ascend to their heavenly abode each evening after the conclusion of their daily labors. Once she learns these powerful syllables, she immediately pronounces them and flies off to heaven, where God rewards her cleverness and intact virtue by transforming her into the planet Venus.

Within both of these latter forms, Hārūt and Mārūt succumb to temptation and soon discover they are now doomed to remain permanently on earth. This result invariably follows regardless of whether they physically succeed in consummating their lust for Zuhara. Their intention to perpetrate sinful behavior despite the divine prohibitions against it confirms

26. Compare n. 21 above. The version of the tale that is attributed jointly to Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās (*apud* Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān* [ed. Beirut, 1986], 1: 363; idem, *Jāmi' al-bayān* [ed. Beirut, 2002], 1: 598–99 [no. 1685]) also depicts al-Zuhara as descending and assuming the shape of a woman; note also the ninth-century Baṣran belletrist Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (7 vols. in 2, ed. F. Aṭawī [Damascus: Maktabat Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, 1968]), 1: 113.22–23; whereas the more common opposite metamorphosis (i.e., from woman to star) is signaled in *ibid.*, 6: 456.3–6.

their guilt and definitively demonstrates God's earlier point that the angels erred in deeming themselves to be superior to humans.

4. Mujāhid relates that after Hārūt and Mārūt realized they were now barred from re-ascending to heaven, they approached an unnamed human who reportedly enjoyed an unparalleled reputation for piety in order to gain his help and possibly rehabilitate themselves in God's eyes. Several other versions of the story are less reticent and identify this anonymous mortal as the prophet Idrīs. Still others simply identify the temporal setting of the "Tale" as that of the "time of Idrīs," thus inviting the inference that it was in fact Idrīs who played this role. Even outside of the immediate context of the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt," the prophet Idrīs was renowned for his righteousness and piety: it is alleged that the quality and quantity of devotion and liturgical service that Idrīs directed to God during his lifetime was equivalent to that of all of his contemporaries on earth during that same time.<sup>27</sup> Coincidentally, the appearance of or allusion to this Quranic character allows us to situate the "Tale" along a biblical axis of significance inasmuch as Idrīs is quite often equated by both traditional and modern critical exegetes with the biblical antediluvian forefather Enoch,<sup>28</sup> a personage whom parascriptural sources similarly develop into a paragon of exemplary piety and righteousness.

5. As a result of the intervention of Idrīs, God offers Hārūt and Mārūt a choice between punishments that they must endure as a consequence of their sin—either an immediate retribution in this world or a postponed one to be enforced in the World to Come. After some deliberation they opt for this-worldly punishment, reasoning that punishment in this world would be preferable since it will eventually come to an end at the Final Hour, whereas the punishment in the World to Come would be eternal in duration. The details of their fate are fairly uniform. According to Mujāhid, they were bound in chains and then suspended upside-down in Babylon. Other versions add little to this colorful description of their incarceration. Some locate the suspension in a pit. Al-Maqdisī relates that they were strung up by their hair. The toponym "Babylon," of course, implicitly echoes the Quranic passage that the "Tale" serves to amplify, and some of the versions of the "Tale" go on to point out that sorcerers and witches make pilgrimage to this pit in order to learn the details of their black arts from them, an aetiology for human knowledge of magic that is again an extrapolation from the language of Q 2:102. Finally, a few of the versions of the "Tale" explicitly invoke the Quranic verse as a coda to their narrative, thus imparting a homiletic quality to the preceding story.

## II

Western scholars who have studied the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt" and grappled with its literary analogues have most frequently pointed to the Jewish and Christian parascriptural materials that envelop the enigmatic figure of Enoch and in particular to a curious medieval

27. See Maqdisī, *K. al-Badʿ* (ed. Huart), 3: 12.3–4; Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis*, 46–47. The latter collection is now conveniently available in English: *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* or "Lives of the Prophets," tr. W. M. Brinner (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Compare the following divine pronouncement about Enoch in a prominent Hekhalot text: ". . . this one whom I took from among them is the choicest one of them all. *He is the equal of all the rest of them in piety, righteousness, and proper behavior.* Therefore I removed this one as My reward in My world beneath all the heavens." Translated from the Hebrew text of Ms. Vatican 228 in *Synopse* (ed. Schäfer), 7 (my emphasis); note also *I En.* 93:3; *Jub.* 10:17.

28. G. Vajda, "Idrīs," *EP* (= *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed. [Leiden: Brill, 1954–2004]), 3: 1030–31; Y. Erder, "The Origin of the Name Idrīs in the Qurʾān: A Study of the Influence of Qumran Literature on Early Islam," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49 (1990): 339–50; J. C. Reeves, "Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qurʾān," in *Bible and Qurʾān*, ed. Reeves, 44–52.

Jewish aggadic narrative known as the “Midrash of Shemḥazai and ‘Azael.”<sup>29</sup> This unusual tale, extant in at least four Hebrew versions and one Aramaic rendition,<sup>30</sup> requires our attention at this stage, and I accordingly provide here a translation of what is arguably its earliest written registration, in the eleventh-century midrashic compilation *Bereshit Rabbati* of R. Moshe ha-Darshan.<sup>31</sup> As with the previous lengthy citation from the *tafsīr* of Mujāhid, I have compressed the Hebrew text in order to eliminate redundancy or irrelevancy:

R[av] Joseph<sup>32</sup> said: The angels noticed that the Holy One, blessed be He, was perturbed because He had created human beings (cf. Gen 6:6–7). Immediately two of the angels, whose names were Shemḥazai and ‘Azael, stood before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said to Him: “Master of the Universe! Did we not say to You at the time You created Your world, ‘do not create human beings,’ as Scripture attests, ‘why do You contemplate (creating) mortals, etc.’ (Ps 8:5)?”<sup>33</sup> The Holy One, blessed be He, answered them: “And the world? What will happen to it?” They said to Him: “We will prove sufficient for it.” He said to them: “It is revealed and known to Me that if you were to be in their world, the evil impulse would gain control of you just as it has gained control of human beings, [and] you would be worse than they.” They said to Him: “Grant us the power to live among the created beings, and You will see how we sanctify Your name.” The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: “I have already granted you such power.”

Immediately they descended [to earth], and the evil impulse gained control of them. When they beheld the beauty of mortal women, they went astray after them and were unable to suppress their lust, as Scripture attests, “and the sons of God saw, etc.” (Gen 6:2).

Shemḥazai beheld a maiden whose name was ʾAsterah.<sup>34</sup> He fixed his gaze upon her [and] said to her: “Submit yourself to me!” She answered him: “I will not submit to you until after you teach me the Inexpressible Name, the one which when you pronounce it you [re-]ascend to Heaven.” He immediately taught her, she pronounced it, and she ascended to Heaven. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Since she has kept herself from engaging in sin, I will make her an example so that she might be commemorated in the world.” Immediately he fixed her [in

29. E.g., Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 107–9; Grünbaum, “Beiträge,” esp. 58–75; J. Halévy, “Harout et Marout,” *Journal Asiatique* 9e série, 19 (1902): 146–50; B. Heller, “La chute des anges Schemchazai, Ouzza et Azael,” *Revue des Études Juives* 60 (1910): 202–12; Littmann, “Hārūt und Mārūt,” 70–87 (he unfortunately ignores the medieval “Midrash of Shemḥazai and ‘Azael”); Horovitz, “Jewish Proper Names,” 164–65; idem, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1926), 146–48; G. Vajda, “Hārūt wa-Mārūt,” *EP*, 3: 236–37; J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrān Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 330–31; J. C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), 88.

30. *Bereshit Rabbati*, *Yerahmeʿel*, *Pugio Fidei*, and *Yalqut Shimoni*. Milik (*Books of Enoch*, 321–31) presented a synoptic edition of the four Hebrew versions and a wider discussion of the “Midrash of Shemḥazai and ‘Azael.” The Aramaic form appears in Zohar 3.207b–208a. This story is often connected to a lost midrashic collection known as *Midrash Avkir*, whose allegedly surviving passages were assembled and published by S. Buber, *Liqūtim mi-Midrash Avkir* (Vienna: G. Breg, 1883); Abraham ben Elijah of Vilna, *Sefer Rav Peʿalim* (Warsaw: Halter va-Ayzenshtadt, 1894), 133–47. See also *Sefer Rav Peʿalim*, 27–28; A. Marmorstein, “Midrash Avkir,” *Devir* 1 (1923): 113–44, at 141; L. Zunz and H. Albeck, *Haderashot be-Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954), 430 nn. 33–34; H. Mack, *Mi-Sodo shel Moshe ha-Darshan* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2010), 126.

31. *Midrash Berešit Rabbati*, ed. H. Albeck (Jerusalem: Mekitze Nirdamim, 1940), 29.14–31.8. For its likely priority to the other versions mentioned in the preceding note, see Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 143 nn. 165–66; A. Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 258–68.

32. Apparently R. Joseph b. Ḥiyya, a fourth-century Babylonian amora.

33. A more developed version of what is recounted in *b. Sanh.* 38b.

34. אֵסְתֵר. Variant in *Yalqut*: אֵסְתֵר. According to the Armenian *Death of Adam*, Estʿera is the sister of Seth: see Theodor’s note to *Gen. Rab.* 22.2 in *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, ed. J. Theodor and H. Albeck, 3 vols. (repr. Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965), 1: 206; M. E. Stone, “The Death of Adam—An Armenian Adam Book,” *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966): 284.

the heavens] among the seven stars of the Pleiades. When Shemḥazai and ʿAzael saw this, they arose, married women, and engendered children. . . .

[At this point two related traditions lifted<sup>35</sup> from *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* intrude that resolve the anticipated physical difficulty of the posited copulation between "fiery" angels and "fleshly" humans, and then identify the ambiguous "Nefilim" of Gen 6:4 and Num 13:33 as the progeny engendered by this unlikely union. Further names for individual "children" and two biblical correlations are then cited.]

R[av] Joseph said: At the time that the decision for the coming of the Deluge into the world was reached, the Holy One, blessed be He, dispatched Meṭatron as a messenger to Shemḥazai. He reported to him: "The Holy One, blessed be He, is planning to destroy the world." Shemḥazai arose and loudly wept and lamented,<sup>36</sup> and grieved for the world and for his sons, "for each of them customarily consumes one thousand camels, one thousand horses, and one thousand of every kind of cattle [daily]. How now will they survive?" [The text then recounts two ominous dreams that the sons of Shemḥazai have which presage the coming Deluge.]

They have said about him, i.e., Shemḥazai, that he repented and suspended himself upside-down between heaven and earth because he had no excuse for his behavior before the Holy One, blessed be He, and to this very day he remains suspended between heaven and earth in repentance. ʿAzael, however, did not repent, and he was appointed chief over all types of coloring agents and cosmetics for women which entice men to sexual immorality,<sup>37</sup> and he still persists in his corruptive activity. Therefore Israel brings offerings and casts one lot for the Lord, so that He might accept atonement for all the sins of Israel, and one lot for ʿAzazel, so that he might bear the burden of the sins of Israel.<sup>38</sup>

Careful comparison of the developed narratives of the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt" and the "Midrash of Shemḥazai and ʿAzael" amid the larger literary corpora within which they are embedded suggests that the Muslim Hārūt wa-Mārūt complex both chronologically and literarily precedes the articulated versions of the Jewish "Midrash of Shemḥazai and ʿAzael," or as Bernhard Heller expressed it over a century ago, "la légende [i.e., the Jewish one] a été calquée sur celle de Harout et Marout."<sup>39</sup> What is likely the oldest Hebrew form of the story dates from approximately the eleventh century,<sup>40</sup> several hundred years after the bulk of the Muslim evidence. Further, each of the extant Jewish versions is embedded within a larger collection of legendary and exegetical lore that exhibits demonstrable links with so-called "Eastern" or "Oriental" figures or sources. Of special interest, too, is the Aramaic version,

35. Thus Albeck, *Midrash Berešit Rabbati*, 30.

36. Compare this pericope with *I En.* 12:3–13:5, 15:2–16:4. Meṭatron is, of course, the "angelified" Enoch. Note *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 5:24: "and Enoch served the Lord faithfully, and suddenly he was no longer together with the inhabitants of the earth, for he was snatched up, and he ascended to heaven at the command of the Lord. *He renamed him Meṭatron, the great scribe.*" See also R. Margaliot, *Malʾakey ʿelyon* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1945), 104.

37. See *I En.* 8:1.

38. Thereby forging a midrashic identification between the ʿAzael of this tale and the homograph ʿAzazel found in Leviticus 16 and the biblical Yom Kippur ritual.

39. Heller, "Chute des anges," 210; cf. also H. Schwarzbaum, "Prolegomenon," in M. Gaster, *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel; or, The Hebrew Bible Historiale* (London, 1899; repr., New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971), 38. The reverse relationship is uncritically assumed rather than argued by Horovitz, "Jewish Proper Names," 165. Unable to decide is L. N. B. Chipman, "Adam and the Angels: An Examination of Mythic Elements in Islamic Sources," *Arabica* 49 (2002): 436.

40. For discussion of R. Moshe ha-Darshan and his exegetical school, including issues of date and provenance, see Albeck, *Midrash Berešit Rabbati*, esp. 1–30; M. Himmelfarb, "R. Moses the Preacher and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *AJS Review* 9 (1984): 55–78; eadem, "Some Echoes of *Jubilees* in Medieval Hebrew Literature," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. C. Reeves (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 115–41; Mack, *Mi-Sodo*, passim.

which is found in the Zohar, a thirteenth-century Iberian compilation of mystical and theological lore that unsurprisingly, given its place of composition, incorporates and adapts a number of motifs and themes from both the Christian and Muslim spheres. A manuscript copy of a Jewish magical grimoire whose prototype can be traced back to at least the twelfth century even inscribes the names Hārūt and Mārūt in Hebrew script, although there they are represented as “two youths” who ascend to heaven and attempt to eavesdrop on heavenly deliberations, only to be driven away by fire.<sup>41</sup> It is also worthy of notice that recitations of the “Midrash of Shemḥazai and ‘Azael” visibly mimic the homiletic structuring of some of the most literarily polished versions of the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt”: just as the latter will typically conclude with an exegetical link to the Quranic passage purportedly explicated (i.e., Q 2:102), so, too, will the former usually end with a citation from the Jewish scriptures that the story supposedly explains, namely, Lev 16:8 and its reference to the Day of Atonement ritual that features a mysterious entity named ‘Azazel.

Thus, the medieval Jewish “Midrash” may be structurally and thematically indebted to the older Muslim “Tale,”<sup>42</sup> but matters are actually more complicated. Even though the integral story transmitted by the versions of the medieval Jewish “Midrash” appears to be post-Islamic, a number of its individual motifs and sub-themes—many of the “building-blocks” that serve as the constituent elements of the larger narrative—predate the Quran. For example, the characters “Shemḥazai” and “‘Azael,” the Jewish counterparts to Hārūt and Mārūt, are authentic rebellious angels who initially appear in the ancient Aramaic and Greek fragments of apocryphal lore associated with the biblical account of the sexual corruption of an unspecified number of divine beings and mortal women (Gen 6:1–4), a complex of mythical traditions that eventually coalesces during the early centuries of the common era into what modern scholars following the Byzantine chronographer George Syncellus term the “first book of Enoch.”<sup>43</sup> The notion that an illicit type of knowledge, including “magic and incantations” (7:1; cf. 8:3), was imparted by these angels to humans initially surfaces as a significant theme in *1 Enoch* and its allied literature. In *1 Enoch*, the angel ‘Azael is punished for his sin by being bound and imprisoned in a dark pit in the desert of Dudael (10:4), a fate reminiscent of that of Hārūt and Mārūt draped in chains in their dark chasm in Babīl. One could certainly speculate here on possible orthographic confusions between Aramaic *beth* and *dalet* or Greek *beta* and *delta*, although the early Mishnaic toponym *bēt hidūdō* would point to the essential integrity of the phonemic cluster signaled by the texts of *1 Enoch*, a correlation first noticed long ago by Geiger.<sup>44</sup> Also worthy of note is that when the errant Eno-

41. Ms. Vatican 245 fol. 111b: “and where are Harūt and Marūt (הררות ומרות), the two youths who ascend to Heaven and listen to what will transpire in the world until fire shoots out to burn them?” Text cited from the transcription of G. Scholem, “Some Sources of Jewish-Arabic Demonology,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 16 (1965): 9. Note T-S. K 1.1 for the twelfth-century edition of the same work, published in *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, vol. 1, ed. P. Schäfer and S. Shaked (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 79–82. See especially Q 72:8–9, 15:16–18; also *Pirqe R. El.* §7 (ed. Luria 16b).

42. Given the active symbiosis between Jewish and Muslim literary cultures within Islamicate realms, this is not an uncommon phenomenon. For a new illustration of this same migratory pattern, compare the Muslim texts studied by Z. Hadromi-Allouche, “The Death and Life of the Devil’s Son: A Literary Analysis of a Neglected Tradition,” *Studia Islamica* 107 (2012): 157–83, with the later expository text extracted from a Yemenite Jewish *mahzor* manuscript by L. Ginzberg, “Beno shel Samael,” *Hagoren* 9 (1913): 38–41, repr. in idem, *‘Al halakhah ve-aggadah* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1960), 227–28.

43. Georgius Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica* (ed. A. A. Mosshammer; Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1984), 11.19; 27.8.

44. Cf. *m. Yoma* 6.8, and A. Geiger, “Einige Worte über das Buch Henoch,” *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben* 3 (1864–65): 200–201.

chic angels realize the gravity of their sin, they approach the antediluvian forefather Enoch to intervene on their behalf with God, "for they henceforth were unable to speak [with God] or to raise their eyes toward heaven due to the disgrace of their transgression, for which they had been condemned" (13:5).<sup>45</sup> Enoch reluctantly accepts their commission, only to return as the bearer of God's final rebuke: "Go, tell the heavenly Watchers who sent you to intercede for them, 'It is proper for you [i.e., the Watchers] to intercede for people, and not people for you!' . . . so tell them, 'You will not have peace!'" (15:2–16:4). The mediating roles ascribed to Idrīs in the Muslim "Tale" as well as that played by Meṭaṭron in the Jewish "Midrash" are, of course, directly dependent upon this Second Temple-era Jewish source.

There remain, however, considerable differences between the Enochic tale of the "descent of the Watchers" and the Muslim "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt." The Enochic angels are not moved by concerns for the wicked behavior of mortals or by expressed jealousy for their exalted creaturely status: they are motivated purely by their sexual lust for human women, and this is a desire that apparently attacks them even while they are still resident in heaven. By contrast, both the Muslim "Tale" and the Jewish "Midrash" explicitly state that the angels are affected by human passions only after they have begun their brief sojourn upon earth. Similarly *1 Enoch* contains no introductory framing scenes wherein the deity expresses His disappointment or His disgust with human shortcomings: the Watchers neither criticize God for His alleged short-sightedness in creating humanity nor do they vaunt their own superiority to terrestrial beings. More than two angels are involved in their perfidy, and no one woman is singled out as being particularly attractive to them. The Enoch text is moreover closely tied both etiologically and literarily to the Flood narrative: it supplies a compelling motivation for this universal cataclysm regarding which the biblical text of Genesis is uncharacteristically terse. While Enochic motifs are demonstrably present in the later recountals of the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt," it is clear that *1 Enoch* is not the sole source from which its narrators have drawn.

At the same time, we also know that *1 Enoch* was not the only repository of "fallen angel" traditions in early Jewish literature. In particular I would like to direct attention to a complex of texts that appears in the originally Hebrew *Book of Jubilees*, a Jewish pseudepigraphic source attributed to Moses paralleling the biblical books of Genesis and Exodus and emanating from the third or second centuries B.C.E.<sup>46</sup> A related set of traditions very similar to those in *Jubilees* and probably dependent on that work is featured in the Greek Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, an enigmatic Christian text whose precise socio-cultural location remains a matter of contention.<sup>47</sup> *Jubilees* informs us that at the time when Yared, the father of Enoch, was alive "the angels of God descended to earth, those who are named Watchers, in order to instruct human beings and to act [with] justice and righteousness upon earth" (4:15). A little

45. Quotations from *1 Enoch* are based upon the following editions: for the Aramaic fragments, Milik, *Books of Enoch; The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols., ed. F. García Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 1997–98), 1: 398–442; for the Greek versions, *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece*, ed. M. Black (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970); for the Ethiopic text, *Das Buch Henoch: Äthiopischer Text*, ed. J. Flemming (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902); M. A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

46. *Jubilees* survives as an integral literary unit only in Ethiopic, although varying residues of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Syriac renditions survive. For the multilingual texts of *Jubilees*, I employ the editions of R. H. Charles, *Maṣḥafa Kufalē, or the Ethiopic Version of the Hebrew Book of Jubilees* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), and J. C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text*, 2 vols. (Leuven: E. Peeters, 1989).

47. Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 8.12.1–19.4. For the Greek text, see *Die Pseudoklementinen*, vol. 1: *Homilien*, ed. B. Rehm (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953), 126.16–129.18. Note also H. J. Lawlor, "Early Citations from the Book of Enoch," *Journal of Philology* 25 (1897): 189–92.

later in the same work, after its description of the corruption of the earth that will provoke the Flood, it says: “and against His angels whom He had sent to earth He grew very angry: He eradicated them from every position of authority, and He told us that we were to imprison them in the earth’s depths; and lo, they are captives within them and are in solitude” (5:6). It is thus clear that, unlike the Enochic *Book of Watchers*, *Jubilees* considers the angelic sojourn on earth to have been initiated and condoned by the deity.<sup>48</sup>

Now this particular tradition supplies a jarring narrative dissonance whose implications for the critical unpacking of older mythologies and their possible reflexes in biblical and rabbinic texts have yet to be appreciated by most students of Second Temple Jewish literature. Although an identical synchronizing with the generation of Yared (cf. *1 En.* 6:6, 106:13) insures that *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch* must be referencing the same narrative event—a descent of the angelic Watchers from heaven to earth—the stories that once surrounded this event were clearly very different. *Jubilees* envisions a benign, even altruistic educational mission that was sanctioned by God Himself, whereas *1 Enoch* recounts an unsupervised independent angelic irruption into human society using the militaristic tropes of invasion, exploitation, and plunder. While *Jubilees* imagines erring humans receiving supernaturally mediated tutelage in the virtues of justice and righteousness, the writers of the Enochic myth relate the malicious impartation of closely guarded secrets undergirding the practices of black magic, the production of metal-based weaponry, and the seductive lures of cosmetology in blithe disregard of their deleterious social consequences. It is surely of interest to recognize that it is not the Enochic tale of the descent of the angels that is presupposed by the Muslim “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt”; rather, it is the irenic instructional task as formulated by *Jubilees* that serves as the motivating factor in God’s dispatch of Hārūt and Mārūt to earth in those versions of the “Tale” that were examined above, and in fact al-Maqdisī explicitly states in his rendition of the “Tale” that God sent these two angels to earth in order to “convey to humanity information about proper behavior,”<sup>49</sup> a statement that virtually paraphrases the motive clause of *Jub.* 4:15. The conclusion seems irresistible that it is here—in this particular Jubilean formulation of a pedagogic angelic mission that went strangely sour—that we begin to behold the conceptual seeds of what will become the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt.”

48. Ever since the time of Robert Charles, most scholars have operated with the questionable axiom that the story of the angelic rebellion in *Jubilees* is a later “rewriting” of the one recounted in the Enochic *Book of Watchers*, which itself is deemed to be an expansive amplification of Gen 6:1–4. This understanding, however, illegitimately privileges “Bible,” recklessly imposes notions of authorship and book history from the modern world onto ancient Mediterranean societies, and tragically does not appreciate the implications of the “intratextual multiplicity” emerging from the explosion of manuscript discoveries and publications over the past century. I prefer instead to work with the more nuanced approaches signaled (but not always followed) by Nickelsburg and VanderKam, who speak of multiple “versions” of the story of the descent of the Watchers, or seeming “innovations” in *Jubilees*, which might be “inherited from now lost sources.” These quotations are taken respectively from G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 196, and J. C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 179. For the affinity of some traditions in *Jubilees* with arguably older “Canaanite” ideas and institutions, see W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), 267, 336 n. 16; J. C. Reeves, “The Feast of the First Fruits of Wine and the Ancient Canaanite Calendar,” *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992): 350–61. For the similarity of the specifically Jubilean version of the angelic descent story to ancient Babylonian and West Semitic tales about culture-heroes, see A. Annus, “On the Origin of Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions,” *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 19 (2010): 277–320, esp. 291–93; H. S. Kvanvig, *Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical, and Enochic* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). I expropriate the useful phrase “intratextual multiplicity” from I. M. Higgins, *Writing East: The “Travels” of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 19. See also n. 50 below.

49. K. al-Badʿ (ed. Huart), 3: 14.7–8.

More, however, can be said about this peculiar linkage which may shed some light on the prehistory of the constellation of traditions that lie behind the present form of *Jubilees*, a work that is arguably as old as any extant form of the biblical book of Genesis and that does not necessarily "rewrite" any of the "canonical" versions.<sup>50</sup> One cannot fail to notice that in every rendition of the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt" (and for that matter, in the "Midrash of Shemḥazai and 'Azael"), God's sending of the angels to earth is never purposeless: it is always preceded by some sort of motivating circumstance that is typically tied to human behavior. The version of the "Tale" found in Mujāhid that we examined above portrays the angels' genuine amazement at the continuing involvement of humans in wickedness and sinfulness, and their shock prompts God to send two angelic paragons of virtue down to earth in order to oversee humanity and to model righteous behavior for them. Mujāhid's version, however, differs from its parallel accounts in that it omits a bridging dialogical sequence that is otherwise familiar to us from early rabbinic literature as an independent exegetical pericope pertaining to Gen 1:26 and the initial creation of Adam.<sup>51</sup> According to this complex of traditions, when God first proposes to create humanity, the angels verbally object to His plan and offer reasons why He should not pursue the project. Alternatively, God is sometimes portrayed as deliberately concealing crucial information about the nature of humanity from the angels or other heavenly entities so that they will not interfere with or block His intentions. Clearly visible in this particular complex is the theme of angelic rivalry with or jealousy of the new creature, a notion that will receive its fullest narrative development in what will eventually become the formally separate Christian and then Muslim myths about a "fall of Satan."<sup>52</sup> The other versions of the "Tale" insert this bridging sequence at the point when the angels witness the general corruption of humanity on earth. Once they behold human sinfulness, the angels immediately confront God and directly condemn the reckless behavior. They sometimes assert their own superiority to humans and brag about their self-perceived immunity to the kinds of desires and temptations that are leading mortals astray. Occasionally they even go so far as to criticize God for creating humanity in the first place, and they remind God of their earlier objections to Adam's creation during the first week of existence.<sup>53</sup> The end result of this plot development is usually the staging of a contest or

50. Much of the scholarly study devoted to *Jubilees* to date is methodologically flawed by two uncritical assumptions: (1) the assumption that much of the canonical Bible was materially present and socially functional in Second Temple Israel, and (2) the hierarchic assumption that *Jubilees* is merely a "rewriting" of components of this same canonical Bible. That there is no empirical evidence to support either "blanket" assumption does not seem to deter many of these scholars. Speaking in both conceptual and archaeological (i.e., physical) terms, it seems to me more responsible to view *Jubilees* as simply one pre-canonical manifestation of the rich pool of sub-textual ancestral traditions that also surface in related but distinctive forms in versions of the biblical books of Genesis-Exodus as well as in other places outside those books that utilize many of the same characters, stories, and themes. For detailed discussion and further references, see Bowley-Reeves, "Rethinking," 7–10; Reeves, "Problematising the Bible," 139–52, esp. 147–48; cf. the remarks of R. S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 100–101; S. Talmon, "Textual Criticism: The Ancient Versions," in *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study*, ed. A. D. H. Mayes (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), esp. 149–50, 157.

51. Note esp. *t. Soṭah* 6.5; *Gen. Rab.* 8.2–5, 17.4 (= *Num. Rab.* 19.3); *b. Sanh.* 38a–b; and the discussion of A. Altmann, "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends," *Jewish Quarterly Review* n.s. 35 (1944–45): 371–79.

52. A fuller discussion is in Reeves, "Some Explorations," 52–53. For a recent analysis of the "fall of Satan" tale(s), see W. S. Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblis: Narrative Theology in the Qurʾān* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2011); cf. M. O. Klar, Review of *The Poetics of Iblis . . .*, *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 15 (2013): 102–32.

53. This being, of course, the original "scriptural" context for their now displaced objection, thus confirming the primitive independence of the rivalry-motif.

trial where chosen representatives of the plaintiffs submit to testing their hubristic claims of fidelity and immunity from sin. As we have seen, after failing miserably to substantiate their claims, the offending angels are banished from heaven and/or are imprisoned until the final Day of Judgment.

In light of this well-attested narrative structure exhibited by both the “Tale” and the “Mid-rash,” one cannot help but notice that the conceptually cognate tradition about the benevolent mission of the Watchers found in *Jub.* 4:15 is a narratological orphan: it lacks any sort of motivating cause. Nothing has been said in *Jubilees* prior to this verse about a general proliferation of wickedness or sin among the human population, and it is not until a later point in the narrative after the arrival of the angels that we begin to see such statements (cf. *Jub.* 4:22–24, 4:26, 5:1ff.). What event or series of events therefore could have prompted this divine intervention? In Jewish sources the transgression of the primal couple never acquires the reputation it would come to enjoy in post-Augustinian Christian interpretations of a fatal “original sin.” Cain murders Abel—a grave crime in that blood is shed and a sentient life is prematurely terminated—but *Jubilees* mentions no further homicides (prior to 4:15) that may have been inspired by Cain’s example, and apart from a birth-notice for his son, it lacks all record of the genealogical line of builders, inventors, and cutthroats spawned by that same figure according to the canonical version(s) of Gen 4:17–24. The mysterious figure of Enosh—grandson of Adam via Seth—attracts critical attention insofar as the rabbinic sages credit him with the invention of idolatry and also recount a legend about how prior to Noah God had to purge the world with a flood during the generation of Enosh.<sup>54</sup> The information that *Jubilees* provides about Enosh, however, is no more prolix than that in the canonical version(s) of Genesis, save that *Jubilees* does provide us with names for his wife (Noʿām) and his mother (?Azurā),<sup>55</sup> the surprising collocation of which constitute another point of intersection with the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt.”

### III

The name “Noʿām” is a recognizable phonological reflex of the appellation of the sole woman explicitly identified as a descendant of the murderer Cain in Genesis 4: Naʿamah, there termed the sister of the culture-heroes Yabal, Yuval, and Tubal-Qain (Gen 4:22). Her name in Hebrew means “lovely, pleasant,” and given the penchant of the Genesis narrators (or at least one of its constituent sources) for wielding symbolic names,<sup>56</sup> it seems legitimate to understand her name as somehow connotative within its present context. No further information about this potentially intriguing character is disclosed and we must turn to the interpretative tradition in order to glean more information about her. *Genesis Rabbah*, an important third- to fourth-century exegetical midrash emanating from Eretz Israel, preserves a pair of discordant traditions about the woman named Naʿamah mentioned in Gen 4:22: “R. Abba bar Kahana said: Naʿamah was the wife of Noah. And why was she named Naʿamah? Because her conduct was pleasing (*neʿimim*). But the Sages said: This one is a different

54. See *Mek.*, *Bahodeš* §6 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 223.13–14); *Sifre Deut* §43 (ed. Finkelstein, 97.2–3); *Midr. Tanh.*, *Noah* §18; Rashi *ad* Amos 5:8. Mandaean literature is also familiar with this motif (i.e., the synchronization of Enosh and Deluge): note M. Lidzbarski, *Ginzā, der Schatz, oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1925), 27.19–28.7, 45.22–46.6.

55. *Jub.* 4:8, 11–13.

56. Note, e.g., Gen 2:7 (Adam), 3:20 (Eve), 4:1 (Cain), 4:25 (Seth), 5:29 (Noah), etc. These examples all purportedly stem from the so-called “J source.”

Na'amah; she would sing with a tambourine while worshipping idols."<sup>57</sup> Curiously each of these incongruous specifications—some say she was the virtuous wife of the flood-hero Noah; others say she was just an idolatrous chorus-girl—are extensively exemplified and amplified within a wide variety of parascriptural sources. For its part, *Jubilees* is clear that the character No'am/Na'amah is the wife of Enosh (4:13) and not the wife of Noah, a female figure identified later in that work under the name of 'Emzārā (4:33).<sup>58</sup> Might she then be identified with her wicked alter-ego, the infamously corrupt songstress to idols and celebrant at their service? Her marriage to Enosh coupled with his extra-textual reputation for being the inventor of idolatry or a transmitter of suspect forms of wisdom make this a tempting association, and perhaps *Jubilees* can be viewed as implicitly endorsing such traditional valuations.<sup>59</sup> Yet this remains spectacularly speculative. It may be worth reiterating that Enosh, like Noah, is legendarily associated with a cataclysmic flood, and even though that pre-Noachic flood is not described in *Jubilees*, the cultural memory of an alternate "Na'amah as wife of a flood-hero" may have been enough to forge this present linkage. If *Jubilees*, like Genesis, had operated with the two rival genealogical lines of Seth and Cain and then, like Genesis, explicitly situated No'am/Na'amah within that latter family tree, we could have argued that *Jub.* 4:13 marks the earliest textual instantiation of a wedding between a "son of Seth" (i.e., Enosh) and a "daughter of Cain" (i.e., Na'amah), a union that eventually becomes an extremely popular exegetical reading of the ancient story about the marriages contracted between angels and human women that is synopsisized and undermined by the present form and placement of Gen 6:1–4. Unfortunately, however, *Jubilees* subverts this attractive interpretation by categorically identifying No'am/Na'amah not only as Enosh's wife but as his sister as well.<sup>60</sup> She thus cannot be a biological "daughter of Cain": Jubilean No'am/Na'amah is most certainly a "daughter of Seth."

There is still another reading of the biblical character Na'amah that draws her closer to the orbit of the traditions that are visible in the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt." This interpretation is signaled in the thirteenth-century commentary of Ramban (i.e., Moses b. Naḥman or Nachmanides) to Gen 4:22: ". . . another midrash recounted by our Sages holds that she was a very beautiful woman, and that it was because of her that the 'sons of God' were led astray; this is hinted at in the verse 'and the sons of God beheld mortal women . . .' [Gen 6:2], and a similar [interpretation] is mentioned in *Pirqe R. Eli'ezer*."<sup>61</sup> While extant printed copies of *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* no longer contain this tradition (at least in the form referenced by Ramban), it is present in one of the Oxford manuscripts, of roughly similar provenance,

57. *Gen. Rab.* 23.3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 224). According to Theodor's textual apparatus, the Oxford manuscripts identify the initial tradent as "R. Ḥiyya bar Abba," as does also the quotation of this passage by the fifteenth-century homilist Isaac Arama in his *Aqedat Yiṣṣḥaq*.

58. With regard to this name for the wife of Noah, note the homophonic variants from Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek sources cited by Charles, *Ethiopic Version*, 18 n. 21, to which can be added the overlooked testimony of al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 15 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879–1901), 1,1: 177.18–19: "Nūḥ b. Lamik [Noah, son of Lamech] married 'Amzūra. . ." (reading the first *rā'* of the printed text as *zāy*). Compare now what may be the earliest reference to this character in 1QapGen 6.7: "and 'Emzara' (אמזרע) his daughter I [i.e., Noah] took as my wife. . ." This last text is cited from M. Morgenstern, E. Qimron, and D. Sivan, "The Hitherto Unpublished Columns of the Genesis Apocryphon," *AbrN* 33 (1995): 40; see now D. A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13–17* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 44.

59. S. D. Fraade, *Enosh and His Generation: Pre-Israelite Hero and History in Postbiblical Interpretation* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984); J. C. Reeves, "Enosh," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 590–91.

60. *Jub.* 4:13a: "and in the seventh jubilee in the third week Enos took No'am his sister to be his wife. . ."

61. Translation of the vulgate text as reproduced in standard editions of *Miqraot gedolot*.

edited by Salomon Buber for his edition of *Midrash Tanhuma*, wherein we read in the course of a longer rabbinic temptation-narrative: “He [i.e., Satan] transformed himself into a beautiful woman—one whose beauty had not been matched since the time of Na’amah, the sister of Tubal-Qain, *the one after whom the ministering angels had strayed*, as scripture attests: ‘and the divine beings saw that mortal women were beautiful’ [Gen 6:2].”<sup>62</sup> The relative age of this particular tradition about the stunning beauty of Na’amah and its seductive effects upon all who beheld her—even the ascetically inclined ministering angels—remains unclear.<sup>63</sup> At its most basic level it is a simple linguistic rendering of her name using a visual instead of a moral register. Na’amah is understood here to be literally “*the lovely one*,” a woman so physically attractive that she drew down the angels from their heavenly stations. And if one is permitted to synchronize the seven generations as they unfold respectively from Cain and from Seth—an exegetical move that the canonical versions of the Genesis text encourage us to make—one is brought narratologically to the epoch of Methuselah on the very cusp of the infamous Generation of the Flood.<sup>64</sup>

There are, however, non-Jewish parallels that may assist us in dating these pluriform contextualizations. According to some heresiological texts authored by the church fathers during the second, third, and fourth centuries of the common era regarding the alleged teachings and writings of certain so-called gnostic sects, a female scriptural character bearing the names “Norea” (Νωρία), “Horiaia” (Ὠραία), or various permutations thereof plays a set of roles roughly parallel to those ascribed to Na’amah by rabbinic tradition and exhibits the full range of positive and negative moral qualities assigned to Na’amah by later Jewish tradition; moreover, the variant spelling “Horiaia” confirms that she is in fact equivalent to biblical “Na’amah” inasmuch as it is a literal Greek translation of the Hebrew proper noun.<sup>65</sup> According to Irenaeus, some gnostic groups (unhelpfully termed by him in the extant Latin rendition *alii* “others”)<sup>66</sup> recounted tales about how, following the births of Cain and Abel and the murder of the latter, “Seth and then Norea were born,” a consanguine marital pairing from whom the rest of humanity allegedly descend.<sup>67</sup> Similarly Epiphanius informs us that the gnostic sect known as the Sethians “claim that a certain Horiaia was the wife of Seth.”<sup>68</sup>

62. *Midr. Tanh.* (Buber), *hosaphah* to *Huqqat* §1. Cf. S. Buber, ed., *Midrash Tanhuma*, 6 vols. (Lvov, 1883; repr. in 2 vols., Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1964), 5: 66a. This addition comes from a second Oxford manuscript examined by Buber. A parallel version of this anecdote appears in *Yal. Šimoni* §161, and is referenced by Grünbaum, “Beiträge,” 59.

63. It certainly predates the Zohar passages that some modern scholars uncritically adduce as parallels; see, e.g., J. D. Turner in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition*, ed. M. Meyer (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 607.

64. A circumstance that sheds light on an otherwise curious tradition cited from *Sefer ha-Yashar* that “Na’amah was the daughter of Methuselah”; see R. David Luria, *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer ha-Gadol* (Warsaw: T. Y. Bamberg, 1852), 50a in n. 3 at the bottom of the page. According to the edition of this work that was prepared by Joseph Dan, Noah weds “Na’amah the daughter of Enoch”; see *Sefer ha-Yashar*, ed. J. Dan (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1986), 56.

65. A comprehensive discussion of these texts and the “Norea-Na’amah” nexus was supplied by B. A. Pearson, “The Figure of Norea in Gnostic Literature,” in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, August 20–25, 1973*, ed. G. Widengren (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1977), 143–51, rev. and repr. in idem, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 84–94. Subsequent references to this article in the present essay are to the revised version. Note, too, idem, “Revisiting Norea,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. K. L. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 265–75. See also the even more widely ranging remarks of G. A. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 53–62.

66. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.30.1; these anonymous groups are specified as “Sethians/Ophites” by Theodoret, *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* 1.14.

67. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.30.9.

68. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39.5.2–3.

The tradition of situating Norea-Naʿamah during the generation of Seth and viewing her as that forefather's wife-sister is not an exclusive peculiarity of gnostic biblical exegesis. The allegedly first-century Jewish *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* of Pseudo-Philo begins its version of the legend of the protoplasts as follows: "Adam engendered three sons and one daughter: Cain, Noaba, Abel, and Seth" (1:1).<sup>69</sup> Its medieval Hebrew retroversion increases the number of Adam's daughters to three and assigns "Noba" (presumably its rendering of Lat. *Noaba*) to Seth as his "twin" and "wife."<sup>70</sup> Birger Pearson is surely correct in suggesting that Pseudo-Philo's "Noaba" results from a textual garbling of the Old Greek form of Naʿamah (Νόεμα) in Gen 4:22.<sup>71</sup> The connubial association of Seth and Norea-Naʿamah would thus appear to be an early narrative motif,<sup>72</sup> an unlikely coupling whose ultimate explanation perhaps lies in their close textual conjunction in the canonical versions of Gen 4:17–26.

Norea, however, also figures in other gnostic texts and traditions as the wife of the flood-hero Noah, a role that matches one of the identities assigned the biblical Naʿamah by a prominent stream of rabbinic tradition.<sup>73</sup> According to Epiphanius, the Nicolaitan sect utilized "a certain book they call Norea," which they had themselves forged, identifying the title character Norea with the "wife of Noah."<sup>74</sup> One of the books recovered in the Nag Hammadi corpus of Coptic gnostic texts has been titled *The Thought of Norea* (NHC IX,2), and references to a "Book of Noraia" and a "Discourse of Oraia" occur in the separate tractate to which scholars have given the title *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,5).<sup>75</sup> She moreover plays a prominent role as one of the dramatis personae in another text stemming from that particular find known as *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4), essentially a narrative counter-version of the opening chapters of the biblical book of Genesis. Therein Norea/Orea<sup>76</sup> is introduced as Eve's daughter (and hence Seth's sister), a pure maiden whom the evil archons seek to ravish. She escapes their sexual assault by calling upon "the Holy One, the God of the pleroma," who dispatches an angel to rescue her from her plight.<sup>77</sup> The remainder of the work consists of a didactic dialogue couched in the first person wherein the angel

69. *Adam genuit tres filios et unam filiam, Cain, Noaba, Abel et Seth*. Latin text cited from *Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, ed. G. Kisch (Notre Dame, Ind. [Univ. of Notre Dame], 1949). A persistent Muslim tradition holds that the name of the first daughter of Adam and Eve was 'Anāq: she was Seth's twin sister, Cain's wife, and the mother of the legendary giant 'Ūj (= biblical 'Ūg of Bashan). She was also reportedly the first human to engage in sexual fornication. See Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Tarbiʿ wa-l-tadwīr*, §47: "Tell me about 'Anāq bt. Ādam"; cited from *Le Kitāb at-tarbiʿ wa-l-tadwīr de Ġāhiz*, ed. C. Pellat (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1955), 30; B. Heller-S. M. Wasserstrom, "'Ūdj," *EP*, 10: 777; B. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006), 231 n. 130. Jāhiz (§38) also mentions 'Ūj: "How long has it been since 'Ūj died?" (Pellat, *Kitāb al-Tarbiʿ*, 26).

70. Oxford Ms. Heb. d. 11 (2797), published as *Sefer ha-zikronot hu' Divrey ha-yamim le-Yerahmeʿel*, ed. E. Yassif (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Univ., 2001), 117: וַשֶׁת וְתַאֲמֶתוּ נֹרַבָּא אִשְׁתּוֹ.

71. Pearson, "Figure of Norea," 91; see also Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 57–58.

72. A cognate tradition is preserved by al-Majlisi wherein Seth takes a wife named Nāʿīma, said to be a houri sent to him by God. See M. J. Kister, "Ādam: A Study of Some Legends in *Tafsīr* and *Ḥadīṭ* Literature," in idem, *Concepts and Ideas at the Dawn of Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 146.

73. *Gen. Rab.* 23.3 as above, where R. Abba bar Kahana's identification of Naʿamah as Noah's wife is also repeated by Rashi, Radaq, Ramban, and R. Baḥya b. Asher in their respective commentaries *ad* Gen 4:22.

74. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26.1.3–4. With regard to the various names accorded the wife of Noah, see the magisterial study of F. L. Utley, "The One Hundred and Three Names of Noah's Wife," *Speculum* 16 (1941): 426–52.

75. *Orig. World* 102.10–11, 24–25. This untitled work is also attested in a more fragmentary form in NHC XIII,2 and Ms. Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), but these latter witnesses do not overlap the section containing the references to Noraia/Oraia.

76. Throughout this work this character's name alternates between these two spellings.

77. *Hyp. Arch.* 91.34–93.13.

instructs his interlocutor (Norea?) about her true nature as well as the coming into being of the world and its ruling archons.<sup>78</sup>

The same text also situates her briefly in its flood narrative. When the ruling archons conspire to destroy all corporeal life on earth by means of a flood, the repentant archon Sabaoth undermines their plan by warning Noah about the coming deluge and instructing him to build the ark. “Orea” thereupon approaches Noah, but when he refuses her passage on the ark, she sets it ablaze with her fiery breath, forcing him to reconstruct it.<sup>79</sup> It is apparent that this particular textual manifestation of the Norea/Orea character is akin to that of the aforementioned corrupt Na‘amah visible in one stream of rabbinic tradition charging her with licentiousness and idolatry, as Orea here is certainly in league with those malevolent archons who seek the death of a “righteous” Noah.<sup>80</sup> At the same time her contextual association with Noah is suggestive of those persistent traditions that view her as his wife. The malevolent character of Noah’s wife is also a theme that surfaces in the Quran, where she is labeled a “disbeliever” and condemned by God to the flames of hell (66:10).<sup>81</sup> It is also worthy of notice that in some Mandaean texts the wife of Noah’s son Šum (= Shem) bears the cognate name “Nhūraitā,”<sup>82</sup> and that the Sibyl who recites the *Third Sibylline Oracle* terms herself the “daughter-in-law” (νόμφη) of Noah.<sup>83</sup>

Pearson’s insight that gnostic (N)orea and biblical/rabbinic Na‘amah are in fact the same narrative character is a signal contribution toward reconstructing the scope of scriptural legendry preserved and reworked by biblically grounded religious communities during the centuries surrounding both sides of the beginning of the first Christian millennium.<sup>84</sup> The philological and historical explanations that he offers for the Na‘amah/(N)orea nexus are much less compelling, however. He employs a reading of Jewish sources that presumes as a matter of course the antiquity, necessary priority, and universality of the traditions reported therein regardless of the actual time of composition and cultural provenance of each literary title—“aggadoth dealing with Na‘amah” that come to expression in later redacted collections such as *Genesis Rabbah*, *Zohar*, and *Yerahme’el* are assumed by Pearson to be linguistically

78. *Hyp. Arch.* 93.13–97.23.

79. *Hyp. Arch.* 92.4–18. Epiphanius (*Pan.* 26.1.7–9) knows a somewhat garbled version of this story. Despite the coincidence in names, it is highly unlikely that this dragon-like (N)orea is identical with the virtuous Norea bt. Eve who figures in the narratives enveloping this pericope.

80. The version of Epiphanius has reversed these allegiances, perhaps in an attempt to harmonize the divergent profiles of the (N)orea entity.

81. What seems to be this very same “wicked” (N)orea in medieval Jewish tradition (Niryah = a slight corruption of Nūrya?) has resurfaced in a Cairo Geniza incantation: [ דבה איתת ניריה כלת נח חרבתן ] (“by which Niryah, the bride/daughter-in-law of Noah, brought sin . . .”; T-S. K 1.162 fol. 1c lines 36–37). Is the figure of this magical text beholden to the same set of esoteric traditions that lie behind the gnostic construction and/or utilization of a fire-breathing (N)orea? Transliteration taken from *Magische Texte*, vol. 3, ed. Schäfer and Shaked (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 70; cf. 398–99 for the photograph of the relevant lines. See also R. Leicht, “Gnostic Myth in Jewish Garb: Niryah (Norea), Noah’s Bride,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 51 (2000): 133–40.

82. Lidzbarski, *Ginzā*, 410.7; E. S. Drower, *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), 152.2. The name “Nūraitā” is also used, however, for the wife of Noah and the wife of the bibliomorphic “wise scribe” Dinānūkt, an Utnapishtim-like figure who tells his story in Lidzbarski, *Ginzā*, 206.11–212.19. See M. Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, 2 vols. (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), 2: 58; E. Segelberg, “Old and New Testament Figures in Mandaean Version,” in *Syncretism*, ed. S. S. Hartman (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1969), 234; Pearson, “Figure of Norea,” 86.

83. *Sib. Or.* 3.827. See S. Gero, “Henoch und die Sibylle,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 73 (1982): 149.

84. For more linkages with medieval Jewish and Muslim “gnostic” texts, see S. M. Wasserstrom, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Muslim Literature: A Bibliographical and Methodological Sketch,” in *Tracing the Threads*, ed. Reeves, 87–114, at 97–99.

extant and available for "appropriation" by "Greek-speaking Jewish communities" during the centuries surrounding the beginning of the common era.<sup>85</sup> According to Pearson, it is among these latter circles that the Hebrew name "Na'amah" (נעמה) becomes Greek "Hōraia" (Ὠραία), and they serve in turn as one conduit for these sorts of traditions about antediluvian figures to contemporaneous and later classical gnostic groups like the Nicolaitans, Sethians, and even the Mandaeans. Pearson also speculates that the variant spellings of Hōraia employing an initial nasal consonant (Norea/Nōraia) are consciously hybrid forms that prefix the first letter of Hebrew Na'amah or Greek Noema to the subsequent Greek syllables (H)ōraia.

I would like to propose instead that the parascryptural names of the female temptress that employ the initial nasal consonant—Greek Norea/Nōraia, Aramaic Nīrya (Nūrya?), and Mandaic Nhūraitā—are semantic, and in the case of the Greek examples, transliterative reflexes of the "luminous" or astral character of the woman who figures in an older mythological narrative shared by the Muslim "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt" and the Jewish "Midrash of Shemḥazai and 'Azael." Each of these names arguably can be tied to a learned word play on the middle weak Semitic stem that yields the Aramaic words for "light" (ܢܗܘܪܐ) and "fire" (ܢܘܪܐ), and their incandescent and/or combustible qualities are prominently displayed in the varying plotlines of the story.

What is more, the proper name 'Azurā used by *Jubilees* for the sister/wife of Seth may also bear a semantic or even genealogical relationship with the Arabic name Zuhara for the femme fatale of the "Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt." As we have seen, this is also the Arabic name for the planet Venus, one of the brightest luminaries in the darkened heavens. Could the common Semitic verbal stem *z-h-r* "be bright, shine" also lie behind the various orthographies and vocalizations of the mysterious appellation 'Azurā?<sup>86</sup> Apart from its spellings in the Ethiopic version of *Jubilees*, we find the same name partially attested in Hebrew among the Cave 11 *Jubilees* fragments (11Q12),<sup>87</sup> and wholly present in several variant spellings in Greek,<sup>88</sup> Syriac,<sup>89</sup> Armenian,<sup>90</sup> and Arabic exegetical texts.<sup>91</sup> According to the "Midrash of Shemḥazai and 'Azael," the name of the virtuous maiden who successfully resists the advances of the lust-crazed Watchers by zooming off to the sky is 'Asterah, a transparent rendering of the common Indo-European stem for "star," and it is surely no coincidence that the Armenian *Death of Adam* informs us that Seth had a sister whose name was Est'era.<sup>92</sup> Given this impressive accumulation of converging evidence gleaned from a wide variety of biblically affiliated sources, it does not seem wrong to conclude that the "star" imagery—or at the very least the notions of "brightness," "combustibility," and perhaps "astral ascent"—constitute central motifs for this portion of the overarching legend.

85. Pearson, "Figure of Norea," 92.

86. For some less than compelling etymological speculations, see R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1902), 30; K. Berger, *Das Buch der Jubiläen* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1981), 341.

87. Unfortunately only the final two letters of the name can be read.

88. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39.6.4–5 *apud* A.-M. Denis, *Fragmenta pseudepigraphorum quae supersunt graeca* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 81–82; Georgius Syncellus, *Chronographia*, 2 vols., ed. G. Dindorf (Bonn: Ed. Weber, 1829), 1:16.18, 17.13. A marginal Greek scholion attached to Gen 5:6 in one manuscript reads "the wife of Seth was Azura (ἄζουρα) his sister." See P. A. de Lagarde, *Genesis Graece* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1868), 16.

89. Brit. Lib. Ms. Add. 12.154 fol. 180 *apud* Charles, *Ethiopic Version*, 183.

90. *Azerah*. See W. L. Lipscomb, "A Tradition from the Book of Jubilees in Armenian," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 29 (1978): 149–63, at 150, 156–57.

91. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (ed. de Goeje), 1,1:146, 153, 164.

92. Stone, "Death of Adam," 284.

## IV

Unraveling the mythic background of the *Lichtjungfrau* motif<sup>93</sup> in this manner points to some intriguing explanations for the curious amalgam of ancient Israelite and Muslim motifs visible in the “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt.” Although the various renditions of the medieval Jewish “Midrash of Shemḥazai and ‘Azazel” attain their own literary crystallizations too late to be of significant help in shedding light on the genealogical path of the “Tale”—and, as we have seen, they may be calques of the Muslim “Tale”—some structural elements of the “Midrash” do reprise authentic lore stemming from Second Temple scribal circles that do not surface either in rabbinic literature or in the extant forms of the Muslim “Tale.”<sup>94</sup> This is a complicating factor for explanations that propose only unidirectional paths of movement across oral or written registers. It does not appear that our extant “biblical,” parascriptural, or classical Jewish sources—whether singly or in combination—suffice to generate this variegated “Tale” or its medieval Jewish mirror. At the same time, our survey and unpacking of the elaborate complex of traditions that surround the motif of the “maiden in distress”—a stable fixture in both the “Tale” and the “Midrash”—suggest that a rich lexicon of ancestral epic lore pertaining to the first human family and the initial generations of descendants is imbricated in the parascriptural penumbra enveloping what eventually become the codified versions of Jewish and Christian scriptures. The suggestions that even canonical forms of “Bible” hint at a more primitive sub-textual layer of autochthonous myth, that they occasionally retain the fragmentary detritus of earlier, more elaborate mythic and epic formulations, or that rabbinic midrash can preserve and re-invoke the fossilized remains of such early formulations are not controversial ones.<sup>95</sup> It has also been observed that even the Quran can often shed light on the structural and exegetical lacunae found in certain renderings of “biblical” stories, including the canonical ones.<sup>96</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that “Bible” and Quran are magnetized nodes within a common “text network” that share a lexicon of ancestral heroes, places, and narrativized events,<sup>97</sup> a lexicon not limited by the constraints

93. I borrow this characterization from Wasserstrom, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 97.

94. Notably the premonitory dream sequence attributed to two of the offspring of Shemḥazai and his spouse (see above), which is otherwise attested only in the Qumran and the Manichaean *Book of Giants*. For discussion, see W. Sundermann, “Mani’s ‘Book of the Giants’ and the Jewish Books of Enoch,” in *Irano-Judaica III: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994), 40–48; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 86–102; Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 265.

95. The literature buttressing each of these suggestions is huge and does not require a detailed articulation here. See the various publications of Michael Fishbane, crowned by his magisterial *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003); also D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), esp. 93–104.

96. M. R. Waldman, “New Approaches to ‘Biblical’ Materials in the Qurʾān,” *Muslim World* 75 (1985): 1–16; D. J. Halperin, “The Hidden Made Manifest: Muslim Traditions and the ‘Latent Content’ of Biblical and Rabbinic Stories,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. P. Wright et al. (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 581–94; R. Firestone, “Comparative Studies in Bible and Qurʾān: A Fresh Look at Genesis 22 in Light of Sura 37,” in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction. Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. B. H. Hary et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 169–84; Reeves, “Some Explorations,” esp. 52–60; Pregill, “Hebrew Bible and the Quran,” 643–59; I. Albayrak, “Reading the Bible in the Light of Muslim Sources: From *isrāʾīliyyāt* to *islāmiyyāt*,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 23 (2012): 113–27.

97. For the definition of a “text network” and its applicability to the late antique forms of “Bible” or certain parascriptural cycles (e.g., Enochic literature), see Selden, “Text Networks,” 1–23. One might compare the analogous notion of text “clusters” independently advanced by M. E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 151–53, 166–71. Note also the important observations of A.-L. de Prémare, “Les textes musulmans dans leur environnement,” *Arabica* 47 (2000): 391–408.

of canon or its lemmata governed by the “tyranny of canonical assumptions.”<sup>98</sup> Within this lexicon resides a rich reservoir of revered tales, ancestral folklore, and tribal traditions about the pre-Deluge era that antedate their varying literary presentations in works such as the many redacted forms of Genesis, the Enochic *Book of Watchers*, renditions of the Second Temple book of *Jubilees*, and other so-called rewritten components of the biblical primeval history (Genesis 1–11). Therein also resides the cultural memory—and perhaps even physical exemplars—of the written sources and editorial moves that preceded the later formal crystallization of discrete textual entities such as proto-Masoretic “Genesis” or “Jubilees.”

The likelihood of a persistent survival of the sources from which both “biblical” and “non-biblical” formulations are constellated should not be dismissed out of hand. The “outside books” castigated by halakhic authorities<sup>99</sup> need not be restricted to the collections of pseudepigraphical titles that have been assembled in modern times.<sup>100</sup> Abundant evidence exists for the continuing circulation, or for the rediscovery and reintegration, of undoubtedly authentic Second Temple literary traditions into and among late antique and medieval Jewish, Christian, and Muslim works.<sup>101</sup> Some religious communities whose roots extend into a “biblical” universe of discourse—notably Manichaeans and Muslims—profess knowledge about and will occasionally make appeal to pristine editions of “earlier” scriptures that do not verbally match those utilized by fellow “biblically” grounded communities such as contemporary Jews or Christians. While such claims are typically dismissed by modern scholars as a polemical trope, perhaps more serious attention should be paid to them.<sup>102</sup> Given the remarkable vitality and proliferation of parascriptural writings among “biblically” aligned eastern cultures that express themselves in Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic, and various Middle Iranian dialects, it seems plausible that the purveyors of so-called *isrāʿīliyyāt* within early Islam were equally conversant with a wide range of apocryphal “biblical” lore that was not necessarily tethered to the kinds of scripture textually codified by the classical forms of

98. This “tyranny”—as defined by Robert Kraft—is “the temptation to impose on those ancients whom we study our modern ideas about what constituted ‘scripture’ and how it was viewed.” See especially his “Para-mania,” 10–18; his definition appears on p. 17.

99. See n. 7 above.

100. Students of early Jewish literature frequently forget that the category of “pseudepigrapha” is a modern heuristic construct. See A. Y. Reed, “The Modern Invention of ‘Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,’” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 60 (2009): 403–36.

101. To the studies of Martha Himmelfarb cited above (n. 40), one may add L. H. Schiffman, “Second Temple Literature and the Cairo Genizah,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 63 (1997–2001): 137–61; J. C. Reeves, “Exploring the Afterlife of Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Medieval Near Eastern Religious Traditions: Some Initial Soundings,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30 (1999): 148–77; F. Astren, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Medieval Jewish Studies: Methods and Problems,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8 (2001): 105–23; R. Nisse, “A Romance of the Jewish East: The Ten Lost Tribes and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* in Medieval Europe,” *Medieval Encounters* 13 (2007): 499–523; R. Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirqa de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

102. For example, I have sought to show that the third-century Mesopotamian prophet Mani may indeed have had access to a wide range of Jewish and Christian parascriptural literature that extended well beyond his proven adaptation of the Second Temple-era Jewish Aramaic booklet known as the *Book of Giants*, including perhaps even an unexpurgated form of the so-called “Priestly Source” (P) for the early chapters of Genesis. See, e.g., for the former, J. C. Reeves, “An Enochic Motif in Manichaean Tradition,” in *Manichaica Selecta: Studies Presented to Professor Julien Ries on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. A. van Tongerloo and S. Giversen (Louvain: International Association of Manichaean Studies, 1991), 295–98; idem, *Jewish Lore*, passim; idem, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Manichaean Literature: The Influence of the Enochic Library,” in *Tracing the Threads*, ed. Reeves, 173–203; and for the latter, idem, “Manichaeans as *Ahl al-Kitāb*: A Study in Manichaean Scripturalism,” in *Light against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World*, ed. A. Lange et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011), 249–65.

Judaism or Christianity.<sup>103</sup> The well-documented rise of a “book culture” in late antiquity and the ensuing fierce ideological struggles among rival communities over the significance of their possession of “written scriptures” for the construction or validation of authority did not transpire in a textual vacuum.

What then may ultimately prove more important as a result of this study is the potential that the Muslim “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt” and its congeners have for reconstructing what is almost certainly a pre-Islamic and very possibly a pre-Pentateuchal<sup>104</sup> tale about the early generations of humanity upon earth, their troubled relationship with the celestial entities who preceded them and interacted with them, and the questionable origin of certain types of efficacious crafts and technologies such as the magic arts and metallurgy. The Enochic *Book of Watchers* illustrates one Second Temple-era way of articulating these concepts, the initial chapters of *Jubilees* allude to yet another trajectory for framing them, and the multiple sources underlying the so-called primeval history section of the canonical versions of Genesis furnish still further fragmentary instances where once separate myths were forcibly constrained and adjusted to fit within what appears to be a relatively “new” sequential tale-cycle.<sup>105</sup> The Muslim “Tale of Hārūt and Mārūt” invites us to postulate that the pre-canonical dimensions of Israelite myth and narrative tradition were much richer and more long-lived than most scholars of the Bible or Quran tend to realize.

103. For example, see the impressive range of largely parascriptural sources invoked to explain the Quranic tradition that ties the “biblical” Abraham to the building of the Ka’ba in U. Rubin, “*Ḥanīfiyya* and Ka’ba: An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of *din Ibrāhīm*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 85–112, esp. 106–9; J. Witztum, “The Foundations of the House (Q 2:127),” *BSOAS* 72 (2009): 25–40. Rubin opines that *Jubilees* was available in pre-Islamic Arabia thanks to “Abyssinian Christians for whom this book was sacred” (pp. 108–9), but Aksumite Christianity was not the only post-Second Temple religious community that treasured, preserved, and transmitted lore commonly associated with *Jubilees* or other Second Temple-period texts.

104. Called “Old Israelitish” long ago by J. Finkel, “Old Israelitish Tradition in the Koran,” *PAAJR* 2 (1930–31): 7–21.

105. I therefore concur with the growing roster of scholars who deem Gen 6:1–4 to be a deliberately truncated remnant of what was originally a much fuller tale about the intercourse between the celestial and terrestrial worlds. See, e.g., Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 30–32; P. R. Davies, “Sons of Cain,” in *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane*, ed. J. D. Martin and P. R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 46–50; S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 78; P. Sacchi, Review of Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits. . .*, *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 37 (2006): 511–13; Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, esp. 373–95; Reeves, “Manichaeans as *Ahl al-Kitāb*,” 262–64; D. Melvin, “The Gilgamesh Traditions and the Pre-History of Genesis 6:1–4,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 38 (2011): 23–32.