

## Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qur'ān

John C. Reeves

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

“a palimpsest, layer upon layer, tradition upon tradition, intertwined to the extent that one cannot really grasp one without the other, certainly not the later without the earlier, *but often also not the earlier without considering the shapes it took later.*”<sup>1</sup>

Many contemporary biblical scholars are aware that Bible and Qur'ān share and exploit a common layer of discourse consisting of a number of stories and themes featuring and drawing on certain paradigmatic characters, such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Most, however, do not pursue the literary ramifications of this nexus, and hence they remain remarkably oblivious to the rich reservoirs of traditional lore tapped and channeled by the Qur'ān and its expounders.<sup>2</sup> The intent of the present essay is to suggest that a careful reading of the Qur'ān in tandem with the interpretive traditions available in ancillary Muslim literature such as *ḥadīth*, classical commentaries, antiquarian histories, and the collections of so-called

---

\* An earlier version of a portion of this essay was published electronically as “Toward a Rapprochement between Bible and Qur'ān,” *Religious Studies News—SBL Edition* 2.9 (December 2001), which is accessible at [http://www.sbl-site.org/Newsletter/12\\_2001/ReevesFull.htm](http://www.sbl-site.org/Newsletter/12_2001/ReevesFull.htm).

<sup>1</sup> H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 4, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> A particularly valuable survey of this labyrinthine corpus, supplemented with copious bibliographical references, is H. Schwarzbaum, *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk-Literature* (Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte des Orients 30; Walldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde Dr. H. Vorndran, 1982). See also C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1–22.

“prophetic legends” (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*)<sup>3</sup> can shed a startling light on the structure and content of certain stories found in Bible and its associated literatures (such as Jewish pseudepigrapha and rabbinic midrash). Indeed, the results of this type of study imply that the Qur’ān and the other early Muslim biblically allied traditions must be taken much more seriously as witnesses to “versions of Bible” than has heretofore been the case.<sup>4</sup>

Let us consider three examples of how a careful reading of Qur’ān and other early Muslim authorities sheds some valuable interpretive light on the shaping and refraction of Jewish and Christian scriptural traditions from the early centuries of the Common Era.

#### IDRĪS “IS” ENOCH

During a qur’ānic rehearsal of the careers of a series of biblical figures to whom Islam accords the status of “prophet” (*nabī*),<sup>5</sup> we encounter the

---

<sup>3</sup> For guidance pertaining to this latter literary genre, see especially Schwarzbaum, *Legends*, 46–75; J. Pauliny, “Some Remarks on the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’* Works in Arabic Literature,” in *The Qur’an: Formative Interpretation* (ed. A. Rippin; Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 313–26.

<sup>4</sup> Not all these “versions” of Bible exist (or even once existed) in written form, just as the Qur’ān itself as revelatory locus resists confinement to the bounds of a physical text. The former point emerges from a consideration of the abundant evidence collected by James L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); the latter from D. A. Madigan, *The Qur’ān’s Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam’s Scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). For some exemplary approaches to the comparative study of biblical and qur’ānic traditions, note James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 28–65; M. R. Waldman, “New Approaches to ‘Biblical’ Materials in the Qur’ān,” *MW* 75 (1985): 1–16; N. Calder, “From Midrash to Scripture: The Sacrifice of Abraham in Early Islamic Tradition,” *Mus* 101 (1988): 375–402; 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. See now the truly groundbreaking study of R. Firestone, “Comparative Studies in Bible and Qur’ān: 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.

<sup>5</sup> A convenient listing of the qur’ānic “prophets” is available in T. P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (1885; repr., New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1977), 475–76. For more nuanced discussions of this office and its occupants, see U. Rubin, “Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shī’a Tradition,” *JSAI* 1 (1979): 41–65; G. D. Newby,

following enigmatic statement: “Mention in the book Idrīs, for he was a truthful one, a prophet; and We raised him to a lofty place” (Q 19:56–57). Given the clear biblical provenance of the names appearing in these verses’ immediate environment—such as those of Moses, Abraham, and Noah—one might legitimately expect Idrīs to be a biblical character as well. However, neither the name Idrīs nor any plausible permutation thereof figures in either the Hebrew or Christian Bibles. Some Western scholars have sought to resolve this identity crisis by positing a corruption in the transmission of the qur’ānic name, but their suggestions are not very compelling.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the postqur’ānic Muslim interpretive tradition, as mediated by the standard commentaries and histories, avers that the prophet Idrīs is in fact identical with the biblical antediluvian forefather Enoch (Gen 5:21–24).<sup>7</sup>

In spite of this important testimony—one that appears early and recurs repeatedly throughout Muslim literature—some modern scholars continue to harbor doubts. In a recent study P. S. Alexander writes: “Now it seems abundantly clear that although the identification of Idrīs with Enoch is standard in the Tafsīr literature . . . the Qur’ān was not, in fact, referring to Enoch. The name Idrīs is nothing like the name Enoch, and no convincing link between the two has ever been suggested.”<sup>8</sup> This is, however, not a particularly compelling argument. If Alexander’s proffered criterion for equivalence—presumably a discernable phonetic correspondence between the names Idrīs and Enoch—should be admitted as a cogent objection, then one would be forced to discard a number of other hitherto undisputed

---

*The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muḥammad* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 18–24; M. R. Waldman, “Nubuwa,” *ER* 11:1–7.

<sup>6</sup> The most important suggestions are summarized by P. Casanova, “Idrīs et ‘Ouzair,” *JA* 205 (1924): 357–58; G. Vajda, “Idrīs,” *ET*<sup>2</sup> 3:1030–31; see also Y. Erder, “The Origin of the Name Idrīs in the Qur’ān: A Study of the Influence of Qumran Literature on Early Islam,” *JNES* 49 (1990): 339–50, esp. 340–41; idem, “Idrīs,” *Enc-Qur* 2:484–86.

<sup>7</sup> A convenient anthology of such traditions, although mediated through a Shī’a perspective, is available in Sayyid Ni’mat Allāh al-Jazā’irī, *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (ed. H. M. ‘Aqil; Beirut: Dār al-Balāgha, 1991), 81–89. Jazā’irī’s collection was abstracted in turn from the massive *Biḥār al-anwār* of Majlisī, a magisterial library of Shiite lore compiled in the seventeenth century (110 vols.; Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1957–), 11:270–84.

<sup>8</sup> P. S. Alexander, “Jewish Tradition in Early Islam: The Case of Enoch/Idrīs,” in *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions in Memory of Norman Calder* (ed. G. R. Hawting et al.; JSSSup 12; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

equivalencies linking qur'ānic and extraqur'ānic characters. For example, the Babylonian angels Hārūt and Mārūt (Q 2:102) are most certainly reflexes of the disgraced heavenly Watchers Shemhazai and 'Azael, whose corruptive activities are extensively profiled in Jewish pseudepigraphic lore.<sup>9</sup> This is true despite the absence of any common elements among their respective names. Nor does any modern scholar seriously dispute the identification of the enigmatic Dhū'l-Qarnayn “the two-horned one” (Q 18:83–98) with Alexander the Great,<sup>10</sup> even though again there is no similarity between the spelling of these names. Hence the lack of a consonantal overlap between the names Idrīs and Enoch is hardly a conclusive factor for dismissing their narratological equivalence.

There is, however, one important clue already within the qur'ānic verses that fosters an identification of Idrīs with Enoch, namely, their suggestive reference to the apparent supernatural removal of Enoch from human society: “We raised him [i.e., Idrīs] to a lofty place.”<sup>11</sup> Although the Hebrew Bible (Gen 5:22–24) is strikingly reticent on Enoch's fate, remarking only that he consorted with divine beings and turned up missing because “God took him,”<sup>12</sup> the rich legendary circle of traditions surrounding this character as found in “books” allegedly authored by Enoch and in other various derivative literatures produced over the course of the first millennium of the Common Era furnish a multitude of details about his journey(s) to the supernal realm and eventual installation among the angelic beings in heaven or, alternatively, his divinely supervised sequestration

<sup>9</sup> M. Grünbaum, “Beiträge zur vergleichenden Mythologie aus der Hagada,” in idem, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Sagenkunde* (ed. F. Perles; Berlin: Calvary, 1901), 59–75; B. Heller, “La chute des anges: Schemhazai, Ouzza et Azaël,” *REJ* 60 (1910): 202–12; G. Vajda, “Hārūt wa-Mārūt,” *EI*<sup>2</sup> 3:236–37. The present author is currently preparing a new comparative study of these materials.

<sup>10</sup> Thereby sidestepping mystical exegesis, such as that of Ibn al-'Arabī. See W. M. Watt, “Iskandar,” *EI*<sup>2</sup> 4:127; J. Renard, “Alexander,” *EncQur* 1:61–62.

<sup>11</sup> While it is true that some commentators (and hence Qur'ān translations) interpret the phrase “lofty place” to refer to a change in status rather than of cosmic locale, most of the legendary embellishments tied to this verse understand its import to connote Idrīs's physical ascent to heaven.

<sup>12</sup> Gen 5:24: וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ הַנּוֹךְ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים וַאֲיָנֹו כִּי לָקַח אֱתֹו אֱלֹהִים, a passage wherein James C. VanderKam rightly calls attention to the missing definite article on the final Hebrew word and suggests “the priestly writer meant to distinguish between the *ba-'elohîm* [Reeves: “divine beings, angels”] with whom Enoch had ongoing fellowship and the deity [*'elohîm*] who removed him after 365 years” (*Enoch: A Man for All Generations* [Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995], 13). Note also *Jub.* 4:21 and D. Dimant, “The Biography of Enoch and the Books of Enoch,” *VT* 33 (1983): 21.

from mortal society within a celestial garden of Eden. One of these latter sources (*Jub.* 4:23) expresses Enoch's removal from human society in these terms: "And he was taken up from among humankind, and we brought him into the Garden of Eden (so as) to honor and glorify (him)."<sup>13</sup> This statement is intriguingly congruous with the Qur'ānic "We raised him to a lofty place," even when one disregards the interesting parallel usage of the first-person plural pronoun to reference their respective angelic interlocutors.<sup>14</sup> Recalling that there is a persistent tradition within early eastern Christendom that situates Eden at the top of a cosmic mountain,<sup>15</sup> one begins to realize that there may be further "subtextual" linkages between these two texts. One might compare Enoch's first-person description of his removal from earth as portrayed in the so-called Animal Apocalypse of *1 Enoch*: "and those three [heavenly beings] that had last come forth grasped me by my hand and took me up, away from the generations of the earth, and raised me up to a lofty place" (*1 En.* 87:3).<sup>16</sup> It is almost as if the Qur'ān has paraphrased this latter clause from *1 Enoch* in its description of the fate of Idrīs. These intriguing intertextual strands that subtly join Genesis, *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, and Qur'ān reunite in Saadia Gaon's tenth-century Arabic translation of Gen 5:22–24 wherein distinctive verbal elements of Q 19:56–57 are incorporated.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Translated from R. H. Charles, *Maṣḥafa Kufālē, or the Ethiopic Version of the Hebrew Book of Jubilees* (Anecdota Oxoniensia; Oxford: Clarendon, 1895), 17.

<sup>14</sup> The same first-person style (i.e., the angels referenced as "we") is found in 4Q227 (4QpsJub<sup>c</sup>) frag. 2; see the edition of James C. VanderKam and J. T. Milik in *Qumran Cave 4*, vol. 8, *Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (ed. H. Attridge et al.; DJD 13; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 171–75 and pl. XII (PAM 43.238).

<sup>15</sup> See N. Séd, "Les hymnes sur le Paradis de Saint Ephrem et les traditions juives," *Mus* 81 (1968): 459; R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 306–10; G. Widengren, *Mubammad, the Apostle of God, and His Ascension* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1955), 208–9. Note Ezek 28:12–18; Isa 14:12–15; *1 En.* 18:6; 24:3–25:7; 32:3–6; Ephrem, *Hymnen de Paradiso* 1.4 (cited by Séd, "Les hymnes," 474).

<sup>16</sup> Ethiopic *makān nauwāx* (መካን ነሆኅ) for "lofty place." Ethiopic text cited from *Das Buch Henoch: Äthiopischer Text* (ed. J. Flemming; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902), 120; translation cited from that of R. H. Charles, *APOT* 2:251.

<sup>17</sup> Even though Saadia actually argues—in agreement with *Targum Onqelos*—that Enoch died. Saadia's *Tafsīr* to Genesis was reproduced by P. A. de Lagarde, *Materialien zur Kritik und Geschichte des Pentateuchs* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1867), 1:6. See also the important remarks of M. Zucker, *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1984), 328–29 n. \*203.

A suggestive junction of Jewish (also Christian) Enoch and Muslim Idrīs attributes is also visible within the ninth-century Muslim chronicler Ya'qūbī's treatment of this biblical character in his summary of antediluvian "history" in his *Ta'riḫ*. It is often remarked that the standard appellation for Enoch in extant Enochic and cognate literatures is the epithet "righteous" (Greek δίκαιος; Hebrew צַדִּיק; Aramaic קְשִׁיט; etc.) and its various permutations.<sup>18</sup> Rabbinic literature critically underscores this apparently popular assessment of Enoch's piety when it rejoins, for example, that "he [i.e., Enoch] is not inscribed within the book of the righteous but instead the book of the wicked" (*Gen. Rab.* 25:1).<sup>19</sup> Ya'qūbī preserves echoes of this distinctive theme and cements the identification of Enoch with Idrīs by creatively fusing the relevant qur'ānic and biblical verses: "Idrīs enjoined his offspring to be faithful in the worship of God and to practice righteousness and true religion. Then God raised him after three hundred years had passed."<sup>20</sup>

But why the peculiar name "Idrīs"? Muslim interpreters agree that the designation is not Arabic, a concession that fueled repeated attempts by Western commentators to see in the name the remaining fragments of a name such as Andreas, Esdras, or even Poimandres.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, earlier traditional scholars do provide a type of "midrashic" explanation for the name Idrīs that achieves broad recognition within the rich treasuries of exegetical and antiquarian lore compiled and transmitted by early Muslim exegetes, historians, and collectors of biblical folklore. One of the earliest contributors to this kind of study was the ninth-century scholar Ibn Qutayba,<sup>22</sup> wherein we read:

To Seth was born Enosh, as well as (other) sons and daughters, and to Enosh was born Kenan, and to Kenan was born Mahalalel, and to Mahalalel was born Yared, and to Yared was born Enoch, and he is Idrīs. . . . He bore the name Idrīs on account of the quantity of knowledge and religious practices which he learned [*darasa*] from the Scripture of God Most Exalted. God Most Exalted revealed to him thirty scrolls. He was the first

<sup>18</sup> See the discussion in John C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (NHMS 41; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 184–85.

<sup>19</sup> So R. Ḥama in the name of R. Hosh'aya (ed. Theodor-Albeck 1:238).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibn Wādīb qui dicitur al-Ja'qubi historiae* (ed. M. T. Houtsma; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1883), 1:8–9. The final sentence is based upon Gen 5:21–22. This edition will henceforth be cited as Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḫ*.

<sup>21</sup> See especially Erder, "Origin of the Name," 340–41.

<sup>22</sup> For information on this figure and his significance, see G. Lecomte, "Ibn Qūṭayba," *ET* 3:844–46; Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 172 s.v. Ibn Qutayba; Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 30–36.

to write with a pen. . . . He was the great-grandfather of Noah. He was raised up at the age of 365 years.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, the name Idrīs reflects a wordplay on the verbal root *darasa*, which is in turn connected with the acquisition and promulgation of knowledge.<sup>24</sup> Enoch becomes Idrīs to mark that character's distinction in academic pursuits. Unsurprisingly, this is precisely the type of *curriculum vita* exhibited by the character Enoch within Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphic sources: he is the first to write, he becomes proficient in astronomical and calendrical lore, and he admonishes his contemporaries—the infamous *dōr ha-mabbūl*—to practice righteousness and true piety.<sup>25</sup> These same collections of traditions often supply a series of reasons why Enoch deserved this boon, most of which revolve around his scholastic attainments and exemplary piety. Given his scholastic and moral attainments, and the well-attested intercultural popularity of the figure of Enoch as celestial voyager and purveyor of supernatural secrets, it should occasion little surprise that the Qur'ān and its early exegetes likewise signal a familiarity with these influential literary traditions.

#### IDRĪS “AS” ENOCH

Consider now the following tradition found in the ninth-century Muslim historian Ya'qūbī amidst his summary rehearsal of the career of the prophet Idrīs, whom, as we have seen, is most often identified with the biblical forefather Enoch. Ya'qūbī recounts:

When he [i.e., Enoch/Idrīs] was 65 years old, he fathered Methuselah.<sup>26</sup>  
He admonished the descendants of Seth, together with their wives and

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-ma'ārif* (ed. Th. 'Ukkāsha; 2d ed.; Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), 20–21.

<sup>24</sup> Also emphasized by Erder, “Origin of the Name,” 341–42.

<sup>25</sup> Note 1 *En.* 12:3–4; 81:1–82:3; *Jub.* 4:16–25; 4Q227 (4QpsJub<sup>c</sup>) frag. 2; Michael Syrus, *Chronicle* 1.5 (see *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche, 1166–1199* [ed. J.-B. Chabot; 4 vols.; repr., Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963], 4:4 [text]); *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234*, 1:39.1–8 (see *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens* [ed. J.-B. Chabot; 2 vols.; CSCO 81–82; Paris: Reipublicae, 1916–20]); Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum* (ed. P. Bedjan; Paris: Maisonneuve, 1890), 5.10–6.18.

<sup>26</sup> Essentially a translation of Gen 5:21: ויהי הנוך חמש וששים שנה ויולד את מתושלח “Enoch lived for sixty-five years and then fathered Methuselah.” It should be noted that the Syriac testimonia to the life of Enoch sometime follow the Septuagintal chronology for Enoch's life, wherein his age is 165 when he fathers Methuselah.

children, about descending (from the mountain), for this (possibility) distressed Enoch. He summoned his offspring—Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah—and said to them: “I know that God will inflict a great merciless punishment on this generation!”<sup>27</sup>

Several things are worthy of note in this short extract. Perhaps most noticeable is Ya‘qūbī’s obvious reliance upon the Christian *Cave of Treasures* legendary cycle for the basic narrative thread of his own “biblical history.”<sup>28</sup> His dependence is instanced in the present citation by its presumption that the descendants of Seth inhabit the slopes of a mountain, which mountain we learn from the *Cave* cycle is the one at whose summit is paradise.<sup>29</sup> Their place of dwelling contrasts with that of the wicked progeny of Cain, a group who indulge in all manner of debauchery and who inhabit the plain below.<sup>30</sup> Much of the narrative tension in the initial chapters of the *Cave of Treasures* revolves around the corruptive danger posed to the line of Seth (who here play the role of the “sons of God” signaled in Gen 6:2) by the degenerate offspring of Cain (the “mortal women” of the same verse).<sup>31</sup>

Equally intriguing are the words spoken by Enoch in this story. Direct discourse in Ya‘qūbī’s “biblical history” is sometimes tied to “quotations”

<sup>27</sup> Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rīkh* (ed. Houtsma), 1:8.

<sup>28</sup> Explored in a preliminary fashion by A. Götze, “Die Nachwirkung der Schatzhöhle,” *ZS* 3 (1925): 60–71; N. Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri I*, vol. 1, *Historical Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 46–50. Important textual resources for studying the *Cave of Treasures* cycle include S.-M. Ri, *La Caverne des Trésors: Les deux recensions syriaques* (CSCO 486, scrip. syri t. 207; Louvain: Peeters, 1987); A. Battista and B. Bagatti, *La Caverna dei Tesori: Testo arabo con traduzione italiana e commento* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1980), 1–56 (text), wherein the *Kitāb majāll* (i.e., Book of Scrolls) first published by M. D. Gibson is reprinted; and C. Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle »Mē‘ārath Gazzē«* (Leipzig, 1883–88; repr., Amsterdam: Philo, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> Interestingly this motif reenters Jewish lore in the medieval Jewish *Yerahme’el* manuscript collection of exegetical traditions. Therein it states: בני שת היו יושבים בהרים אצל גן עדן. Text cited from *Sefer Zikkronot hu’ Divrey ba-Yamim le-Yerahme’el* (ed. E. Yassif; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2001), 115.

<sup>30</sup> *Yerahme’el*: וקין היה יושב בשרה דמשק אשר שם הבל נהרג. The underlined term stems from Gen 4:8.

<sup>31</sup> Such a reading of the primary actors of Gen 6:1–4 narratologically emerges from the immediately precedent juxtaposition of the Cainite (4:17–24) and Sethian (5:1–32) genealogies. For a summary sketch of the history of this interpretation, see John C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), 186–87 and 199 nn. 2–3.

from written revelatory discourse of various types, such as in order to situate a Qur'ānic declaration or pronouncement within a narrative setting.<sup>32</sup> In other words, biblical characters may sometimes “speak” words that are associated with them as authors or actors in other scriptural sources. Enoch, as we have seen above, enjoys a reputation for literary production, and the so-called *Ethiopic Enoch* (or *1 Enoch*) and *Slavonic Enoch* (or *2 Enoch*) survive today as important ancient witnesses to the types of literature associated with his name. Hence, when Enoch “speaks,” as he does in this pericope, one must be attuned to the possibility that the author may be quoting from an allegedly Enochic scripture.

“He summoned his offspring—Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah—and said to them: ‘I know that God will inflict a great merciless punishment on this generation!’” Compare this Enochic oracle with the first statement attributed directly to Enoch that is recorded in the initial chapter of our present *1 Enoch*: “not to this generation, but rather to a distant generation do I speak” (1:2).<sup>33</sup> This latter authentic Enochic citation explicitly associates the proper target audience for the contents of *1 Enoch* with a generation who lives near the anticipated eschaton or end of days, not, it explicitly emphasizes, Enoch’s antediluvian contemporaries. The Ya’qūbī citation, by contrast, reverses this dichotomy and identifies Enoch’s message in this instance as being directed not to future worthies (as in *1 En.* 1:2) but instead specifically to “this generation,” namely, his peers. The this generation/distant generation interplay between these two widely disparate literary sources seems deliberate. The problem comes in analyzing its import. Is it simply a matter of signaling the author’s awareness that a prophet’s primary mission is to convey warnings to his own people during his lifetime and that Enoch, given his status as prophet, must have had some message for his contemporaries? Might the author be consciously tweaking the rhetorical structure of *1 En.* 1:2, in which case one must concede the intriguing likelihood that some form of *1 Enoch* would have been known to either Ya’qūbī or his source? Or might the author be informing us that there is in fact another “book of Enoch”—still awaiting

<sup>32</sup> For example, Iblīs (i.e., Satan) weeps before Adam and Eve in the garden. When they inquire about the reason for his grief, he responds: ‘Because *Your Lord has forbidden you this tree only to prevent you from becoming angels or from becoming immortal! He swore to them: Most truly I am giving you good advice!*’ The italicized words reproduce Q 7:20–21, now situated within a narrative context. Citation from Ya’qūbī, *Ta’riḫ* (ed. Houtsma), 1:2.

<sup>33</sup> I render the fragmentary Aramaic Ur-text of *1 En.* 1:2 as preserved in 4Q201 (4QEn<sup>a</sup> ar) I 4: לא להרין ררה להן לרר רחיק אנה ממלל. The Greek version is similar: καὶ οὐκ εἰς τῆν νῦν γενεάν διενεούμην, ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ πόρρω οὔσαν ἐγὼ λαλῶ. See Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm*, 24 n. 45.

modern discovery—that featured oracles and visions pertinent to “this generation, rather than a distant one”? In that vein, persistent reports within Muslim authorities regarding the existence of numerous works allegedly authored by Enoch assume a greater significance.<sup>34</sup>

#### Q 2:30 AND ITS “BIBLICAL” ROOTS

Q 2:30 reads: “And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am putting a deputy on the earth!’, they responded: ‘Would You put on it one who will corrupt it and shed blood? We (by contrast) extol Your praise(s) and sanctify You!’” We learn from the following verse that this “deputy” (*caliph*) is in fact Adam,<sup>35</sup> the first human being, and God goes on to create him despite these angelic objections. Once Adam has been created, God immediately challenges the reproving angels to measure their mental acumen against that of the new creature by “coining names for everything” (2:31). Predictably, the angels fail this test miserably, whereas Adam experiences no difficulties whatsoever in assigning names to the various creatures. His triumph, however, is somewhat tarnished, since the text also notes that Adam had been previously coached for this contest by God (2:31)!<sup>36</sup>

Earlier scholars rightly acknowledge a close structural and dialogical affinity between what the Qur’an reports here about a heavenly consultation concerning the fabrication of humanity and a parallel cycle of legends surrounding the creation of Adam found in rabbinic literature.<sup>37</sup> In that latter corpus of Jewish texts, the scene is usually constructed as follows:

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the testimony of the tenth-century historian Mas‘ūdī: “Thirty scrolls were revealed to him [i.e., Enoch], just as before him twenty-one scrolls were revealed to Adam and twenty-nine scrolls were revealed to Seth. Within them [Enoch’s scrolls] were psalms of praise and hymns.” Passage cited from Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma‘ādin al-jawhar: Les prairies d’or* (ed. C. Barbier de Meynard and P. de Courteille; 9 vols.; Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1861–77), 1:73.

<sup>35</sup> For brief discussions regarding the possible meanings of this word in relation to the creation of Adam, see C. Schöck, “Adam and Eve,” *EncQur* 1:22–26, esp. 23; W. Kadi, “Caliph,” *EncQur* 1:276–78. A more comprehensive treatment is provided by M. J. Kister, “Ādam: A Study of Some Legends in *Tafsīr* and *Ḥadīth* Literature,” in idem, *Concepts and Ideas at the Dawn of Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1997), 113–74, esp. 115–32.

<sup>36</sup> One might compare a cognate tale about the humiliation of Satan found in the rich medieval collection of Jewish legends transmitted by R. Moshe ha-Darshan in *Beresbit Rabbati*; see the appendix to the present article.

<sup>37</sup> Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Islam* (1898; repr., New York: Ktav, 1970), 75–77; H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1988), 51–54.

- a. God resolves to create Adam.
- b. The angels object to God's plan
- c. usually due to allegations of Adam's inherent uselessness or weakness.
- d. God goes ahead and creates Adam anyway,
- e. sometimes declaring the superiority of human wisdom to that of the angels,
- f. which is often "proven" by an animal-naming contest,
- g. which the angels lose
- h. but which Adam wins.

There are a number of variant versions of this distinctive tale-type,<sup>38</sup> whose precise details may change from source to source but whose general outline remains fairly constant.<sup>39</sup> Of especial interest for our present purposes are the unusually specific reasons advanced by the angels for refraining from Adam's creation. Within the rabbinic material, the typical response by the angels to God's announcement about his intention to create Adam is to exclaim Pss 8:5 or 144:3–4,<sup>40</sup> both of which stress the inherent uselessness or weakness of mortals, but neither of which specify any particular failings or crimes. By contrast, Q 2:30 departs significantly from this standard template when it portrays the angels saying, "Would You put on it one *who will corrupt it and shed blood?*" Were this verse to figure in a completely unique narrative scenario, it would probably attract little attention. But since it occurs within what is otherwise a relatively

---

<sup>38</sup> More precisely, a "motif" in the "tale-type" concerned with the "Creation of humanity," namely, A1217.1 "Rebel angels object to creation of man," in S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (6 vols.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1932–36), 1:203. I use the term *tale-type* here for what L. Dégh terms a "master story"; see her *Legend and Belief: Dialectics of a Folklore Genre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 49.

<sup>39</sup> See *Gen. Rab.* 17:4; *b. Sanh.* 38b; *Pesiq. Rab. Kab.* 4.3 (ed. Mandelbaum 1:60–61); *Pirqe R. El.* §13; *Num. Rab.* 19:3; Zohar 3.207b. These examples can easily be multiplied. Christian and Muslim versions of this tale often embellish it with either a parallel or supplemental account of the "fall of Satan": note *Vita Adae et Evae* 12–17; *Cave of Treasures* §§2–3 (ed. Ri); Q 2:30–37; 15:28–38; 38:71–81.

<sup>40</sup> Ps 8:5 (Eng. 8:4) asks: "What is man that you are mindful of him, mortal man that you take note of him?" Similarly Ps 144:3 queries: "O LORD, what is man [Adam] that you should care about him, mortal man that you should think of him?" The use of psalmic "quotations" need not necessarily imply that the biblical book of Psalms had a premundane existence; rather, rabbinic midrash often narratively contextualizes the unattributed declarations, queries, and exclamations frequently found in canonical works such as Psalms or Job.

stable narrative setting whose elemental components do not significantly vary for over one thousand years of literary history, it becomes positively arresting. A major question generated by this formulation of the text is whether the Qur'ān envisions a specific narrative event or sequence of such events when it represents the angels condemning humanity for its impending "corruption of the earth" and the "shedding of blood."<sup>41</sup>

Antediluvian biblical narrative, an integrated sequence of stories embraced by both the Qur'ān and its interpretive community as a normative portrayal of early human history, immediately suggests one possible candidate for the referent of the angels' accusation. The infamous "generation of the flood" (דור המבול) explicitly "corrupted the earth" (Gen 6:11–12) and "engaged in violence" (6:11–13), therein an undifferentiated mayhem, but which we learn from the parallel accounts in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* involved the "shedding of blood."<sup>42</sup> After the flood, when God reestablishes his covenant with Noah, the flood hero receives some detailed instructions pertaining to the proper handling of "blood," some of which focus upon the grievous consequences that befall one who "sheds human blood" (Gen 9:2–6; *Jub.* 6:6–8, 12–13; 7:27–33). The attention devoted to this topic within the "biblical" templates suggests that an improper handling of blood—including that of humans—is somehow implicated in those events that "corrupt the earth" and precipitate the universal deluge.<sup>43</sup>

A better candidate, however, may be the earlier story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–16), some echoes of which also appear in the Qur'ān (5:27–32).<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> "How could the angels say to their Lord, when He told them that He was placing a viceregent on earth: 'Will You place thereon one who will work corruption there, and shed blood?,' when Adam had not yet been created, let alone his offspring, so that the angels could have known through the evidence of their eyes what they would do? Did they have knowledge of the unperceivable . . . that they could say this? Or did they say what they said through conjecture?" Ṭabarī goes on to relate a number of opinions regarding the possible resolution of this seeming foreknowledge. Quotation cited from Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The Commentary on the Qur'ān: Being an Abridged Translation of Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (ed. J. Cooper et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1:211. See also M. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* (2 vols.; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984–), 1:73–93.

<sup>42</sup> *Jub.* 5:2–4 (?); 7:21–26; 1 *En.* 7:4–6; 9:1, 9.

<sup>43</sup> This point is explicitly emphasized in *Jub.* 7:25 (*APOT* 2:24): "And the Lord destroyed everything from off the face of the earth; because of the wickedness of their deeds, and because of the blood which they had shed in the midst of the earth He destroyed everything."

<sup>44</sup> While the basic story is recounted here, the names of the feuding brothers are conspicuously absent in the Qur'ānic version. Later tradition supplies the assonant

Many modern students of Bible fail to discern the pivotal significance that this tale actually plays in the present narrative structure of Genesis due to the enormous theological weight with which ancient, medieval, and modern Christian interpreters have invested the immediately preceding story of Adam and Eve's misadventure in the garden (Gen 2:25–3:24). The subsequent Cain and Abel affair, having been ideologically overshadowed by the account of the primal couple's hubris and disobedience to their Creator, is in effect often reduced to an appendix serving to reinforce the Christian dogma of the fall.<sup>45</sup> While admittedly the episode of disobedience in the Garden was not a good thing, the story of Cain and Abel introduces something foreign into the created order, namely, the "corruption" and "bloodshed" of which the Qur'anic angels speak. It represents a critical turning point in antediluvian narrative history and is (from the point of view of the final redactor of Genesis) the key crime that leads ineluctably to the flood.

Evidence supporting these points can be gathered from both a structural and exegetical scrutiny of the Masoretic Text of Genesis. A structural examination swiftly reveals that the stories of Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 2:4b–3:24) and of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–16) form almost perfect mirror images:

**Gen 2:4b–3:24**

Adam: "worker" of אָדָמָה  
within Eden  
admonished to avoid a type of  
action  
does the action anyway  
in association with a woman

**Gen 4:1–16**

Cain: "worker" of אָדָמָה  
outside of Eden  
admonished to avoid a type of  
action  
does the action anyway  
[possibly over a woman]<sup>46</sup>

---

sobriquets Qābīl and Hābīl. For illuminating presentations of the textual interfaces among the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim interpretations of this story, see Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, 80–82; Speyer, *Erzählung*, 84–88; N. A. Stillman, "The Story of Cain and Abel in the Qur'an and the Muslim Commentators: Some Observations," *JSS* 19 (1974): 231–39; H. Busse, "Cain and Abel," *EncQur* 1:270–72.

<sup>45</sup> E.g., "The narrator [of Gen 4:1–16] shows what happened to mankind *when once it had fallen from disobedience to God*. This is actually the first picture of man *after he was expelled from Paradise*, and the picture is a terrible one. Sin has grown like an avalanche. It has taken total possession of the man who associated with it, for *this man outside Paradise* is a fratricide from the beginning." Quotation taken from G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 108, emphases added.

<sup>46</sup> *1 En.* 85:3; *Jub.* 4:1, 9 already know this tradition about the brothers' rivalry over their potential bride, as does the Syriac *Cave of Treasures* and the Muslim compilations of "biblical lore" ultimately indebted to it. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–38), 5:138–39

question-response sequence  
 result: death (mortality)  
 plus curses (including אַרְמָה)  
 expulsion

question-response sequence  
 result: death (murder)  
 plus curses (more than אַרְמָה)  
 expulsion

While both stories result in the manifestation of “death,” the deaths depicted are in no way equivalent.<sup>47</sup> The death that results from Adam’s disobedience may be a misfortune, but it is presented as a universal, natural, and even inevitable event that will eventually and inexorably lay claim to all organic life. The pertinent point of the garden story, when cast in this light, is not so much about detailing the consequences of human rebellion and corruption as it is about exposing human stupidity in their forfeiture of immortality. By contrast, the death introduced by Cain’s homicide marks a qualitatively different type of demise: it is individually plotted and targeted, and it represents a premature and illicit termination of a divinely ordained determination of life span.

If its primary motifs have been coherently reconstructed, the narrative logic of the structural juxtaposition demands that the murder of Abel should function as the first fatal shedding of blood in the course of antediluvian “history.” Does this exegetical conclusion withstand a narratological scrutiny? Two possible interpretive problems emerge here: (1) the “garments of skin” (כְּתוּנֹת עוֹר) mentioned in Gen 3:21 (“and the LORD God fashioned garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and he clothed them”); and (2) Abel’s sacrificial offering from his flock in Gen 4:4a (“and moreover Abel brought from the firstborn of his flock and from their fats”).

A simple (*pesbat*) reading indicates that a slaughter of animals, and hence a fatal shedding of blood, might be presupposed for both texts. However, a canvassing of the exegetical tradition surrounding each of these verses reveals that neither passage *necessarily* involves the violent death of animals. With regard to the “garments of skin,”<sup>48</sup> some interpreters

n. 17 accumulates abundant references to this motif in rabbinic, Christian, and Muslim sources.

<sup>47</sup> Such emerges from a contextual reading of Gen 2:17b (“for on the day you eat from it you will certainly die”).

<sup>48</sup> Also relevant here would be the extremely popular exegetical option that interprets the “garments of skin” as the stretching of the epidermis over the human body in order to replace the original “garments of glory” forfeited as a result of the primal couple’s expulsion from Eden. For a masterful examination of this specific theme, see Gary A. Anderson, “The Garments of Skin in Apocryphal Narrative and Biblical Commentary,” in *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (ed. J. L. Kugel; Cambridge: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2001), 101–43.

opine that the skin employed was that previously sloughed by the serpent.<sup>49</sup> Others note that since fur and wool grow out from the skin, they also can be considered part of a single substance, namely, “skin,” and that God simply collected and wove together the bits of fur pulled off mammals by briars and thorns as they passed through the thickets of Eden.<sup>50</sup> With regard to Abel’s offering, there is a recurring tradition that no blood was spilled by the officiant during its presentation: “How did he do it? R. Yose b. Hanina said, Whole, with their skin (intact), without flaying or dismembering.”<sup>51</sup> Other sources read the term “firstborn” (בכורים) as if it signified “firstfruits” (בכורים), thereby transforming the ceremony from one involving the terminal slaughter of animals to one involving the solemn presentation of substances produced by living animals, such as dairy products and wool. In fact, one popular explanation grounds the later *shaatnez* taboo—the biblical prohibition against blending wool and linen in the manufacture of cloth (Deut 22:11; Lev 19:19)—in this particular offering, explaining that Cain offered flax seed and Abel wool: God thoughtfully rejected the offering of Cain in order to prevent this forbidden combination of items.<sup>52</sup> Another tactic utilized for defusing the scene’s potential for violence is to read the phrase “from their fats” (only one word in Hebrew מִחֵלְבָבָם) as “from their milk,” an interpretive option that involves no emendation of the consonantal text.<sup>53</sup> The very existence of such reading strategies for these potentially problematic verses prior to

<sup>49</sup> *Tg. Ps-J.* Gen 3:21; *Pirqe R. El.* §20 (ed. Luria 46a; note especially his commentary); *Midr. Teh.* 92:6. Note Abraham ibn Ezra *ad* Gen 3:21: “others say there was an animal who was of anthropoid form, and God issued a command and it (the animal) shed its skin.”

<sup>50</sup> *Gen. Rab.* 20:12 (ed. Theodor-Albeck 1:196–97): “R. Samuel b. Nahman (said), Camel-wool and rabbit-fur are ‘garments of skin,’ for they grow from the skin.” Note Rashi *ad* Gen 3:21: “Some say (from) material which comes from skin, like rabbit-fur which is soft and warm, and He made garments for them from it.”

<sup>51</sup> *Gen. Rab.* 22:5 (ed. Theodor-Albeck 1:208). Note Radaq *ad* Gen 4:4: “it seems to me that he (Abel) did not slaughter the offering, but left it tethered alive at that place which was fixed for it, so that fire from heaven could descend to consume it, just as occurred for the offering(s) of his father. They (i.e., Adam, Cain, Abel, etc.) did not slaughter because (at that time) they did not eat meat.” Regarding the last point, see Gen 1:29 and *b. Sanh.* 59b.

<sup>52</sup> *Tanh.*, *Beresbit* §9; *Pirqe R. El.* §21 (ed. Luria 48b–49a).

<sup>53</sup> So apparently Josephus, *Ant.* 1.54: Ἄβελος δὲ γάλα καὶ τὰ πρωτότοκα τῶν βοσκημάτων “Abel (came) with milk and the firstlings of his flocks.” Text and translation cited from H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books I–IV* (LCL 242; Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1930), 24–25 and Thackeray’s note f.

Abel's murder serves to validate our above suspicion about the climactic enormity of that crime. Nothing remotely like it had ever happened before, and once the murder is committed, its effect is to unleash a pent-up wave of bloodthirsty violence (Gen 4:14) that wends its way through Lamech (Gen 4:23–24) and the generation of the flood.

Fatal “shedding of blood” would then appear to be a crucial motif for understanding the narrative logic of Gen 2–9 in its canonical form. Does not Q 2:30 explicitly confirm the validity of such a *biblical* reading when the angels presciently condemn humanity as “a shedder of blood”? Does it not illuminate and even justify the prominent role played by “bloodshed” in the extrabiblical accounts of the predeluge generations? In other words, Qur’ān and its interpretive tradition arguably function here as valuable witnesses to the crucial nature of this theme in early Jewish narrative, a theme whose centrality within the first few chapters of Genesis has been obscured and then largely ignored by postbiblical Christian commentators.

APPENDIX: THE HUMILIATION OF SATAN LEGEND FROM *BERESHIT RABBATI*<sup>54</sup>

“And all the years of Adam—those which he lived—were 930 years” (Gen 5:5). Three people cheated the Angel of Death out of gaining power over their souls, and they were Adam the protoplast, Jacob our ancestor, and Moses our teacher.

(How did) Adam the protoplast (do so)? The day when he was endowed with his knowledge, the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded the ministering angels: “Enter and bow down to him!”<sup>55</sup> The ministering angels entered to perform the will of the Holy One, blessed be He. (However,) Satan, who was the mightiest of all the angels in heaven, said to the Holy One, blessed be He, “Master of the universe! You created us from the Divine Glory, and now You say to us, ‘Bow yourselves down!’ before one whom You created from the dirt of the earth?!”<sup>56</sup> The Holy One, blessed

<sup>54</sup> *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati* (ed. Ḥ. Albeck; Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1940), 24.21–25.18.

<sup>55</sup> According to Latin *L.A.E.* 14:1–2, it is the archangel Michael who commands the angels and Satan to “worship the image of the Lord God, just as the Lord God has commanded.” The Armenian version (*ibid.*) represents Michael as summoning the angels, to whom then God says: “Come, bow down to god whom I made.” Translations cited from *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve: Second Revised Edition* (ed. G. A. Anderson and M. E. Stone; SBLJL 17; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 16E.

<sup>56</sup> Latin *L.A.E.* 14:3: “I will not worship him who is lower and later than me. I am prior to that creature. Before he was made, I had already been made. He ought

be He, answered him: "This one who originates (from) the dirt of the earth possesses some wisdom and intelligence which is not in you!"<sup>57</sup> Satan responded, "Try me!", and so He put him to the test.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Behold, I have created cattle, creeping things, wild beasts, and birds on the earth. Descend so that you might arrange them in front of yourself and in front of him (Adam). If you can give names to all of them, I will command Adam to bow down to you, and I will install you beneath the presence of My Glory indefinitely. However, if Adam can give them the names which correspond to their names which are with Me,<sup>58</sup> you must bow down to Adam, and Adam will be in My garden to serve and to protect."<sup>59</sup> The Holy One, blessed be He, descended to the Garden of Eden, as Scripture affirms: "My Beloved has descended to his garden" (Cant 6:2), and Satan also descended.

When Adam noticed that Satan [*sic*]<sup>60</sup> had descended, he stood up and told his wife: "Come, let us bow down before the Holy One, blessed be He, Who created us!", as it is written, "Come and let us worship and bow down before His footstool, and let us praise the Lord our Maker!" (Ps 95:6). At that time the Holy One, blessed be He, asked Satan, "Will you begin giving names to the cattle, or will Adam?" Satan answered Him, "I will go first!" The Holy One, blessed be He, brought a bull and a cow and stood them before Satan. He said to him, "What are the names of these?" He did not know. He removed them from before him and brought a camel, and

---

to worship me." Translation from Anderson and Stone, *Synopsis*, 17E. Note also Q 38:76: "I [Iblīs] am superior to him [Adam]. You created me from fire, whereas You created him from clay."

<sup>57</sup> Compare Q 2:31–33.

<sup>58</sup> I.e., a thing's "name" as a perfect expression of its "essence" or "nature."

<sup>59</sup> Note that nothing is said about Satan losing his heavenly position. Contrast Latin *L.A.E.* 15:3–16:1: "I (Satan) said: 'If he (God) grows angry with me, I will place my seat above the stars of heaven and I will be like the Most High.' Then the Lord God grew angry with me and sent me forth with my angels from our glory. On account of you (Adam) we were expelled from our dwelling into this world and cast out upon the earth." Translation from Anderson and Stone, *Synopsis*, 17E. Note too the early application of Isa 14:13–14 to Satan by the author of *L.A.E.* See also *2 En.* 29:4–5 (long): "And one [Satanail] from out [of] the order of angels, having turned away with the order that was under him, conceived an impossible thought, to place his throne higher than the clouds above the earth, that he might become equal in rank to my power. And I threw him out from the height with his angels, and he was flying in the air continuously above the bottomless." Translation cited from *APOT* 2:447.

<sup>60</sup> Perhaps, as Albeck suggests, we should read instead "the Holy One, blessed be He."

asked him, “What is its name?” He did not know. He removed that one and brought a donkey, but he did not know (its name).<sup>61</sup>

Now the Holy One, blessed be He, had endowed Adam with mental organization via wisdom, and a voice with which to speak and respond, as it is written: “Adam possessed mental plans” (Prov 16:1). He brought the cattle before him, and the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: “What shall the name of this one be called?” Since He began (his question) with the letter *beth*, he answered Him, “*baqar*” (cattle). He then stood the camel before him and asked, “And this one too, what is its name?” Since He began (his question) with the letter *gimel*, he said “*gamal*” (camel). He stood the donkey before him, and asked, “This animal, what is its name?” Since He began (his question) with the letter *het*, he said, “*hamor*” (donkey).

When Satan realized that the Holy One, blessed be He, had endowed Adam with wisdom,<sup>62</sup> he let out a great cry and ascended back to heaven. The Eternal One said to him, “Why did you cry out?” He responded, “And why shouldn’t I cry out! You created me from Your Own Presence and created Adam from the dirt of the earth, yet you have granted to him wisdom and intelligence!” The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: “Satan, O Destroyer, why are you surprised?”<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Compare *Gen. Rab.* 17:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck 1:155–56); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4.3 (ed. Mandelbaum 1:60–61); *Pesiq. Rab.* §14; *Num. Rab.* 19:3, where the ministering angels (מלאכי השרת) collectively are incapable of providing names for the animals.

<sup>62</sup> Or: “when Satan realized that the Holy One, blessed be He, had given Adam insight,” perhaps a better rendering in this context of God’s hint-giving.

<sup>63</sup> A new and unrelated legend now follows, and eventually the story about how Adam attempts to cheat the Angel of Death. The denouement of the “fall of Satan” episode is lacking in *Bereshit Rabbati*.