

THE  
SOURCES OF ISLAM

AN ABRIDGED REPRINT

BY THE  
REV. W. ST. CLAIR-TISDALL, M.A.  
C.M.S. MISSIONARY FROM JULFA

TRANSLATED BY  
SIR WILLIAM MUIR, K.C.S.I. D.C.L., LL.D., PH. D.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE MUSLIM VIEW OF THE SOURCES OF ISLAM . . . . .	1
ARAB CUSTOMS MAINTAINED IN ISLAM . . . . .	2
JEWISH AND SABAEAN SOURCES . . . . .	7
UNORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SECTS . . . . .	31
ANCIENT ZOROASTRIAN AND HINDU BELIEFS . . . . .	51
THE HANIFS . . . . .	64



## PREFACE

This remarkable book has been written by the Rev. W. St. Clair-Tisdall, Missionary, C.M.S., Julfa, Persia. It takes up a subject never as yet brought properly under discussion either by Muslims or Christians - namely, the origin of the Koran, and the Sources from which both it and Tradition have been derived. By the teaching of Mohammed the Koran is of divine origin, and was brought down, as Tradition tells us, word by word by Gabriel to the Prophet's ear. The original is "written on a Tablet, kept in Heaven,"<sup>1</sup> "sent down on the night of al Cadr"<sup>2</sup> by the Almighty. Thus the Koran comes from God alone, heavenly, divine, and uncreate from all eternity. Now if it be shown that much of this grand book can be traced to human Sources existing daily around the Prophet, then Islam falls to the ground. And this is what the Author proves with marvelous power and erudition.

Such Sources as were derived from the Arabs themselves are treated first (chap. 2). The shadow of divine unity still subsisted among them. There were a multitude of gods and idols, of which each tribe had its special ones, as Lilt and Ozza for the Quraysh. The intercession of these was sought; but above and beyond them all was the ancient memory of one great God, Allah - the Al ("the") a proof of sovereign unity. Curious that the word occurs in the Prophet's family, his father and uncle being called Abdallah and Obeidallah. There was thus a local Source to build upon. Then we have the multitude of national habits and practices, as the Hajj, the Kabah, etc., maintained in the new faith, though all of earthly origin. It was indeed the Prophet's endeavor to pull down all purely idolatrous worship;<sup>3</sup> and so he did, except the kissing of the Black stone, too popular a practice to be abandoned. A curious example of a purely local Source may be found in a number of verses of the Koran which are shown to be

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1 Sura lxxxv. 21; vi. 19.

2 Sura xcvi. 1. Sent down, the, as they say, to the lowest Heaven, and thence by Gabriel communicated to the Prophet, bit by bit, as occasion required.

3 "What think ye of Allat and Al Uzza and Monat, the other third? ... They are but empty names which ye and your fathers have named Goddesses." Sura liii. 19.

taken from the Moallaqit, a plagiarism rather difficult for the Muslim to conjoin with the heavenly origin of his Revelation.

Chapter 3 explains the influence of Judaism. And first we are told that the Five times of prayer were borrowed from the Sabeans. The Jews were numerous and powerful throughout Arabia, and Mohammed, having sought their conversion in vain, at last fought against them and banished them from the country. But in the meantime he had taken much of his teaching from their books, the Talmud, their Commentaries, etc. The first Qibla was Jerusalem, and the marvellous tales thus derived cannot be read without astonishment. Thus there is the story of Cain and Abel, and of their parents weeping while the raven showed how to bury the dead; Abraham cast by Nimrod into the fire unhurt;<sup>4</sup> the Queen of Sheba uncovering her legs as she walked before Solomon over the glass floor, which she takes for a sheet of water; the descent of Harut and Marut and other spirits from above to tempt mankind; Sammael the Angel of Death speaking out of the Golden Calf - and other fictitious tales too numerous to mention. It is strange that though the Jewish and Christian Scriptures are spoken of throughout the Koran with the utmost devotion, only one passage is quoted from them, namely, "The meek shall inherit the earth." In respect also of the Tables of the Testimony put by Moses into the Ark, the Muslims, following the extravagant notions of the Jews who fancied that all their sacred books with the Talmud were also in the Ark, place on the "Preserved Table" their own Koran! A vast emerald mountain has also arisen out of the word Cau in the Talmudic explanation of Thohu, Genesis i. 2; of which it takes 2000 years to make the circuit, and 500 the ascent. Such are the wild vagaries of Muslim tradition and the Sources whence they come.

Chapter 4 next shows the apochryphal Christian sources from which Islam has so largely borrowed. There were many Christian tribes in Arabia belonging to unorthodox sects who had sought refuge there from persecution in Roman lands. Little versed in their own Scriptures, they spent the time in fables. The Prophet, longing for a universal faith, listened gladly to such stories, which thus became the Source of much we find in the Koran.

First we have the fairy tale of the Cave wherein the seven Sleepers slumbered for ages, fearing persecution.<sup>5</sup> Next we have endless stories of the

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4 The story arises out of the strange mistake of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. xv. 7) for the same word signifying an oven or fire.

5 It is worth the while of anyone not familiar with the Koran to read this at length, as given in Sura xviii. 8 24

PREFACE

Virgin Mary, both in the Koran and with vast detail also in Tradition; her mother Hannah, her childhood as fed by angels in the Temple; Joseph chosen by a miraculous rod, etc., much as in the ProtoEvangelium and other Egyptian and Coptic writings.<sup>6</sup> Then there are the tales of Jesus, as of his speaking in the cradle, breathing life into birds of clay, etc.<sup>7</sup> These the Prophet learned probably from Mary his Coptic concubine, as they are all contained in such Coptic books as the Gospel of St. Thomas.<sup>8</sup> Thus we have the descent of the Table from Heaven (derived no doubt from the table of the Lord's Supper); the promise by Jesus of a prophet to come, called Ahmed,<sup>9</sup> which was apparently caused by the mistake of *periklytos* for *parakletos*; the notion that the resemblance only, and not the real person, of Christ was slain,<sup>10</sup> derived from the heretic Basilides, etc. Passing over much of interest, we may close our review of Christian sources by notice of the Balance, briefly mentioned in the Koran<sup>11</sup>, but surrounded by a vast variety of Coptic tales. Two Egyptian books (one of ancient date placed in the tombs to be read by the dead) are quoted at length; a wonderful Egyptian picture exhibits how the Balance weighs the spirits, good and bad; and strange sights are given of Adam and Abraham in the Heavens beyond.

Chapter 5 relates many things from ancient Zoroastrian and even Hindu writings. Persia, far ahead of Arabia, had a sensible influence upon it, and much of what is Oriental in the Koran and Tradition is evidently derived from Pehlavi and other Eastern sources. Thus we have the marvels of the Seven heavens, seen by the Prophet on his ascent from Jerusalem; the Houries; Azazil and other spirits coming up from Hades; the Light of Mohammed, the bridge of Sirat, etc. - all illustrated by the author's marvellous knowledge of Eastern literature, beliefs, and history. The Prophet must have learned all these things from the foreigners who frequented Medina. Suspected of this, he indignantly replied that his tongue was not foreign, but pure Arabic alone.<sup>12</sup>

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6 Aaron's sister Maryam is confused with Mary of the Gospel.

7 Sura iii. 41; v. 19.

8 Sura v. 121.

9 Sura lxi. 6.

10 Sura iv. 156.

11 Sura xlii. 16; ci. 5 and 6: "He whose balance is heavy shall live in pleasure; but whose balance is light, his dwelling -place shall be hell fire."

12 Sura xvi. 103: "They say a certain man teacheth him; but the tongue of him whom they mention is foreign, while this is simple Arabic" - hardly an answer in point!

#### THE SOURCES OF ISLAM

The concluding chapter tells us of a few inquirers in Arabia, called Hanifs, just before the time of Mohammed. There were four at Mecca, of whom one became a Christian, another a Muslim, and a third joined Caesar. The fourth, Waraca, was first a Jew and then a Christian. One of these, a pious devotee, worshipped yearly in a cave near Mecca, and no doubt influenced the Prophet, who used to visit the same place for quiet and lonely contemplation.

*The Sources of Islam*, our Author in conclusion shows, have been altogether human and misleading. They all passed through the Prophet's mind as he composed the Koran, which thus bears throughout the impress of his own heart and character. One good thing there is in it, namely, a thorough testimony to the Gospel and "Torah"; all true Muslims are accordingly invited to study both, and thus through our Saviour Christ obtain the true promises of their father Abraham.

The Sources is a noble work, and reflects high distinction on the writer. Hitherto much labour has been spent in showing the falsity and errors of Islam, as has been ably done by Pfander and others. It has remained for our Author not only to conceive anew, and perhaps more thorough and effective, mode of treating the so-called divine and eternal faith, but also in doing so to prove its Sources to be of purely human origin; and that in so masterly and effective a way that it seems impossible for good Muslims to resist the conclusion drawn. And for all this the thanks of the Christian world are eminently due to the Rev. W. St. Clair-Tisdall.

W. MUIR.



## PREFACE

### INTRODUCTION

Since every religion must have had a Source from which it sprung, so this last faith, Islam, must like all others have had its originating cause. Accepted neither by Jews nor Christians, many treatises have been written to convert it. These have been answered by Muslims in such Works as the *Mizan ool Mavazfn*; but unfortunately the learning of the Authors of these defenses of Islam has not been equal to their zeal. The Object of the present work is to investigate the various theories which have been put forward as to the origin of Islam. The Author first states briefly the Muslim view, and then examines the claim of those who hold that Islam has a human and not a divine origin.

In this new endeavor, it has been the Author's object, by God's help, to show from whence the Muslim faith has risen, its foundation and origin, in other words, its Source. And he trusts that those who study the following pages, having learned the origin of the Faith, may not lose sight of those Sources whence has arisen the vast stream which has overflowed so many nations of the East.

### NOTES

This book is a devastating attack on the "divine" origins of the Koran and Islam. Nearly all of the ideas that are found in Islamic doctrine were taken from the surrounding cultures. The only original ideas are that Mohammed is the prophet of Allah, and if you do not believe this then jihad can be used to convince you. Everything else is derivative.

It is a sad comment on modern Islamic scholarship that we have to reproduce a text that is over a century old to see the sources of the Koran. Unfortunately, the universities of today are no longer capable of adding to the body of knowledge about Islam.

This book is a reprint, but it is not an exact reproduction of the original. The spelling of words has been modernized to some degree. Also, the formatting has been changed for easier reading.

Since this book was scanned and then optical character recognition used to create the text, there are undoubtedly errors that have been introduced.

Bill Warner



# THE MUSLIM VIEW OF THE SOURCES OF ISLAM

## Chapter 1

Muslims hold that their Faith came direct from heaven. The Koran and all their tenets were sent down by Gabriel from God himself to Mohamed. Much of their faith is also built upon Tradition handed down by the Prophet's followers. But the Shi'ite differ from the Sunni as to much that is told us by Tradition; and the Author, therefore, has based his arguments mainly on the Koran which is accepted as divine by every Muslim, and on such tradition as is comfortable thereto. As for the Koran, it is held to be of eternal origin, recorded in heaven, and lying as it does there upon the "Preserved Table" (Sura lxxxv. 21).<sup>1</sup> Thus God alone is held to be the "Source" of Islam; and if so, then all effort to find a human origin for any part of it must be in vain. Now, if we can trace the teaching of any part of it, to an earthly Source, or to human systems existing previous to the Prophet's age, then Islam at once falls to the ground.

It therefore behooves every true and earnest Believer, with the utmost diligence to test whether this claim be true or not. If their opponents can bring to light no human Source, they may contend that by admission Islam is indeed divine; but if otherwise, they cannot but perceive what fatal conclusion must be drawn. Let us then test the assertions of those who hold to the existence of human Sources, and see whether any portion of the doctrines and tenets of Islam can be traced to other Faiths or Sources preceding the Prophet's age, or existing at the time.

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1 See also Sura vi. 19 and xcvi. 1. Also Ibn Khaldun, i. 194 and ii. 458.

## ARAB CUSTOMS MAINTAINED IN ISLAM

### Chapter 2

Some hold that these are its initial Source. When the desire arose in the mind of Mohammed to draw his people from the worship of idols to that of God Almighty; and when he remembered that their forefathers in the days of Abraham believed in the divine Unity; and further that they inherited many of the beliefs and customs of their pious forefathers; he was unwilling to force abandonment of them all, but desired rather to purify their faith, and to maintain such ancient practices as he thought good and reasonable. And so we find this passage in the Koran:

*Koran 4:124 Who is better than he that resigneth himself to God, and worketh righteousness, and followeth the religion of Abraham the faithful? and truly God took Abraham for his friend.*

And again:

*Koran 3:89 Say, The Lord speaketh truth; follow ye, therefore, the faith of Abraham the righteous; for he was no idolator.*

And yet once more:

*Koran 6:89 Say, Verily my Lord hath directed me into the right way, the true faith, the religion of righteous Abraham, and he was no idolater.*

Hence it came to pass that (excepting the worship of idols, a plurality of gods, the killing of daughters and other such evil practices), many of the ideas and customs subsisting among the Arabs from the time of Abraham were retained by the Prophet, and form part of his religion. Although some of the Southern and Eastern tribes became mixed up with the children of Ham, yet we learn, as much from the Torah as from Ibn Hisham, Tabari and others, that the North and West of the country was occupied by the progeny of Shem. Some tribes were descended from Joktan, others from Hagar, Ketura, and Ishmael. Among the latter was the tribe of the Quraysh, itself among the descendants of Abraham. Now, although the children of Shem had greatly lost the purity of their faith from mixing with the tribes of Syria, yet when all the people of those parts, except the Jews, had altogether forgotten the Unity of God, still the dwellers in the North and West of the Peninsula retained a certain knowledge of the Unity divine. There is every reason to believe that in the days of Job, the

stars, sun, and moon were worshipped in those parts of Arabia; 1 and Herodotus, more than four centuries before Christ, tells us that the Arabs of his day had only two gods, Orotal and Alitat, 1evidently meaning Allah-tainii and Allat, though as a foreigner he was not exactly acquainted with the local form of the names. The term Allah itself is repeatedly found in the seven Moallaqat, whose authors lived before the ministry of Moham-med, and also in the Dewan of Labid.

Still more, we know that the Kabah was of old the holy Masjid of the Arab tribes at large; for we learn from Diodorus Siculus, sixty years before the Christian era, that it then existed (Bk. iii.). From the use of *al* (or the) in Allah it is manifest that the Unity of God was never forgotten by the Arabs. The Koran, indeed, calls them idolators for giving other gods the worship due to Him alone. But they never held those other gods on an equality with the great God above, whom by their adoration they sought specially to propitiate. The following story from early Muslim writers makes this all the more clear: "Some of the Abyssinian Refugees returned to Mecca this verse was read:

Koran 53:19, *What think ye of Allat and Al Uzza and Manat the other, the third?*

Satan cast these words into the reader's lips: 'These three noble ones whose intercession is to be hoped for.'

When the Sura ended, the whole company bowed down in adoration; and the Idolators together with them, thinking that their gods had been thus graciously acknowledged. The strange episode was spread abroad by Satan, and the Refugees hastily returned to Mecca expecting to find the whole city converted." Beidhawi and others are the more inclined to believe this tale:

Koran 22:51 *Truly we have sent no Apostle or Prophet before thee, but when he read, Satan suggested some (error) in his reading; but God shall make void that which Satan suggested.*

Along with the early spread of idolatry, there still survived throughout Arabia the consciousness of One true God. Shahrastani tells us this, and gives a long list of the local deities, and also of the customs retained by the Prophet. Some denied a future life as well as a Creator, while others admitted both.<sup>2</sup> He then mentions a variety of tribal gods, and gives the name and

1 Job xxxi. 26-28. 2 Bk. iii. 8.

2 To these the Koran replies, Sura 1. 14: Is our power exhausted by the first creation; for these are in perplexity as to a first creation.

place of eleven, including Ozza of the Quraysh, Hobal aloft on the Kabah, etc.; also angels, *genii*, and heavenly bodies adored by the Sabaeans. We are then informed of a variety of local customs in vogue among the heathen Arabs, some retained in Islam, as family restrictions in marriage, Hajj to the Kabah with its various practices, visiting Safa and Marwa, throwing stones in Wady Mina, ablution, and several minor matters. Very similar is the testimony of Ibn Ishaq, and the Sirat al Rasfil, that notwithstanding the idolatry into which the Arabs fell when they lost the faith of Abraham and Isaac, yet throughout it all they never forgot the great God above all other gods. Thus at the new moon, the Beni Kinana and Quraysh would cry aloud "Labbeik, Allah Labbeik! Thou hast no Companion, but rulest over all"; - acknowledging thus the oneness of Him they called upon; and while joining their idols in worship with the Highest, they yet placed them all under his hand. Then the Unity is thus expressed in the Koran:

Koran 10:3 *Verily your Lord is God who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then ascended the throne to rule over all things. There is no intercession but by his permission. God is your Lord, wherefore serve him. Ah! will ye not consider?*

From all this we perceive that while the Arabs up to the Prophet's time worshipped idols, they did so regarding them as intercessors with the great God whom they held supreme.<sup>3</sup> The truth was so well known in Mohammed's own household, that his father and uncle bore the names Abd-Allah and Obeid-Allah, - "Al," as we have seen, signifying The One. Hence we are sure that the Unity was acknowledged long before the Prophet's mission, as well as the various Meccan customs still in current use. Circumcision also was practised from of old, as we learn from the Epistle of Barnabas written about two centuries after Christ. Multitudes of idols being all around Mecca,<sup>4</sup> certainly little inspiration was needed to shew how false the system was, and the task was well carried out by Mohammed. While so many of the ancient places, rites, and customs were maintained, only one quasi-idolatrous practice has been kept up, namely, the Kissing of the Black Stone, which was then worshipped as of heavenly descent; the habit was so loved by the people, that it could not be forbidden, and indeed is still observed.

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3 Our Author pithily remarks that the Muslims of today who seek forgiveness through the intercession of their holy men are as much polytheists as these old Arabs were.

4 Some say there were 360 around the Kabah. But Ibn Ishik gives authorities for only fifteen generations of idolators before the Prophet's time.

In conclusion, then, we find that the first "Source" of the Koran and Tradition consisted of the notions, customs, and religious beliefs, existing around Mohammed. And we know of no other answer as to the adoption of these, than they were assumed to exist in the time of Abraham, and therefore were continued by the Prophet. Now, although we are told in the Torah that the doctrine of the Unity, as well as circumcision, were of Abraham's time, yet in the Holy Scriptures we find no mention of Mecca, procession round the Kabah, the Black Stone, the other Holy Places, etc.; nor can there be any doubt that all these things were the gradual creation of idol worshippers, and had no connection whatever with the faith and tenets of Father Abraham.

It is interesting also to note that some verses of the Koran have without doubt been taken from poems anterior to Mohammed's assumption of the prophetic office, in proof of which two passages in the Sabaa Moallaqat of Imra'ul Cays etc. are quoted, in which several verses of the Koran occur, such as, "The hour has come, and shattered is the moon."<sup>5</sup> It was the custom of the time for poets and orators to hang up their compositions upon the Kabah; and we know the Seven Moallaqat were so exposed. We are told that Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, was one day repeating as she went along, the above verse. Just then she met the daughter of Imra'ul Cays, who cried out: "O that's what your father has taken from one of my father's poems, and calls it something that has come down to him out of heaven"; and the story is commonly told amongst the Arabs until now.

The connection between the poetry of Imra'ul Cays and the Koran is so obvious that the Muslim cannot but hold that they existed with the latter in the Heavenly Table from all eternity! What then will be the answer? That the words were taken from the Koran and entered in the poem, - an impossibility. Or that their writer was not really Imra'ul Cays, but some other who, after the appearance of the Koran, had the audacity to quote them there as they now appear; rather a difficult thing to prove!

In concluding this chapter we have no difficulty in asserting with every confidence that the customs, rites, and beliefs of the ancient Arabs, formed one of the most important Sources of the Koran.

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5 The two passages given by our Author from the Sabaa Moallaqat contain several verses, more or less similar to the Koran: - Sura liv. 1, xxix. 31 and 46, xxxvii. 59, xxi. 96, xciii. 1; this last, - By the brightness of the morning; and by the night when it groweth dark. The passages noted are the same in both, with occasionally a few verbal differences.

## JEWISH AND SABAEAN SOURCES

### Chapter 3

There were three religions in the Peninsula - the Sabaean, Jewish, and Christian - each of which, as we hope to shew, helped to nurse Islam, which at the first lay like an infant in its cradle.

The SABAEANS have disappeared. No trace of them anywhere remains, and even of their history but little is known. We are told by Eastern authorities<sup>1</sup> that they were the first of all peoples who inhabited Syria; that they derived their faith from Seth and Idris; and that they possessed a book called *Pages of Seth*, in which were inculcated righteousness, truth, bravery, care of the poor, and avoidance of evil. They had seven times for prayer, five of which were at the same hour as chosen by the Prophet. They prayed also for the dead, but without prostration; fasted thirty days from night to sunrise, and also if any new moon rose badly, for the remaining day of the month; observed Eid from the setting of their five stars; and venerated the Kabah. Hence we see that the Sabaeans kept many observances still in force among the Muslims.

We turn to the Jews. Of Course it is known to all how numerous and powerful the race was in Arabia at the time of Mohammed, and especially before the Hegira. Amongst their chief tribes were the Beni Coreitza, Cainucaa, and Nadhir, having their three villages in the vicinity of Medina.

When it became manifest that the Jews would in no wise recognise the prophetic office of Mohammed, he fought several severe battles with them and, not without difficulty, either took them prisoners and slew them with the sword, or at last expelled them from the land. Now, these Jews possessed and carefully preserved the Torah, the Psalms, etc., and were called (as also the Christians) *The People of the Book*. Though the nation at large knew little or nothing of Hebrew, yet they were familiar with the stories of the Talmud and other sources.

The ignorant Arabs of the day looked upon their neighbors the Jews with honour and respect as being of the seed of Abraham, and possessed of the Word of God. Hence when the Prophet turned aside from idols as hateful to the Almighty, and sought to bring his people back to the faith

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1        What follows is from Abul Feda, who quotes from Abu Isa al Maghra-bi.



of Abraham, he betook himself with the utmost care to learn in what the teaching, customs, and obligations of that Faith consisted. Comparing these with the Koran and Tradition, we find the closest similarity between the two. Thus the Koran throughout bears witness to the faith of Abraham, to the truth of the Jewish religion, and the heavenly origin of their divine books. The following passages will be found to that effect:-

*Koran 7: 156 Dispute not with the People of the Book, but in the mildest way, excepting such as behave injuriously; and say, We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us, and in that which hath been revealed unto you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we are resigned. And again:- Say, We believe in God, and in that which hath been sent down unto us, and in that which was sent down unto Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes; and in that which was delivered unto Moses and Jesus, and in that which was delivered to the Prophets from the Lord. We make no distinction between any of them; and to Him we are resigned. At this period, also, Mohammed made the Holy House (Jerusalem) the Qibla of his followers, being then, (as it has since remained) the Qibla of the Jews.*

To this it might be objected that Mohammed, as the “illiterate prophet,” must have been unable to read,<sup>2</sup> and how then could he have gained all this knowledge from Jewish literature? But even admitting it to have been so, it must still have been easy enough for him to have learned all about their beliefs and customs and tales from his companions, such as Obeidallah, Waraca, or even himself from his Jewish friends. For these people, though they had but an imperfect knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, yet well knew the tales current amongst the Jewish nation. And now, if we compare the Koran with the tales in the Talmud and other books still current among the Jews, it becomes evident that although the Koran speaks of Abraham and many others of whom we read in the Torah, still all the wild stories it tells us are taken from Jewish traditional Sources. And we shall now give a few specimens to prove that it is so.

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<sup>2</sup> Sura vii. 156. The word used for illiterate is Ummi. R. Geiger’s view is that this word has an altogether different meaning - viz. that Mohammed held he was of the Ummat or Arab people, and not an Ajemy or non-Arab, as a Jew would be held to be. But seeing that the word has been universally held to mean unlearned (and unable to read), I think we must accept that interpretation. It does not, however, much matter in the present argument.

CAIN AND ABEL

We have the following passage:-

Koran 5:35 *And tell them the story truly of the two sons of Adam. When they offered up their sacrifice, and it was accepted from one of them, and not accepted from the other, Cain said "I will kill thee." Abel answered, "God accepteth (offerings) of the pious alone. If thou stretchest forth thine hand against me to kill me, I will not stretch forth my hand to kill thee; for I fear God, the Lord of all worlds. I desire that thou shouldst bear my sin and thine own sin, and become a dweller in the Fire, for that is the punishment of the oppressor." But the soul of Cain inclined him to slay his brother, and he slew him; then he became one of the destroyed. And God sent a raven which scratched the earth to shew him how he should hide his brother's body. He said, "Woe is me! I am not able to be like the raven"; and he became one of those that repent (v. 35). For this cause we wrote unto the children of Israel that he who slayeth a soul, - without having slain a soul or committed wickedness in the earth, - shall be as if he had slain all mankind; and whosoever saveth a soul alive, shall be as if he had saved all mankind.*

Now this conversation and affair of Cain and Abel, as given above in the Koran, has been told us in a variety of ways by the Jews.<sup>1</sup> Thus when Cain, according to them, said there was no punishment for sin and no reward for virtue, Abel, holding just exactly the reverse, was killed by Cain with a stone. So also in the book *Pirke Rabbi Eleazer*, we find the Source of the burying of Abel as described in the Koran, there being no difference excepting that the raven indicates the mode to Adam instead of to Cain, as follows: - Adam and Eve, sitting by the corpse, wept not knowing what to do, for they had as yet no knowledge of burial. A raven coming up, took the dead body of its fellow, and having scratched up the earth, buried it thus before their eyes. Adam said, Let us follow the example of the raven, and so taking up Abel's body buried it at once.

If the Reader will look at the last verse (35) in the quotation above from Sura v. of the Koran, he will see that it has no connection with the one preceding. The relation is explained thus in the Mishnah Sanhedrin, where in quoting from Genesis the verse,

Genesis 4:10 *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground,*<sup>2</sup>

1 Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziah; also the Targum of Jerusalem. In Arabic Cain is called Cabil.

2 Gen. iv. 10, "Bloods" in the margin for blood.

- the Commentator writes as follows:- “As regards Cain who killed his brother, the Lord addressing him does not say, ‘The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth out,’ but ‘the voice of his Bloods’; - meaning not his blood alone, but that of his descendants; and this to shew that since Adam was created alone, so he that kills an Israelite is, by the plural here used, counted as if he had killed the world at large; and he who saves a single Israelite is counted as if he had saved the whole world.” Now, if we look at the thirty-fifth verse of the text above quoted, it will be found almost exactly the same as these last words of this old Jewish commentary. But we see that only part is given in the Koran, and the other part omitted. And this omitted part is the connecting link between the two passages in the Koran, without which they are unintelligible.

#### ABRAHAM SAVED FROM NIMROD’S FIRE

The story is scattered over various passages of the Koran, chiefly in those noted below.<sup>3</sup> Now whoever will read these, as well as the Traditional Records of the Muslims,<sup>4</sup> will at once perceive that the tale as there told has been taken from one of the ancient Jewish books called Midrlish Rabblih. To bring this clearly to view, we must first shew the history as given in the Koran and Muslim writings, and then compare it with the Jewish tale in the above book.

In a work of Abdul Feda we have the Muslim story as follows.<sup>5</sup> Azar, Abraham’s father used to construct idols, and hand them over to his son to sell Abraham would go about crying, “Who will buy that which will hurt and not benefit him?” Then when God Almighty commanded him to call his people to the Divine unity, his father refused the call, and so did his people. Thus the matter spread abroad till it reached Nimrod, son of Cush, king over the country .... who took Father Abraham, and cast him into a fierce fire; but the fire grew cool and pleasant unto Abraham, who came out of it after some days. And thereupon his people believed in him.

Again, in the Ariiish al Majiilis we read: Before this, when Abraham one night came up out of his cave and saw the stars before the moon arose, he said:

Koran 6:76-80 *This is my Preserver. And when the night overshadowed him, he saw a star, and said, This is my Lord; and when it set, he said, I love not*

3 Sura ii. 260, vi. 74-84, xxi. 52-72, xix. 42-50, xxvi. 69-79, xxix. 15, 16, xxxvii. 81-95, xliii. 25-27, Ix. 4, and other passages.

4 Such as the Qissas al Anbia and Arfush al Majiilis.

5 3 Ancient History from the Mukhtasar fi Akhbiir il Bashar.

*those that set. And when he saw the moon rising, he said, This is my Lord; but when it set, he said, Verily if my Lord direct me not, I shall be of those that go astray. And when he saw the sun rising, he said, This is my Lord; this is the greatest. But when it set, he said, O my people! Verily I am clear of that which ye associate together with God. Verily I direct my face unto him who hath created the heavens and the earth. I am orthodox, and not one of the idolators.*

They say that Abraham's father used to make idol images and give them to Abraham to sell. So Abraham taking them about would cry: "These will neither hurt nor help him that buys," so that no one bought from him. And when it was not sold, he took an image to the stream, and striking its head, would say, Drink, my poor one! in derision, for his people and the heathen around him to hear.

*Koran 6:80-85 So when his people objected, he said, Ah! do ye dispute with me concerning God, and verily God hath directed me .... And this is our argument wherewith we furnished Abraham for his people. We raise the dignity of whom we wish, for thy Lord is wise and knowing.*

And so in the end Abraham overcame his people by such arguments. Then he called his father Azar to the true faith, and said: O my father, wherefore dost thou worship that which neither hears nor sees, nor yet doth profit thee in any way, and so on to the end of the story.<sup>1</sup> But his father refused that to which Abraham called him; whereupon Abraham cried aloud to his people that he was free from what they worshipped, and thus made known his faith to them.

*Koran 26: 75-77 He said, What think ye? That which ye worship, and your forefathers also, are mine enemies, excepting only the Lord of the worlds.*

They said, Whom then dost thou worship? He answered, "The Lord of all worlds." "Dost thou mean Nimrod?" "Nay, but he that created me and guideth me," and so on. The thing then spread abroad among the people, till it reached the ears of the tyrant Nimrod, who sent for him, and said: "O Abraham! Dost thou hold him to be thy god that hath sent thee; dost thou call to his worship and speak of his power to those that worship other than him? Who is he?" Abraham:

*Koran 2:260 "My Lord, he that giveth life, and giveth death."*

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1 Sura xix. 40.

N. "I give life, and cause to die." A. "How dost thou make alive, and cause to die?" N. "I take two men who at my hands deserve death, one I kill, who thus dies; the other I forgive, who thus is made alive." Whereupon Abraham answered,

Koran 2:260 *"Verily God bringeth the sun from the East, now do thou bring him from the West."*

Thereupon Nimrod was confounded, and returned him no reply. The people then went away to celebrate their Eid, and Abraham, taking the opportunity, broke all the idols but the biggest, and then the story proceeds as follows: -

When they had prepared food, they set it before their gods and said, "When the time comes we shall return, and the gods having blessed the meat we shall eat thereof." So when Abraham looked upon the gods, and what was set before them, he said derisively.

Koran 37:90 *"Ah! ye are not eating"; and when no answer came, "What aileth you, that ye do not speak?" and he turned upon them and smote them with his right hand.*

And he kept striking them with a hatchet in his hand, until there remained none but the biggest of them, and upon its neck he hung the axe.<sup>2</sup> Now when the people returned from their Eid to the house of their gods, and saw it in such a state, they said, Who hast done this to our gods? Verily he is a wicked one. They answered, We heard a young man speaking of them; They call him Abraham. He it is, we think, who hath done it. When this reached the tyrant Nimrod and his chief men, They said, Bring him before the eyes of the people; perhaps they will bear witness that he hath done this thing. And they were afraid to seize him without evidence.<sup>3</sup> So they brought him and said: Hast thou done this unto our gods, O Abraham? He answered, Nay but that big one hath done it; he was angry that ye worshipped along with him these little idols, and he, so much bigger than all; and he brake the whole of them in pieces. Now ask them if they can speak?<sup>4</sup> When he had said this, they turned their backs, and said (among themselves), "Verily it is ye that are the transgressors. We have never seen

<sup>2</sup> Here the text is quoted: He brake them all in pieces except the biggest, that they might lay the blame on it (Sura xxi. 59).

<sup>3</sup> Cotada and Al Sidy are quoted here; and it is added from Al Dzahhiik, "Perhaps they may give evidence as to what we should do, and punish him."

<sup>4</sup> A note is here added to the following purport:- Mohammed on this remarked that Abraham in all told three lies, allan behalf of the Lord, namely,

him but telling us that we transgress, having those little idols and this great one." So they broke the heads of them all, and were amazed that they neither spake nor made any opposition. Then they said (to Abraham), Certainly thou knowest that they speak not. Thus when the affair with Abraham was ended, he said to them: Ah! do ye indeed worship, besides God, that which cannot profit you at all, nor can it injure you. Fie on you, and on that which ye worship besides God! Ah, do ye not understand?

When thus overthrown and unable to make any answer, they called out, Burn him, and avenge your gods if ye do it. Abdallah tells us that the man who cried thus was a Kurd called Zeinun; and the Lord caused the earth to open under him, and there he lies buried till the day of Judgment. When Nimrod and his people were thus gathered together to burn Abraham, they imprisoned him in a house, and built for him a great pile, as we read in Sura Saffat: *They said, Build a pile for him and cast him into the glowing fire. Then they gathered together quantities of wood and stuff to burn; and so, by the grace of God, Abraham came out of the fire safe and sound, with the words on his lips, - God is sufficient for me* (Sura xxxix. 39); and *He is the best Supporter* (Sura iii.37). *For the Lord said, O Fire! be thou cool and pleasant unto Abraham.*<sup>1</sup>

Now, let us compare the story of Abraham as current amongst the Jews, with the same story in Koran and Tradition as given above, and see how they differ or agree. The following is from the *Midrash Rabbah* on Abraham brought out of Ur (Gen. xv. 7).

Terah used to make images. Going out one day, he told his son Abraham to sell them. When a man came to buy, Abraham asked him how old he was. Fifty or sixty years, he replied. Strange, said the other, that a man sixty years of age should worship things hardly a few days old! On hearing which the man, ashamed, passed on. Then a woman carrying in her hand a cup of wheaten flour said, Place this before the idols. On which, Abraham, getting up, took his staff in his hand, and having broken the idols with it, placed the staff in the hand of the biggest. His father coming up, cried, "Who hath done all this?"

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"I am sick"; "the big one hath done this"; and what he said to the King regarding Sarah, "She is my sister."

1 1 In the last few pages the quotations from the Koran are all from Suras xxi. and xxxvii., and the verses being so numerous and detached are not numbered in detail; but they will be found in passages succeeding verse 52 of the former, and verse 84 of the latter Sura. The Koran passages are throughout printed in italics.

Abraham said, "What can be concealed from thee? A woman carrying a cup of wheaten flour asked me to place it before the gods; I took and placed it before them; one said, I will eat it first, and another, I will eat first. Then the big one took the staff, and broke them all in pieces." His father: "Why do you tell such a foolish tale to me? Do these know anything?" He answered, "Does thine ear hear what thy mouths speaks?" On this his father seized and made him over to Nimrod, who bade him worship Fire. Abraham: "Rather worship Water that putteth out Fire." N. "Then worship Water." A. "Rather worship that which bringeth Water." N. "Then worship the Cloud." A. "In such case, let us worship Wind that drives away the Cloud." N. "Then worship Wind." A. "Rather let us worship Man that standeth against the wind." On this Nimrod closed: - "If thou arguest with me about things which I am unable to worship other than Fire, into it I will cast thee; then, let the God thou worshippes deliver thee there from." So Abraham went down into the flames, and remained there safe and unhurt.

Comparing, now, this Jewish story with what we saw of it in the Koran, little difference will be found; and what there is no doubt arose from Mohammed hearing of it by the ear from the Jews. What makes this the more likely is that Abraham's father is in the Koran called Azar,<sup>2</sup> while both in the Midrash and Torah he is called Terah. But the Prophet probably heard the name in Syria (where, as we learn from Eusebius, the name had somewhat of a similar sound), and so remembered it.

The Muslims, of course, hold that their Prophet gained the tale of Abraham's being cast into the fire neither from Jews nor Christians, but through Gabriel from on high; and as the Jews, being children of Abraham, so accepted it, the Koran, they say, must be right. But it could only have been the common folk among the Jews who believed it so; for those who had any knowledge of its origin must have known its puerility.

The origin of the whole story will be found in

Genesis 15:7 *I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees.*

Now Ur in Babylonish means a "city", as in UrShalim (Jerusalem), "the City of Peace." And the Chaldaean Ur<sup>3</sup> was the residence of Abraham. This name Ur closely resembles in speech another word, Or, signifying light or fire. And so ages after, a Jewish Commentator,<sup>4</sup> ignorant of Babylonish,

2 Sura vi. 74.

3 Same as the present town, Mugheyr.

4 Jonathan ben Uzziel.

when translating the Scripture into Chaldean, put the above verse from Genesis; as follows: I am the Lord that delivered thee out of the Chaldean fiery oven. The same writer has also the following comment on

Genesis 9: 27 *“Now this happened at the time when Nimrod cast Abraham into the oven of fire, because he would not worship the idols, that leave was withheld from the fire to hurt him,”*

- a strange confusion of words, - Ur the city, for Or light and fire. It is as if a Persian seeing notice of the departure of the English post, should put in his diary that an Englishman had lost his skin, - not knowing that the same word for skin in Persian means the Post in English.

No wonder then that a Jew should have mistaken a word like this, and made it the foundation whereon to build the grand tale of Abraham's fiery Oven. But it is somewhat difficult to understand how a Prophet like Mohammed could have given credence to such a fable, and entered it in a revelation held to have come down from heaven. And yet the evidence of it all is complete, as quoted above from the Jewish writer. Apart from this we know from Genesis that Nimrod lived not in the days of Abraham but ages before his birth. The name indeed is not in the Koran, though freely given in the Muslim Commentaries and Tradition. As if a historian should tell us that Alexander the Great cast Nadir Shah into the fire, not knowing the ages that elapsed between the two, or that Nadir never was so thrown.

#### QUEEN OF SHEBA

The story of Balkis, Queen of Sheba, as told at length in the Koran, corresponds so closely with what we find in the II. Targum of the Book of Esther, that it was evidently taken from it, as heard by Mohammed from some Jewish source. The following is from the Sura of the Ant:-

Koran 27:17- *His armies were gathered together unto Solomon, consisting of Genii, men and birds, and they were kept back. .. Solomon smiled at the ant and said: O Lord! may I do that which is right and well pleasing unto thee, so that thou introduce me amongst thy servants the righteous. And he viewed the birds and said, Why is it that I see not the Hudhud (Lapwing)? Is she among the absent ones? Truly I will chastise her with a severe chastisement, or will put her to death unless she bring a just excuse. But she did not wait long, and said, I have viewed a country that thou hast not seen: and I come unto thee from Sheba with certain news. I found a female ruling over them, surrounded with every kind of possession, and having a magnificent Throne. I found her and her people worshipping the Sun apart from God. Satan hath made their deeds pleasant unto them, and hath turned them aside from the right*



way, and they are not rightly directed, - lest they should worship God who manifesteth that which is in heaven and earth, and knoweth what they conceal and what they discover. God! there is no God but he, the Lord of the great Throne! Solomon said: We shall see whether thou tellest the truth or art amongst the liars. Go with this my letter, and having delivered it to them turn aside, and see what answer they return. The Queen having received it, said: O ye Nobles! verily an honourable letter hath been delivered unto me. It is from Solomon. It is in the name of the Most Merciful God; - "Rise not up against me; but come ye submissive unto me." She said: O ye Nobles! advise me in the affair; I will not resolve upon it, until ye be witnesses thereof. They said: We are men of strength and of great prowess; but the matter belongeth unto thee; see therefore what thou wilt command. She said: Verily kings when they enter a city waste it, and abuse its most powerful inhabitants; and so will they do. But I will send gifts unto them, and wait to see what the messengers will return with. So when they went to Solomon, he said: Ah! do ye present me with wealth? Verily that which God hath given unto me is better than that which he hath given you, but ye do rejoice in your gifts. Return unto them; we will surely come unto them with an army which they cannot withstand, and we shall drive them thence humbled and contemptible. O ye Nobles (he continued), which of you will bring me her Throne, before they come submissive unto me? A giant of the Genii cried, I will bring it unto thee before thou gettest up from thy place, for I am strong in this, and to be trusted. And one who had knowledge of the Scriptures: I will bring it unto thee before the twinkling of thine eye. Now when (Solomon) saw it placed before him he said: This is a favour of my Lord, that he may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; he that is grateful is grateful for his own benefit; but he that is ungrateful, verily the Lord is rich and beneficent. And (Solomon) said: Alter her throne, that we may see whether she be rightly directed, or be amongst those who are not rightly directed. And when she came, it was said, Is this thy throne? She said, It is as if it were; and knowledge hath been bestowed upon us before this, and we are resigned (unto God). But that which she worshipped besides had turned her aside, for she was of an unbelieving people. It was said to her, Enter the Palace. And when she saw it, she imagined that it was a great surface of water, and she uncovered her legs, when (Solomon) said, Verily it is a palace floored with glass. And she said, Truly I have done injury to my own soul, and I resign myself, along with Solomon, unto God, the Lord of all creatures.

Such is the account the Koran gives us of Queen of Sheba. What it tells us of the Throne differs but little from the Targum, where it is said to have belonged to Solomon, and to have had no other like it in any land. There were six steps of gold to ascend, and on each twelve golden Lions, while

twelve eagles of gold were perched around. Four-and-twenty other eagles cast their shadow from above upon the King, and when he wished to move anywhere, these powerful eagles descending would lift the Throne and carry it wherever he wished. Thus they performed, according to the Targum, the same duty the Koran tells us the Genii did. But otherwise in respect of Queen of Sheba, her visit to Solomon, the letter sent by him to her, etc., there is a marvellous resemblance between the two, excepting this, indeed, that in place of the Lapwing of the Koran, the Targum speaks of a Red-cock, - not a very vital difference after all! The whole story is told in the Targum as follows:-

At another time, when the heart of Solomon was gladdened with wine, he gave orders for the beasts of the land, the birds of the air, the creeping things of the earth, the demons from above and the Genii, to be brought, that they might dance around him, in order that all the kings waiting upon him might behold his grandeur. And all the royal scribes summoned by their names before him; in fact, all were there except the captives and prisoners and those in charge of them. Just then the Red-cock, enjoying itself, could not be found; and King Solomon said that they should seize and bring it by force, and indeed he sought to kill it. But just then the cock appeared in presence of the King, and said: O Lord, King of the earth! having applied thine ear, listen to my words. It is hardly three months since I made a firm resolution within me that I would not eat a crumb of bread, nor drink a drop of water until I had seen the whole world, and over it make my flight, saying to myself, I must know the city and the kingdom which is not subject to thee, my Lord King. Then I found the fortified city Qitor in the Eastern lands, and around it are stones of gold and silver in the streets plentiful as rubbish, and trees planted from the beginning of the world, and rivers to water it, flowing out of the garden of Eden. Many men are there wearing garlands from the garden close by. They shoot arrows, but cannot use the bow. They are ruled by a woman, called Queen of Sheba. Now if it please my Lord King, thy servant, having bound up my girdle, will set out for the fort Qitor in Sheba; and having "bound their Kings with chains and their Nobles with links of iron," will bring them into thy presence. The proposal pleased the King, and the scribes prepared a despatch, which was placed under the bird's wing, and away it flew high up in the sky. It grew strong surrounded by a crowd of birds, and reached the Fort of Sheba. By chance the Queen of Sheba was out in the morning worshipping the sea; and the air being darkened by the multitude of birds, she became

so alarmed as to rend her clothes in trouble and distress. Just then the Cock alighted by her, and she seeing the letter under its wing opened and read it as follows:

“King Solomon sendeth to thee his salaam, and saith, The high and holy One hath set me over the beasts of the field, etc.; and the kings of the four Quarters send to ask after my welfare. Now if it please thee to come and ask after my welfare, I will set thee high above them all. But if it please thee not, I will send kings and armies against thee; - the beasts of the field are my people, the birds of the air my riders, the demons and genii thine enemies, - to imprison you, to slay and to feed upon you.” When the Queen of Sheba heard it, she again rent her garments, and sending for her Nobles asked their advice. They knew not Solomon, but advised her to send vessels by the sea, full of beautiful ornaments and gems, together with 6000 boys and girls in purple garments, who had all been born at the same moment; also to send a letter promising to visit him by the end of the year. It was a journey of seven years but she promised to come in three. When at last she came, Solomon sent a messenger shining in brilliant attire, like the morning dawn, to meet her. As they came together, she stepped from her carriage. “Why dost thou thus?” he asked. “Art thou not Solomon?” she said. “Nay, I am but a servant that standeth in his presence.” The queen at once addressed a parable to her followers in compliment to him, and then was led by him to the Court. Solomon hearing she had come, arose and sat down in the Palace of glass. When the Queen of Sheba saw it, she thought that the glass floor was water, and so in crossing over lifted up her garments. When Solomon seeing the hair about her legs, cried out to her: Thy beauty is the beauty of women, but thy hair is as the hair of men; hair is good in man, but in woman it is not becoming. On this she said: My Lord, I have three enigmas to put to thee. If thou canst answer them, I shall know that thou art a wise man: but if not thou art like all around thee. When he had answered all three, she replied, astonished: Blessed be the Lord thy God, who hath placed thee on the throne that thou mightest rule with right and justice. And she gave to Solomon much gold and silver; and he to her whatsoever she desired.

In the Jewish statement, we see that the Queen put several enigmas for Solomon to solve; and though this is not mentioned in the Koran, it is in the Muslim traditions. And so with the story of her legs; for in the Ariiish al Majiilis we find the following: - When the Queen was about to enter the

Palace, she fancied the glass floor to be a sheet of water, and so She uncovered her legs, that is, to pass over to Solomon; and her legs and feet were covered with hair; which when Solomon saw, he turned his sight from her, and called out, The floor is plain glass.

Here we would ask whether there is any reality whatever in all this story. There is indeed so much as we find<sup>1</sup> which is as follows:-

*First Kings 10: 1-11 And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.*

Now these are the facts of the Queen's visit, and all beyond mere fiction. The Jews themselves admit it to be so, - excepting, indeed, Solomon's magnificent Throne, though not its being carried aloft. The Koran account of Solomon ruling over Demons, Genii, etc., is in entire accord with what we have cited from the Targum; and it is curious to find, as learned Jews tell us, that the origin of the notion lay in the similarity of two Hebrew words,<sup>2</sup> 1 with two kindred words signifying demons and genii, and the Commentator confounding them together led to the strange error.

In concluding our notice of the fanciful tale which we have given from the Jewish Targum, we might say that it reminds one of such stories as we

1 See also 2 Chronicles ix. 1-9.

2 1 (Meaning "a lady and ladies," in Ecclesiastes ii. 8.)

find in the "Arabian Nights." But strange that the Prophet could not have seen it so. Having heard it from his Jewish friends, he evidently fancied that it had been read by them in their inspired Scriptures, and as such introduced it, as we find, into the Koran.

HARUT AND MARUT

Harut and Marut. - There are many other stories in the Koran taken from the fanciful details of Jewish writers; but we shall content ourselves with this one other before entering on more general questions. We shall first recite the tale of those two Spirits as given in the Koran and Tradition, and then compare it with the same as told by Jewish writers. The passage in the Koran is this:- Solomon was not an unbeliever; but the Devils believed not. They taught men sorcery, and that which was sent down to the two angels at Babel, - Harut and Marut Yet these taught no man until they had said, - Verily we are a temptation, therefore be not an unbeliever.<sup>3</sup>

The following is from the Ariiish al Majiilis:-

The Commentators say that when the angels saw the evil doings of mankind ascending up to heaven (and that was in the days of Idris), they were distressed and complained thus against them: Thou hast chosen these to be the rulers upon earth, and to they sin against thee. Then said the Almighty: If I should send you upon the earth, and treat you as I have treated them, ye would do just as they do. They said, O our Lord, it would not become us to sin against thee. Then said the Lord, Choose two angels from the best of you, and I will send them down unto the earth. So they chose Harut and Marut; who were among the best and most pious amongst them.

Al Kalby's version:-

The Almighty said: Choose ye three: so they chose (Azz, i.e) Harut, and (Azabi, i.e.) Marut and Azrael; and the Lord changed the names of the two when they fell into sin, as he changed the name of the Devil, which was Azazil And God placed in their heart the same fleshly lust as in the sons of Adam; and sending them down to the earth, bade them to rule righteously amongst mankind, to avoid idolatry, not to kill but for a just cause, and to keep free from fornication and strong drink. Now when Azrael felt lust in his heart, he prayed the Lord to relieve him, and was taken up to heaven, and for forty years

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3            1 Sura ii. 96.

was unable to raise his head for shame before his Maker. But the other two remained steadfast, judging the people during the day, and when night came ascending to the heavens, worshipping the name of the Almighty. Catada tells us that before a month had passed they fell into temptation; for Zohra, one of the most beautiful of women (whom Aiy tells us was queen of a city in Persia), had a suit before them, and when they saw her they fell in love with her, and sought to have her, but she refused and went away. The second day she came again, and they did the same; but she said, Nay, unless ye worship what I worship, and bow down to this idol, or kill a soul, or drink wine. They replied, It is impossible for us to do these things, which God hath forbidden; and she departed. The third day again she came holding a cup of wine, and her heart inclined towards them; so when they desired her, she said the same as yesterday, but they replied, To pray to other than God is a serious thing, and so is the killing of anyone; the easiest of the three is to drink wine: so they drank the wine, and becoming intoxicated fell upon her and committed adultery: and one saw it, and they slew him. And it is said that they worshipped an idol, and the Lord changed Zohra into a star. Aiy and others tell us that she said, Come not near me till you teach me that by which ye can ascend to the heavens. They said, We ascend by the name of the great God. Again she said, Come not near me till ye teach me what that is. So they taught her; and forthwith she, repeating it, ascended to the skies, and the Lord changed her into a star.

Turning now to the Jews, the same account is given in two or three places of the Talmud, especially in this extract from the Midrash Yalkut:-<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Joseph being asked by his disciples about Azael, told them as follows:- After the Flood, idolatrous worship prevailing, the Holy One was angry. Then two angels, Shamhazai and Azael arose and addressing him said, O Lord of the Universe, when thou createdst the world, did we not say to thee, What is man that thou art mindful of him? and now we are anxious about him. The Lord replied: I well know that if ye be sent to rule over the earth, your evil passions will have possession of you, and ye will become tyrants over mankind. They answered:

If thou wilt give us leave, and we shall dwell amongst them, thou shalt see in what wise we shall sanctify thy name. Go then, he said, and dwell amongst them.

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1 Cap 44.

Soon after, Shamhazai saw a beautiful maiden called Esther, and turning his eyes upon her to come and be with him, she said, I cannot surrender myself to thee until thou teach me that great name by which thou canst ascend to the heavens above. He told her, and she having spoken it, ascended upwards undefiled. Then said the Holy One, - Since she hath kept herself clear from defilement, she shall be raised aloft amid the Seven Stars, there to give praise unto the Lord. Forthwith the two went forth and consorted with the beautiful daughters of men, and children were born unto them. And Azael adorned the women he was inclined to with all kinds of beautiful ornaments. [Azael is the same as in the Talmud is called Azael].

Now anyone comparing the two stories together, must see that they agree, excepting that in the Muslim one the angels are called Hfuiit and Mfuiit, and in the Jewish, Shamhazai and Azael. But if we search whence the names in the Koran and Tradition came, it will be seen that Hfuiit and Mfuiit were two idols worshipped far back in Armenia. For in writers of that country they are so spoken of, as in the following passage from one of them:-

Certainly Horot and Morot, tutelary deities of mount Ararat, and Aminabegh, and perhaps others now not known, were Assistants to the female goddess Aspandarami't. These aided her, and were excellent on the earth.

In this extract, Aspandaramit is the name of the goddess worshipped of old in Iran also; for we are told that the Zoroastrians regarded her as the Spirit of the Earth, and held that all the good products of the earth arise from her. Aminabegh also was held by the Armenians to be the god of vineyards, and they named Horot and Morot the assistants of the Spirit of the Earth, seeing that they held them as spirits who had control over the wind so as to make it bring rain. They sat on the top of the lofty mountain Ararat, and sent down showers that fertilised the earth; the two were thus rulers of the wind.<sup>2</sup> The Armenians, - fancying that Morot came from Mor, genitive of Mair, "Mother," - formed Horot in the same way from Hair, "Father." When also it is said that the two angels came down to propagate mankind, the meaning is that they caused the earth to bring forth its produce for that end. Zohra in Hebrew reads as Ishtar or Esther, the same as of old was worshipped in Babylon and Syria as the goddess over the birth of children and promoter of passion and desire. In proof of all this, we find in the ruins between the Tigris and Euphrates the name

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<sup>2</sup> The origin of the name is traced still further East to the ancient Sanskrit wind-gods the Maruts.

Ishtar on the primeval tiles. The story of one Gilgamish, with whom Ishtar fell in love but was rejected, has been decyphered in ancient Babylonian character upon these tiles. Ishtar came to him having the crown upon her head and asked him to kiss her, and with many loving words and gifts to be her husband, when he would in her Palace have a quiet and happy life. Gilgamish in derision rejected her offer, whereupon she ascended to the sky and appeared before the God of the heavens!<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that the idolators of Babylon are shown in this primeval story to have held that Ishtar, that is Zohra, ascended on high, - exactly as is told us in Muslim tradition, as also in the Jewish commentaries.

Now if we search for the Source of the above tale, we shall no doubt find it in what the Talmud says of the angels associating with women, in its commentary on the two verses in Genesis quoted below.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the second verse, a Jewish commentator gives us the following interpretation: - "It was Shamhazai and Uzziel who in those days came down from heaven." Hence we see that the whole imaginative tale has come out of the mistake of this and other commentators. For the word giant, as shown below, was misconstrued by them to signify not those who tyrannically "fell" on the poor people around them, but angels who "came down, or fell, from heaven."<sup>3</sup> And this unhappy mistake has led to the spread of the strange idol-worship just narrated. Nor was there any apparent reason for the mistake; since in the Targum we find the name (Nefilim) explained in its right and natural sense as "giants." But by and by the Jews came to love the wild tales that spread abroad; and so in a counterfeit book ascribed to

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1 The original Babylonish text is here given, as indeed the Author does in most of the Oriental quotations. A close translation is also given, but only the general purport is here attempted.

2 1 Genesis vi. 2 and 4: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose ... There were giants in those days, ... when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children unto them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." The "sons of God," according to our Author, mean righteous men of the seed of Seth. The Commentator quoted is Jonathan son of Uzziel.

There is a Sanskrit story of the similar ascent of two angels, and a Houry like Zohra, from which the Armenians may possibly have taken their tale; and from this idolatrous source the Jews no doubt received it; and from them, the Muslims.

3 The term is Nefilim, i.e. persons who fell upon the helpless around them and committed violence and oppression on the earth.



Enoch, we are told that 200 angels under Samyaza (i.e. Shamhazai) came down from the heavens to commit adultery on the earth, as we read:-

The angels of heaven having seen the daughters of men, fell in love with them, and said to one another, Let us take for ourselves these women, the daughters of mankind, and beget children for ourselves. And Samyaza, who was their chief, said .... Azazel taught men to make swords, daggers, and shields, and taught them to wear breastplates. And for the women they made ornaments of kinds, bracelets, jewels, collyrium to beautify their eyelids, lovely stones of great price, dresses of beautiful colours, and current money.

Let it be remembered also that we have mention of this in the Koran:- Men learned from these two (Hfuiit and Mfuiit) that by which to cause a division between a man and his wife; but they did not injure anyone thereby excepting by leave of God; and they learned that which would hurt them and not profit them.<sup>4</sup> This is similar to what we have seen above in the Midrash Yalkut, where we are told that Azael embellished the daughters of men with ornaments to make them lovely and attractive.

But enough has been said to show that the story of Hfuiit and Mfuiit, as we find it in the Koran and Muslim books, has been derived from Jewish sources.

#### OTHER JEWISH TALES

A few other things taken by Islam from the Jews. - If time permitted, we could easily tell of many other narratives in the Koran, not in our Scripture but taken from tales of the Jews, about Joseph, David, Saul, etc.; but space will not permit, excepting for a few. Here, for example, is the account of "Sinai overhead" as we have it in

*Koran 7:172 And when we raised the mountain over them, as though it had been a canopy, and they imagined that it was falling upon them, (we said) Receive that which we have sent unto you with reverence, and remember that which is therein, if may be that ye take heed;*

and we have two other passages (vv. 60 and 87) in Sura Bekr to the same effect; - the meaning being that when the Jews held back from accepting the Torah, the Lord lifted Mount Sinai over their heads to force their reception of it.

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4            1 Sura ii. 96.

The same tale is given by a Hebrew writer thus: "I raised the mount to be a covering over you, as it were a lid."<sup>1</sup> It need hardly be said that there is nothing of the kind in the Torah. The tale, however, may have arisen (Exodus xxxii. 19) from the fact that when Moses returning from Mount Sinai, saw his people worshipping the calf, "his anger waxed hot and he cast the tables (of the Law) out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." The words "beneath the mount," simply mean that he cast the tables down at the foot of Mount Sinai. And hence all this wild fiction of the mountain being lifted over their heads! We can only compare it to a like Hindu tale of a mountain similarly lifted over the people's heads, very much resembling what we have in the Koran.

Here are one or two other tales of Moses in the wilderness; and first, that of the Golden Calf which came out of the fire kindled by the people at Sinai. The Koran tells us that Sameri also cast (what he had into the fire) and brought out unto them a bodily calf which lowed.<sup>2</sup> The origin of this fiction we find in a Jewish writer<sup>3</sup> as follows:

"The calf having cried aloud, came forth, and the children of Israel saw it. Rabbi Yahuda says that Sammael from the inside of it made the cry of the calf in order to lead the Israelites astray." No doubt the Prophet in this matter got his information from the Jews; strange that he should have been led to adopt this baseless tale. But he has used the wrong name Al Sameri. The name of the people, of course, occurs often in the Bible, and the Jews regarded the Samaritans as their enemies; but as the city of Samaria did not arise till some four hundred years after Moses, it is difficult to imagine how it came to be entered in this story.<sup>4</sup> We also note that in this matter the Koran is in opposition to the Torah, which tells us that Aaron was the person who for fear of the Israelites around him, had the molten calf set up. Another story, given us twice in the Koran,<sup>5</sup> is that when the Israelites insisted on seeing the Lord, they were punished by death, but eventually restored to life again; and to add to the foolish tale we are told that it was the Torah which appealed for help and thus obtained their revival.

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1 From the Jewish story in the Abodah Siirah.

2 Sura xx. 90.

3 Pirke Rabbi Eleazer.

4 No doubt, the Prophet thought that the Jews said Sfuneri (Samaritan) when they said Sammael. They regarded Sammael as the angel of death.

5 Sura ii. 28; iv. 152.

A FEW OTHER JEWISH MATTERS

In the Koran are a number of Chaldaean and Syrian words which the Muslims have been unable rightly to explain, as Torat, Jehannam, and such like.<sup>6</sup> To know their meaning, it must be learnt from Hebrew, Chaldaean, and Syriac, for they are not genuine Arabic words.

The following ideas are common to both Jews and Muslims:-

In the Koran we are told of there being Seven heavens, and seven storeys to Hell, which we also find in Jewish writings.<sup>7</sup> Similar accounts of the heavens and the earth we have also in Sanskrit sources, and also from Muslim tradition; and also from such stories in Zoroastrian books as that there are seven climes, etc.

In Sura xi. 9, we are told of God's throne being above the waters; and similarly the Jewish Rashi, commenting on Genesis i. 2, says: "the glorious throne stood in the heavens and moved over the face of the waters." Again, Muslims tell us that the Lord appointed an angel Malik ruler over Jehannam. Similarly the Jews speak of the Prince of Hell; only the Muslims call him Malik, following the ancient idolators of Palestine, who worshipped the Ruler of Fire as Molech.

In Sura vii. 44 there is mention of a wall or partition called Aaraf as separating Paradise and Hell, thus:- And between the two a Veil, and upon Al Aaraf (stand) men. So in the Jewish Midrash, when it is asked what the distance is between heaven and hell, the answer of one Rabbi is "a wall," and of another "a span"; and again. "Our leaders tell us that the two are so close that a mere ray glances from one to the other." And so we find similar passages in the Avestic and Pehlavi writings, as, - "the distance is but as that between light and darkness."

In three passages of the Koran,<sup>8</sup> we are told of Satan listening stealthily, and being driven away with stones; another idea taken from the Jews, in one of whose books we find it written of the Genii that "they listened behind the curtain" in order to gain knowledge of things to come.

In Sura 50:29, we read:- *On the day we shall say unto hell, Art thou full? and it shall reply, Is there yet any more?* Similarly in a Jewish author:- "The Prince of Hell shall say, day by day, Give me food that I may be full."

6 Such as, Garden of Eden, TaghUt, Forcan, Sakina, TabUt, Hibr, etc.: all from one or other of the Hebrew, Syriac, or Chaldaean tongues.

7 Sura xv. 44; xvii. 46. Jewish books, Hagigah, and Zohar. 3 Sura xv. 17 and 34; xxxvii. 7; lxvii. 5.

8 Sura 15:17, 34; Sura 37:7; Sura67:5

In Suras xi. 42 and xxiii. 27, it is said of the Flood, - *The oven boiled over*; and in a Jewish work we have this: "The people of the Flood were punished with boiling water."

These similarities are interesting as showing the close connection between the Koran and Jewish remarks; but enough has been given of them.

RELIGIOUS USAGES OF ISLAM TAKEN FROM THE JEWS

There are many such, but it will suffice to mention two or three. We have seen that keeping the fast of Ramazan has been taken from the Sabaeans and not the Jews; still there is one point certainly coming from the latter, and that regards eating and drinking at night during the month. In Sura ii. 83, we read:- Eat and drink until ye can distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the day-break, then fulfil the fast. In a Jewish book<sup>1</sup> we find it similarly laid down that "the beginning of the day is at the moment when one can but distinguish a blue thread from a white thread," - a striking coincidence.

Again, Muslims of all lands, at the fixed time of their five prayers, wherever they happen to be, whether in the house or in the street, perform their devotions on the spot, especially at places where people are passing by. This strange practice is entirely confined to them, and would be seemly in no other religion. But in the days of the Prophet there were Jews in Arabia who used this habit; for many of them were descended from the Pharisees, of whom our Saviour said:- "They love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men."<sup>2</sup> 1 Thus the Companions of Mohammed looking upon the Jews as the People of the Book and children of father Abraham, regarded such practices as having descended from him, and so adopted, and have continued them to the present day, as we see, unchanged, though they are no longer kept up by the Jews themselves.

Does it not seem strange to the Reader, that although the Koran repeatedly attests our Scriptures as the Word of God, yet but one quotation is taken from them; viz.

Koran 21:105 *Verily we have written in the Psalms after the mention (of the Law) that my servants the righteous shall inherit the earth;*

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1 Mishnah Berakhoth.

2 Matth. vi. 5.

an evident reference to Psalm xxxvii. 11; - "But the meek shall inherit the earth."

Two other matters borrowed from the Jews. Every Muslim thinks the Koran to have been on the heavenly Table (Lauh) from before the creation of the world, as is mentioned in a passage already quoted:- *Truly it is the glorious Koran, on a preserved Table.*<sup>3</sup> Now before saying anything about this Table, one may ask, was the Book of the Psalms in existence before the Koran or not? For we have given above a verse in which is revealed the inheritance given by the Lord to his servants, as mentioned in the Psalms before the Koran was revealed. The Koran quotes from the Psalms: is it not clear, therefore, that the Psalms were before the Koran? How then could the Koran, produced so late in the world, have been placed on the heavenly Table?

Now let us hear what Tradition tells us about this Table:-

One tells us that the Throne is made out of a pearl, as is also the Preserved Table, the height of which is 700 years' journey, and its breadth 300. All around it is adorned with rubies. The Lord commanded that there should be written upon it what he had wrought in Creation, and onwards till the Day of Judgment:- "In the name of the Lord, the Compassionate and Merciful. I am God and there is none else beside me. He that accepts my decree, is patient at my punishment, and thankful at my mercies, I will write and place him along with the righteous; he that doth not accept my decree, let him go forth from beneath my heaven," etc.<sup>4</sup>

The Source of this tale is to be found in Jewish books, but vastly exaggerated by the Muslims. We find in the Tourat that when God desired to give forth the Ten commandments, he thus addressed Moses, who has himself given the account in

*Deut. 10: 1-5 At the time the Lord said to me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and then come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark. And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand. And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the Lord gave them unto me. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the*

3 2 Sura lxxxv. 21 and 22.

4 Qissas al Anbia.

*tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me.*

Elsewhere also we are told that the two Tables were preserved in the Ark of the Covenant, made by Moses at the Lord's command.<sup>1</sup> But in course of time the Jews imagined that all the books of the Old Testament, nay the Talmud itself, were deposited in the Ark on the Tables, Mohammed hearing this of the Jewish Law and Scriptures, imagined the same of his own, and said (as we are told above) that the Koran also was placed on the Preserved Table; and his followers not understanding of what heavenly Table he spoke, swelled out the whole matter into the story given above.

The following is from a Jewish writer, Rabbi Simeon:-

What is that which is written that the Lord said to Moses: Come up to me into the mount, and be there; and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them (Exodus xxiv. 12). The tables are the Ten Commandments; and the Torah the Law which is read; and the Commandments also mean the Mishnah; and "that which I have written" means the Prophets, and the Holy Writings; and "that thou mayest teach them" points to the Gemara. And from this we learn that all these were delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai.

No intelligent Muslim would for a moment credit this story, knowing that the Mishna was not written till about the year 220 of the Christian era; the Gemara of Jerusalem in 430 A.D.; and the Gemara of Babylon about 530 A.D. But ignorant Muslims believing it all, added their own Koran to the rest, and so comes this wretched story. The Reader will not think it necessary, we are sure, that anything more of the above kind be added, excepting this, perhaps, that the Jews themselves hold the Tables to be of date beyond time; for one tells us they were made "at the creation of the world at the sunset before the Sabbath day."<sup>2</sup>

The Mount Caf.- The origin of what the Muslims tell us about this mountain clearly originated from the Jews. Here is what the Tradition of the Muslims tell us:<sup>3</sup> -

The Lord Almighty formed a great mountain from green chrysolite, - the greenness of the sky is from it, - called Mount Car, and surrounded the entire earth therewith, and it is that by which the Almighty swore, and called it Car (see Sura 50:1).

1 Exodus xxiv. 12; 1 Kings viii. 9; Hebrews ix. 3.

2 From Pirke Aboth, v. 6. 2 Araish al Majalis.

3 Araish al Majalis.

And again: -

One day Abdallah asked the Prophet what formed the highest point of the earth.

“Mount Car,” he said. “And what is Mount Car made of?” “Of green emeralds,” was the reply; “and from hence is the greenness of the sky.” “Thou hast said the truth, O Prophet; and what is the height of Mount Car?” “A journey of five hundred years.” “And round about it how far is it?” “Two thousand years’ journey.”

Now all these strange ideas are founded on the Jewish writing called Hagigah, where we meet with the following comment on the word *thohu* in Genesis i. 2: “Thohli is a green line (Cav or Cat) which surrounds the whole world, and hence comes darkness.” And so the Companions of the Prophet hearing this explanation of the word Cav, and not understanding what was meant, fancied it must be a mountain, or succession of great mountains, surrounding the world and making it dark.

From all that has now been said, it must be clear to the Reader that the Jewish writings, and specially the fanciful tales of the Talmud, formed one of the chief Sources of Islam. And now we must turn our attention to the similar influence on Islam exercised by the Christian religion, and especially by those stories which in the Prophet’s day the unorthodox sects, spread abroad.