

PADERBORN UNIVERSITY

PROPHETOLOGY, TYPOLOGY, AND CHRISTOLOGY: A NEW READING OF THE
QURANIC JOSEPH STORY IN LIGHT OF THE SYRIAC TRADITION

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
THE DISCIPLINE OF COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

CHARBEL RIZK

FIRST SUPERVISOR: PROF. DR. KLAUS VON STOSCH

SECOND SUPERVISOR: PROF. DR. ZISHAN GHAFAR

2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
1.1. The Quran and the Syriac tradition.....	1
1.1.1. New trends in quranic studies	1
1.1.1.1. The Jewish and Christian religious milieu of the Quran	1
1.1.1.2. The origin and history of the Quran	3
1.1.1.3. Thematic and literary studies of the Quran	5
1.1.2. The presence of Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians in Arabia.....	7
1.1.2.1. The religious identity of the Arabic-speaking Christians in Arabia.....	8
1.1.2.2. The presence of Arabic-speaking Christians in Mecca and Medina.....	10
1.1.3. The presence of Syriac Christianity in Arabia.....	11
1.1.3.1. The presence of Syriac Christianity in East Arabia	12
1.1.3.2. The presence of Syriac Christianity in South Arabia.....	13
1.1.3.3. The presence of Syriac Christianity in North Arabia.....	15
1.1.3.4. Summary	17
1.1.4. The Syriac background of the Quran	18
1.2. The Joseph story	27
1.2.1. Joseph in the Syriac tradition.....	27
1.2.2. Joseph in the Quran.....	29
1.2.3. The Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition	33
1.3. Sources and structure.....	36
1.3.1. The Jewish sources on Joseph.....	36
1.3.2. The Syriac sources on Joseph	37
1.3.3. The structure of the dissertation.....	38
2. Quranic omissions of biblical details	40
2.1. Joseph the shepherd.....	40
2.2. Joseph brought a bad report of his brothers to Jacob	42

2.3. Joseph the favoured son of Jacob	44
2.4. Joseph's robe	46
2.5. Joseph's first dream.....	50
2.6. Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers	52
2.7. The brothers scorned Joseph in the wilderness	55
2.8. The brothers stripped Joseph of his robe	58
2.9. The empty pit.....	60
2.10. The sale of Joseph.....	61
2.11. The mourning scene.....	64
2.12. God gave Joseph success and blessed Potiphar.....	66
2.13. Joseph was found guilty of attempted assault and was sentenced to prison.....	68
2.14. The three days.....	72
2.15. Joseph's age.....	75
2.16. Joseph's rise to power in Egypt.....	77
2.17. The brothers bowed down to Joseph	82
2.18. Joseph revealed himself to all of his brothers.....	83
2.19. Joseph was made known to his brothers during the second journey	86
2.20. Summary and discussion	88
3. Quranic additions of extrabiblical details.....	98
3.1. Joseph's second dream	98
3.2. Jacob's interpretation of Joseph's dream.....	101
3.3. The brothers' plan to do away with Joseph	107
3.4. The wolf.....	111
3.5. Joseph's divine inspiration in the pit	113
3.6. Divine presence enables Joseph to resist Potiphar's wife	117
3.7. Joseph's shirt as proof of his innocence	123
3.8. Joseph's imprisonment	128

3.9. Joseph's religious proclamation in prison	138
3.10. Satan made the cupbearer forget to mention Joseph to Pharaoh	144
3.11. Potiphar's wife admitted that she tried to seduce Joseph	148
3.12. The brothers' repentance	155
3.13. Joseph's shirt gave Jacob his eyesight back	159
3.14. Summary and discussion	170
4. The character, style, and lexicon of the quranic Joseph story	172
4.1. The character of the quranic Joseph story	172
4.1.1. The liturgical character of the quranic Joseph story	172
4.1.2. The homiletic features of the quranic Joseph story	178
4.2. The style of the quranic Joseph story	182
4.2.1. The artistic orality of the quranic Joseph story	183
4.2.2. The use of dialogue in the quranic Joseph story	188
4.3. The lexicon of the quranic Joseph story	192
4.3.1. <i>Ḥaṣada</i> 'to reap' and <i>kazānat</i> 'treasury, storehouse'	193
4.3.2. <i>Kamr</i> 'wine'	196
4.3.3. <i>Sunbul</i> 'ear of corn'	199
4.3.4. <i>Şalaba</i> 'to crucify'	201
4.4. Summary and discussion	203
5. Conclusion.....	204
6. Comparative theological reflection	210
Abbreviations	214
Bibliography.....	215
Declaration of originality	234

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE QURAN AND THE SYRIAC TRADITION

1.1.1. New trends in quranic studies

In his introduction to the volume *New Trends in Quranic Studies*, the editor, Munim Sirry, notes that “the last few years have witnessed an unprecedented development in the scholarly study of the Quran and its exegesis in terms of both the number of volumes that have been produced and the wide range of issues covered.”¹ Sirry goes on to highlight recent trends in quranic studies which I will summarise and discuss in this subsection with the purpose of outlining the larger context in which my dissertation is situated.

1.1.1.1. *The Jewish and Christian religious milieu of the Quran*

Even a quick reading of the Quran is sufficient to disclose that it emerged in a religious milieu deeply informed by biblical literature (by which I mean the Bible, apocrypha, and post-biblical Jewish and Christian works) and that its audience included Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the Quran participated in many Jewish and Christian literary traditions (by which I mean narratives, themes, motifs, and notions from biblical literature) and addressed both Jews and Christians.

In the scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the appearance of Jewish and Christian literary traditions in the Quran was viewed in terms of borrowing, and scholars usually examined parallels in biblical literature and the Quran with the purpose of finding

¹ Sirry, “Introduction”, *NTQS*, 1.

the Jewish and Christian sources of the Quran.² While some scholars emphasised the Jewish setting of the Quran,³ others stressed its Christian background,⁴ but neither acknowledged that the Quran is an original religious proclamation that participates in biblical literature for the purpose of voicing an alternative reading of Jewish and Christian literary traditions, a reading that ultimately conforms to its own religious message.⁵

Currently, and rightly so, the Quran is read not as a book of Jewish and Christian borrowings but as a distinctive religious proclamation in conversation with both Jews and Christians and their literary traditions, or in Sirry's words:

In the last few years we have witnessed a new development in scholarly studies on the Quran's relation to the Bible. Instead of arguing that elements of other religions were co-opted and integrated into the Muslim scripture, scholars contend that the Quran is in conversation with biblical literature, both Jewish and Christian.⁶

² The sources-hunt that started with Abraham Geiger in 1833 began to attenuate a century later with Heinrich Speyer. In his comprehensive and detailed work *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Speyer collected most of the parallels to the Jewish and Christian material in the Quran. For surveys of the century-long sources-hunt, see Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 3–22; Kronholm, "Dependence and Prophetic Originality of the Koran", 47–70; Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 10–17.

³ Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (English translation *Judaism and Islam*); Torrey, *The Jewish foundation of Islam*.

⁴ Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*; Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Quran*.

⁵ As for the religious message of the Quran, in the present dissertation, I will not delve into this question, but I would like to state that my understanding of the religious message of the Quran is close to, yet not identical with, that outlined by Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 56–89. I disagree with Donner that the Quran is antitrinitarian (58–59), that it supersedes the Bible (60), that Muhammad's community in Mecca and Medina was an ecumenical movement that included Jews and Christians (68–74), and that it was an eschatological movement with the conviction that the end of the world was imminent (78–82).

⁶ Sirry, "Introduction", *NTQS*, 3–4.

Situated within this new development, my dissertation offers a historical and literary study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition that focuses on the relationship between prophetology, typology, and christology.

1.1.1.2. The origin and history of the Quran

In past decades, a number of controversial works on the origin and history of the Quran have appeared by various scholars, such as Günter Lüling, Christoph Luxenberg, John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, and Yehuda Nevo and Judith Koren, who relentlessly discard the traditional account of the origin and history of the Quran.⁷ To these scholars, so-called revisionists, the Islamic sources on Muhammad's life and early Muslim history, on which the traditional account of the origin and history of the Quran is more or less based, have no historical value because they were written centuries after the events they describe and because they appear to be legendary stories marked by discrepancies and conflicting political and religious agendas.⁸ What is more, having rejected the traditional account of the origin and history of the Quran, the revisionists suggest alternative theories of the origin and history of the Quran that are far from convincing and highly speculative.

⁷ For a critical outline of the traditional account of the origin and history of the Quran, see Welch, "al-Kuran", 404–409. See also Donner, "The historical context", *CCQ*, 23–39; Gilliot, "Creation of a fixed text", *CCQ*, 41–58; Burton, "Collection of the Quran", *EQ*, 1:351–361.

⁸ For a critique of this sceptical approach to the Islamic sources, and for a survey of other approaches taken by western scholars, see Donner, *Narratives*, 1–31. Moreover, in *Narratives*, Donner convincingly argues that, despite their late date and unreliable information, the Islamic sources on Muhammad's life and early Muslim history contain kernel of historical facts and may provide us with a general outline of Muhammad's life and early Muslim history. In *Discovering the Quran*, 27–47, Neal Robinson offers a balanced outline of Muhammad's life and early Muslim history based on some combed clues from the Quran and a cautious reading of the earliest Islamic sources. For similar accounts of Muhammad's life and early Muslim history, see Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*; Brown, *Muhammad*.

Lüling proposes that the Quran developed from the hymnal of a Christian sect in Mecca that rejected the belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus.⁹ Luxenberg maintains that the Arabic Quran was originally a Syriac lectionary written in a Syriac-Arabic hybrid language, the vernacular of Mecca, and due to the absence of a reliable oral tradition, later Muslims misread the transmitted text of the Syriac-Arabic lectionary and consequently turned it into the Arabic Quran.¹⁰ In view of its striking awareness of and engagement with biblical literature, Wansbrough argues that the Quran appears to be a product of religious debates that occurred not in Arabia during the sixth and seventh centuries but in Mesopotamia during the eighth and ninth centuries in a sectarian milieu (by which he means communities that separated themselves from mainstream Judaism and Christianity).¹¹ Relying on non-Muslim, mostly Christian, sources from the seventh century, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook contend that Muhammad was a messianic proclaimer from Arabia who led a messianic movement, to which both Arabs and Jews of the Hijaz joined, to retake Palestine, and when Umar, the movement's messianic figure, conquered Jerusalem in 638, during which Muhammad was still alive, the Arabs, following the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik, broke with the Jews and gradually formed their distinct identity as Muslims whose prophet was Muhammad and whose sacred scripture, revealed to Muhammad, was the Quran.¹² Yehuda

⁹ Lüling, *Über den Ur-Quran* (English translation *Challenge to Islam for Reformation*). For a review of Lüling's work, see Böwering, "Recent Research on the Construction of the Quran", *QHC*, 74–77; Motzki, "Alternative accounts of the Quran's formation", *CCQ*, 65–67.

¹⁰ Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* (English translation *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*). Several reviews of Luxenberg's work have appeared. In his article, "A Christian Quran?", 44–71, Daniel King considers Luxenberg's work from the perspective of Syriac philology and summarises eight reviews of Luxenberg's work.

¹¹ Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies; Sectarian Milieu*. For a critique of Wansbrough's ideas, see Donner, *Narratives*, 35–63, who convincingly argues that the Quran must have emerged in Hijaz before the First Civil War, which took place between 656 and 661, and not in Mesopotamia during the eighth and ninth centuries. See also Schoeler, "The Codification of the Quran", *QC*, 779–794, who demonstrates that the Quran must have been codified by the beginning of the eighth century because, by that time, a debate raged between Muslim scholars as to whether it was permitted to write down Muhammad's sayings alongside the Quran, a debate that presupposes the existence of the Quran as a codified text.

¹² Crone, *Hagarism*. For a summary and critique of *Hagarism*, see Robinson, *Discovering the Quran*, 47–59.

Nevo and Judith Koren claim that Muhammad did not exist but is a legendary figure whom Muslims of the eighth and ninth centuries made up to provide a founder for their religion that originated not in Hijaz but in Syria among the Arabs who moved in there after the Byzantine empire had abandoned its eastern provinces in the seventh century.¹³

The revisionists' alternative theories of the origin and history of the Quran, in Gabriel Reynolds' words, "form a cacophony, not a symphony, all of which contributes to the sense that revisionists have provided no respectable alternative narrative."¹⁴ Angelika Neuwirth notes that the revisionists' theories of the origin and history of the Quran "have by now been discarded," but "many of their critical observations remain challenging and still call for investigation."¹⁵ Donner remarks that none of the revisionists "has provided us with a satisfactory alternative interpretation" of the origin and history of the Quran, but they have "forced scholars in the field of Quranic studies to confront the simplistic view derived ultimately from Islam's own dogmas about its origins."¹⁶

1.1.1.3. Thematic and literary studies of the Quran

Other areas of scholarly interest in quranic studies are what the Quran says about specific issues (thematic studies) and how the Quran communicates these issues (literary studies).

In *Major Themes of the Quran*, Fazlur Rahman explores what the Quran says about God, man as individual, man in society, nature, prophethood and revelation, eschatology, Satan and evil, and the emergence of the Muslim community.¹⁷ A similar work, exploring other themes of the Quran, is that by Muhammad Abdel Haleem.¹⁸ Also, many works have

¹³ Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*. For summaries and critiques of *Crossroads to Islam*, see the review of Reynolds and that of Muhammed Bamyeh.

¹⁴ Reynolds, "Introduction", *QHC*, 9.

¹⁵ Neuwirth, "Structural, linguistic and literary features", *CCQ*, 100.

¹⁶ Donner, "The Quran in Recent Scholarship", *QHC*, 30.

¹⁷ Rahman, *Major Themes of the Quran*.

¹⁸ Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Quran*.

appeared that delve into one specific theme.¹⁹ The scholars of these works commonly assume that the Quran is a coherent whole and has some kind of unity in its message, which is a reasonable assumption,²⁰ but they do not approach the themes of the Quran in a diachronic manner, although they are aware of the possibility of such an approach, choosing instead to employ a synchronic approach,²¹ an approach that ultimately fails to fully detect the historical development of the themes.²² In their co-authored book about Jesus in the Quran, Mouhanad Khorchide and Klaus von Stosch employ a diachronic approach,²³ which is one of four methodological principles that guide their study. Another interesting methodological principle that guides their study, and which I will follow in my study of the Joseph story in the Quran, is that of comparative theology.

¹⁹ To give but four examples: God (Madigan, “Themes and topics”, *CCQ*, 79–96); Prophets and prophethood (Rubin, “Prophets and prophethood”, *BCQ*, 234–247; Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Quran*); Moses (Wheeler, “Moses”, *BCQ*, 248–265); Argumentation (Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning*).

²⁰ For a further reading, see Mir, “Unity of the Text of the Quran”, *EQ*, 5:405–406; “The sura as a unity”, *AQ*, 211–224; *Coherence in the Quran*; Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 163–199; “Structure and the Emergence of Community”, *BCQ*, 140–158; “Structural, linguistic and literary features”, *CCQ*, 97–114; “Sura(s)”, *EQ*, 5:166–177; Robinson, *Discovering the Quran*, 97–283.

²¹ Introducing his reading of the theme of God in the Quran, Madigan, “Themes and topics”, *CCQ*, 79, notes that it is possible “to discern historical development in some aspects of the Quran’s thought,” but his reading will nevertheless “be a reading of the text as it currently stands, fixed as a canon of scripture, and therefore presuming a substantial unity in its thought.” For a further discussion, see Sirry, “Introduction”, *NTQS*, 11–13.

²² The diachronic approach to the Quran is closely related to the understanding of the Quran as Muhammad’s successive proclamation in Mecca and Medina. From the mid-nineteenth century, western scholars, understanding the Quran as Muhammad’s successive proclamation, set out to reconstruct the chronological order of the Quran on the basis of (1) critical study of Muhammad’s life as outlined by Islamic sources and (2) formal and semantic study of the text of the Quran. The most successful scholar to work out a chronology of the Quran was Theodor Nöldeke, who, in 1860, submitted his doctoral thesis, *Geschichte des Qorans*, which was revised and expanded by Friedrich Schwally and later by Gotthelf Bergstrasser and Otto Pretzl into the three-volume work that soon became the traditional chronology of the Quran in western quranic scholarship. The three-volume *Geschichte des Qorans* of Nöldeke, Schwally, Bergstrasser, and Pretzl was translated into English by Wolfgang Behn in 2013 with the title *The History of the Quran*. For a further reading, see Böwering, “Chronology and the Quran”, *EQ*, 1:316–335. Neuwirth’s work on the textual unit of the sura (referenced in footnote 20) has reinforced the validity and importance of the chronology of the Quran.

²³ Khorchide and von Stosch, *Der andere Prophet* (English translation *The Other Prophet*).

In his study of various themes of the Quran, Abdel Haleem explores not only what the Quran says about certain themes, but also how the Quran communicates these themes.²⁴ In other words, Abdel Haleem examines the language of the Quran in terms of its literary features. Many similar works have appeared.²⁵ In Sirry's words, "Like other sacred texts, the Quran may be studied through its use of hyperbole, metaphor, allegory, symbolism, personification, irony, wordplay, narrative, and dramatic dialogue."²⁶ In chapter 4 of this dissertation, exploring the character, style, and lexicon of the quranic Joseph story, I will take a closer look at the use of dialogue.

1.1.2. The presence of Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians in Arabia

The presence of Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians in Arabia by the time of the Quran, and even centuries before that, has been firmly established by a number of scholars.²⁷ This historical situation explains why the Arabic Quran contains reminiscences of Jewish and Christian literary traditions as well as Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Geez, and Greek loanwords.²⁸ However, there are two questions about the Arabic-speaking Christians in Arabia that deserve further consideration:

²⁴ Abdel Haleem's study has been referenced in footnote 18.

²⁵ Boullata, *Literary Structures*; "Literary structures of the Quran", *EQ*, 3:192–205; Kadi and Mir, "Literature and the Quran", *EQ*, 3:205–227; Mir, "Language", *BCQ*, 88–106; "The Quran as Literature", 49–64.

²⁶ Sirry, "Introduction", *NTQS*, 6.

²⁷ Lecker, *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia*; Newby, *A History of the Jews in Arabia*; Rubin, "Jews and Judaism", *EQ*, 3:21–34; Hoyland, "The Jews of the Hijaz", *NPQ*, 91–116; *Arabia*; Fisher (ed), *Arabs and Empires before Islam; Between Empires*; Finster, "Arabia in Late Antiquity", *QC*, 61–114; Nebes, "The Martyrs of Najran", *QC*, 27–59; Toral-Niehoff, "The Ibad of Al-Hira", *QC*, 324–347; Thomas, "Arab Christianity", *BCEC*, 1–22; Griffith, "Christians and Christianity", *EQ*, 1:307–316; *The Bible in Arabic*, 7–53; Reynolds, *The emergence of Islam*, 121–133, 153–166; Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 33–41; Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 1–38; Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*; Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs; Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century; Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century; Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (volume 1, parts 1–2); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (volume 2, parts 1–2).

²⁸ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*; Mingana, "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kuran", 77–98; Carter, "Foreign Vocabulary", *BCQ*, 120–139; Zammit, *A Comparative Lexical Study*, 51–61.

- (1) What was the religious identity of the Arabic-speaking Christians in Arabia?
- (2) Were there Arabic-speaking Christians in Mecca and Medina?

1.1.2.1. The religious identity of the Arabic-speaking Christians in Arabia

Archaeological findings and textual sources, gathered and examined by, among others, the scholars mentioned in footnote 27, disclose that, centuries before the time of the Quran, Christianity became known to the Arabs living in the regions bordering Arabia by way of their contact with Greek/Aramaic-speaking, Syriac-speaking, and Geez-speaking Christians living in the neighbouring territories and lands of Arabia proper, resulting in the formation of Arabic-speaking Christian communities in Arabia.²⁹ The textual sources identify the Greek/Aramaic-speaking, Syriac-speaking, and Geez-speaking Christians, with whom the Arabs had contact, as Melkites (Greek/Aramaic-speaking Chalcedonians) whose language was mainly Greek but also Aramaic in both its Palestinian and Syriac expressions,³⁰ Jacobites (West-Syriac Christians) and Nestorians (East-Syriac Christians) whose language was Syriac, and Ethiopians whose language was Geez.³¹

²⁹ In *The Bible in Arabic*, 13, Sidney Griffith reasonably suggests that the Arabs living in the regions bordering Arabia were most likely bilingual and would therefore have been able not only to learn Christianity from Greek/Aramaic-speaking, Syriac-speaking, or Geez-speaking Christians, but also to translate Christianity orally into their Arabic language for the Arabs in the Arabian heartland.

³⁰ Although he frequently uses the name Melkites to denote the Greek/Aramaic-speaking Christians, with whom the pre-Islamic Arabs had contact, Griffith, “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and the Christological Controversies”, 9–55, problematises such a use of the term in his article. On pages 11–12, he states that the frequently used definition of the term ‘Melkites’ as “simply the followers of the Council of Chalcedon in the oriental patriarchates” is “at once anachronistic, incomplete and, sociologically speaking, inaccurate,” arguing that “when the term ‘Melkites’ first came into currency into the East to designate an identifiable, socio-ecclesial group,” which occurred after the rise of Islam in the eighth century, “it already marked them not simply as ‘Chalcedonian’, but as anti-‘Jacobite’ and anti-‘Monothelite’ in theology, Hellenophone and Arabophone in language, and as living in the cultural world of the commonwealth of Islam.” See also Griffith, *The Church of the Shadow of the Mosque*, 137–139, where it is noted that “the see of Jerusalem and the monasteries of the Judean desert, particularly Mar Sabas, would remain the intellectual centre for the Melkites, but the members of their community were to be found throughout the Arabic-speaking world, from Alexandria in Egypt to Antioch in Syria and even Bagdad.”

³¹ Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 12, fn 15, rightly points out that the names Melkite, Jacobite, and Nestorian are somewhat problematic in that they are anachronistic and polemical in origin.

However, some scholars have breathed new life into an old argument to the effect that the Christians, with whom the Arabs had contact, were not Greek/Aramaic-speaking Chalcedonians, West-Syriac Christians, East-Syriac Christians, or Ethiopian Christians, but rather a group of Jewish Christians.³² Consequently, these scholars have tried to show not only that the Quran reflects beliefs and practices of Jewish Christianity but also that the Quran addresses Arabic-speaking Jewish Christians or at least their beliefs and practices.³³ There are a number of problems with this argument, and here is not the place to delve into all of them,³⁴ but suffice it to say that any notion of Jewish Christian influence beyond the fifth century, in the words of Khorchide and von Stosch, “must be deemed pure speculation” because “all direct traces of Jewish Christianity vanish as early as the fifth century.”³⁵ In fact, as Griffith reminds us, “there is little solid evidence for the persistence of Jewish Christian communities as such beyond the fourth century.”³⁶ Therefore, as Guillaume Dye points out, “We have no evidence of Jewish Christian groups in Arabia in the early seventh century, and no evidence either that other putative Jewish Christian groups elsewhere in the Near East played a role in the emergence of early Islam.”³⁷ Hence, the Quran is not addressing Arabic-speaking Jewish Christians, but it is in conversation with Arabic-speaking Christians who, centuries before the time of the Quran, came into contact with Christians

³² For a description of the different Jewish Christians groups by patristic authors of the third and fourth centuries, see Klijn, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*.

³³ For example, see Crone, “Jewish Christianity and the Quran (Part One)”, 225–253; “Jewish Christianity and the Quran (Part Two)”, 1–21; de Blois, “Nasrani”, 1–30. For a list of scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who held this view, see Crone, “Jewish Christianity and the Quran (Part One)”, 227–228.

³⁴ For critical evaluations of this argument and discussions of its problems, see the contributions to Sanchez (ed), *Jewish Christianity and the Origins of Islam*; Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 28–39; “Al-Nasara in the Quran”, *NPQ*, 301–322; Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 27–33.

³⁵ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 29.

³⁶ Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 28.

³⁷ Dye, “Jewish Christianity”, 17.

belonging to the Greek/Aramaic Chalcedonian Church, the Syriac-Orthodox Church, the Church of the East, and the Ethiopian Church.

1.1.2.2. The presence of Arabic-speaking Christians in Mecca and Medina

On the basis of archaeological findings and non-quranic textual sources, the scholars mentioned in footnote 27 have been able to establish that, by the dawn of the seventh century, Arabic-speaking Christians were present in East Arabia, South Arabia, and North Arabia, but not in Mecca and Medina.³⁸ Turning to the Quran, which emerged in Mecca and Medina, we find a considerable amount of evidence for the presence of Arabic-speaking Christians in Mecca and Medina in the seventh century.³⁹ To put it differently, why would the Quran participate in Christian narratives, themes, motifs, and notions from biblical literature, discuss several Christian beliefs and practices, and address Arabic-speaking Christians, directly and indirectly, if they were not present in its audience? This seems to suggest that Arabic-speaking Christians were present in Mecca and Medina in the seventh century. Furthermore, on the basis of Islamic sources, Ghada Osman has demonstrated that there were a number of Arabic-speaking Christians in Mecca and Medina in the late sixth and seventh centuries,⁴⁰ and Irfan Shahid has shown that many Ethiopian Christians were living in Mecca by the time of the Quran.⁴¹

³⁸ These scholars do concede, however, that Christian literary traditions, beliefs, and practices were noticeable in Mecca and Medina. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the region around Mecca was connected with South Arabia, East Africa, and the eastern Mediterranean through the caravan trade, which, by extension, means that the Arabs in Mecca and its immediate surroundings were in contact with the larger Christian context of Arabia and its environs. For a further reading, see, Bukharin, “Mecca on the caravan routes”, *QC*, 116–134.

³⁹ For a further reading, see Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 23–39.

⁴⁰ Osman, “Pre-Islamic Arab Converts to Christianity in Mecca and Medina”, 67–80.

⁴¹ Shahid, “Islam and *Oriens Christianus*”, 9–31.

1.1.3. The presence of Syriac Christianity in Arabia

In the sixth and seventh centuries, the Christians in the neighbouring lands and territories of Arabia were organised in four distinct ecclesiastical bodies: the Greek/Aramaic Chalcedonian Church, the Syriac-Orthodox Church, the Church of the East, and the Ethiopian Church.⁴² Here is not the place to discuss the christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries that gave rise to these four distinct Churches,⁴³ but suffice it to clarify, first, that neither Church has ever denied the divinity of Jesus, his salvific incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, or the salvific importance of the mysteries of baptism and eucharist, and second, that the Syriac-Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church disclaimed the dyophysite christology of the council of Chalcedon (451), which the Greek/Aramaic Chalcedonian Church affirmed, and instead they defended the miaphysite christology of the council of Ephesus (431), which the Church of the East rejected.

As for Syriac Christianity, to put it simply, it is Christianity experienced and expressed in Syriac, be it West-Syriac or East-Syriac. Syriac Christianity is claimed by both the Syriac-Orthodox Church and the Church of the East. In the fifth century, these Churches diverged from each other, mainly because of christological controversies, forming two distinct ecclesiastical bodies. While the Syriac-Orthodox Church, with its stronghold in Syria and Mesopotamia, held on to the miaphysite christological tradition of the council of Ephesus, the Church of the East, which established itself as the national Church of the Sasanian Empire in 410, rejected the miaphysite christology of the council of Ephesus and

⁴² For a further reading on the history of these Churches and their present state and organization, see Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches*; Thomas, “Arab Christianity”, *BCEC*, 1–22; Griffith, “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and the Christological Controversies”, 9–55; Murre-van den Berg, “Syriac Christianity”, *BCEC*, 249–268; Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*; “The establishment of the Syriac Churches”, 105–118; Baumer, *The Church of the East*; Appleyard, “Ethiopian Christianity”, *BCEC*, 117–136.

⁴³ For a further reading, see Price and Michael, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (volumes 1–3); Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553* (volumes 1–2); Price and Whitby, *Chalcedon in Context*.

maintained a form of dyophysite christology. However, before the fifth century, West-Syriac Christians and East-Syriac Christians shared a common christological understanding and ecclesiastical identity. Long before the time of the Quran, the Syriac-Orthodox Church and the Church of the East were markedly represented in Arabia, though in different parts of it, and therefore, they played a significant role in shaping the Christian context in which Muhammad was born and out of which the Quran emerged.

1.1.3.1. The presence of Syriac Christianity in East Arabia

In the fourth to sixth centuries, the Church of the East, in Hoyland's words, "established offshoots in all the islands and coastlands of east Arabia."⁴⁴ Already in 325, a bishop named David, who was the overseer of an Arabic community on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf, is said to have attended the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.⁴⁵ The *Chronicle of Siirt* mentions that around 390 a certain Abdisho left southern Iraq for Yamama and Bahrain where "he lived an ascetic life, baptized its inhabitants and built a monastery."⁴⁶ Reynolds notes that recent archaeological expeditions "have uncovered numerous churches and monasteries in this region."⁴⁷ To this, one may add that crosses and Christian cemeteries and funerary steles have been discovered in East Arabia.⁴⁸ The presence of Christian communities in East Arabia, closely connected with the Church of the East in the early

⁴⁴ Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 147.

⁴⁵ Reynolds, *The emergence of Islam*, 157.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 30. Besides, on the same page, Hoyland notes, "From the biography of a monk named Jonah we learn that in the region of Qatar there existed a monastery in the 340s AD... In the year 410 Batai, bishop of Mashmahig (modern Muharraq island next to Bahrain), was excommunicated and replaced by a certain Elias (*Synod Or.* 34, 36). And the acts of a synod of 424 record a John, bishop of Mazun (Oman), in attendance (*Synod Or.* 43)."

⁴⁷ Reynolds, *The emergence of Islam*, 157.

⁴⁸ Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 30; Finster, "Arabia in Late Antiquity", *QC*, 89, who, moreover, on pages 87–94, explores the architecture of the monasteries and churches in East Arabia.

seventh century, is evidenced in the letters of Ishoyahb III, the patriarch of the Church of the East from 649 to 659.⁴⁹

1.1.3.2. *The presence of Syriac Christianity in South Arabia*

By the fourth century, South Arabia was ruled by the kingdom of Himyar, whose kings, since 320, had chosen “to reject polytheism and favour Judaism, but without formally adhering to its creed.”⁵⁰ In the subsequent century, Himyar “conquered large areas of central and western Arabia, including Mecca and Medina, between 420 and 445,” and “probably controlled the whole Arabian Peninsula around 500.”⁵¹

Already in the fourth and fifth centuries, Christianity was present in South Arabia.⁵² By the sixth century, miaphysite Christianity became prevalent in South Arabia, and it was probably and mainly from there that miaphysite Christianity reached Mecca and Medina.⁵³ The prevalence of miaphysite Christianity in South Arabia in the sixth century was due to the increasing presence there of Arabic-speaking Christians who were in close contact with both the Ethiopian Church and the Syriac-Orthodox Church.⁵⁴

Around 520, the kingdom of Himyar fell under the control of Ethiopia. In 519, the king of Ethiopia, Kaleb, placed a Christian ruler, Ma'dikarib, on the throne of Himyar. After his

⁴⁹ Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 30–32; Rompay, “Beth Qatraye”, *GEDSH*, 72–73.

⁵⁰ Robin, “Himyar”, 129.

⁵¹ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 34.

⁵² Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 51, notes that “the Byzantine emperor Constantius (337–61) dispatched ambassadors, accompanied by the missionary Theophilus the Indian, to the ruler of the Himyarites, seeking permission to build churches for the use of visiting Byzantine merchants and ‘of any others who might incline towards Christianity’ (Philostorgius 3.4).” For more on this, see Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, 86–106, who shows that Theophilus succeeded in founding three churches. See also Nebes, “The Martyrs of Najran”, *QC*, 35–40, who, on page 40, notes that, in 472, “a Christian priest called Azqir attempted to proselytize in Najran, upon which he was seized by the local Himyarite nobility and sent to the royal court for sentencing.”

⁵³ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 33, state, “The main missionary impact on Mecca and Medina probably came from miaphysite-influenced Christians from South Arabia.”

⁵⁴ By this, I do not mean that miaphysite Christianity was the only form of Christianity represented in South Arabia. Evidently, dyophysite Christianity was also represented in South Arabia at the time.

death in 521/522, Kaleb crowned a new ruler, this time a Jewish one, Joseph, who shortly afterward rebelled and led an army, first, against the Ethiopians in Zafar, the capital of Himyar, killing 300 men and some priests and burning their church, and then, against the coastal ranges of the Red Sea, killing thousands of Christians and burning their churches. At this point, while on the coastal ranges of the Red Sea, Joseph sent an army against the South Arabian city of Najran whose inhabitants were largely miaphysite Christians. In 523, Joseph's army isolated Najran, and when Joseph arrived in Najran, a large number of miaphysite Christians were persecuted and massacred.⁵⁵ In response to the massacre, Kaleb, the Ethiopian king, had Joseph killed, seized Zafar, took control over South Arabia including Najran, founded many churches, established an ecclesiastical hierarchy,⁵⁶ and placed a Christian ruler, Sumuyafa', on the throne of Himyar. Nevertheless, Kaleb soon lost direct control over South Arabia and large parts of Arabia. Sumuyafa' was overthrown by the leader of his army, Abraha, also a Christian, who turned against Kaleb and declared himself the ruler of Himyar and the king of Arabia.⁵⁷ Abraha ruled between 535 to 565. After the death of Abraha, his two sons, Yaksum and Masruq, ruled Himyar, but not for many years, for in 575, the Sassanids conquered South Arabia and made it a Persian province.⁵⁸

This brief overview of the history of South Arabia and Najran during the sixth century discloses the considerable impact that Ethiopian Christianity must have had on the Arabic-speaking Christians living there. Furthermore, we know that, in the sixth century, Najran became an important centre for West-Syriac Christianity. For example, before the

⁵⁵ Robin, "Himyar", 145–148; Nebes, "The Martyrs of Najran", *QC*, 43–49; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 51–53. The date of the massacre is debatable. Some sources give an earlier date to the effect that the massacre took place in 518. See the brief discussion in Nebes, "The Martyrs of Najran", *QC*, 46–47, fn 86.

⁵⁶ For a further reading on the churches that Kaleb founded and the ecclesiastical hierarchy that he established, see Shahid, "Byzantium in South Arabia", 23–94. For a discussion of ecclesiastical architecture and art in South Arabia, see Finster, "Arabia in Late Antiquity", *QC*, 94–100.

⁵⁷ Robin, "Himyar", 149–152; Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 34–35.

⁵⁸ Robin, "Himyar", 152–153.

massacre of the Christians in Najran, two bishops, both of whom were named Paul, “had been consecrated by Philoxenos of Mabbug, a leading figure of the Syrian Orthodox Church, which makes it likely that Christianity in Najran was of a markedly anti-Chalcedonian bent.”⁵⁹ Moreover, there is no doubt that Najran continued to have a bishop after the massacre of its miaphysite inhabitants.⁶⁰ Furthermore, Jacob of Serugh, an important West-Syriac author, with whom we will become acquainted in the subsequent chapters, wrote a letter to the miaphysite Christians in Najran, encouraging them in the face of their severe suffering and reminding them of the orthodoxy of their miaphysite confession.⁶¹ Finally, Abraha, who ruled Himyar and controlled all of Arabia between 535 to 565, rejected the Ethiopian Christian tradition and turned gradually to the Syriac Christian tradition.⁶² All this confirms the view that the Syriac tradition, and particularly its West-Syriac form, must have been present in South Arabia and prevalent in Najran before the time of the Quran.

1.1.3.3. The presence of Syriac Christianity in North Arabia

In the fourth to sixth centuries, large numbers of Arabs in North Arabia converted to Christianity.⁶³ At this time, Arabia was wedged between the Byzantine empire and the Sasanian empire. The Byzantines controlled North-West Arabia through their allies, the

⁵⁹ Nebes, “The Martyrs of Najran”, *QC*, 48

⁶⁰ Shahid, “Byzantium in South Arabia”, 39–40, fn 42. In “Islam and *Oriens Christianus*”, 24–26, Shahid argues that Quss Ibn Sa‘ida, whom Muhammad is said, according to Islamic sources, to have heard in the Arab market or fair called ‘Ukaz near Mecca, was the bishop of Najran at the time.

⁶¹ Olinder, *Iacobus Sarugensis*, 87–102. For a brief entry on the life and bibliography of Jacob, see Brock, “Ya‘qub of Serugh”, *GEDSH*, 433–435. Since Jacob died in 521, his letter must have been written before that, reinforcing the earlier date of the massacre, or, perhaps, revealing that the persecution of miaphysite Christians in Najran began already around 520. Moreover, much of Jacob’s letter is devoted not only to arguing for the orthodoxy of miaphysite christology, but also to criticising dyophysite christology. This would confirm the presence of dyophysite Christianity in South Arabia in the sixth century.

⁶² Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 35. See also Robin, “Himyar”, 153–154.

⁶³ Reynolds, *The emergence of Islam*, 158; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 147–150.

Jafnids, based in the Golan. The Sasanians controlled the North-East Arabia through their allies, the Nasrids, based in Hira.⁶⁴

Although they were seated in the part of the world where East-Syriac Christianity had flourished, the Nasrids largely chose not to openly identify or definitely affiliate with any form of Christianity or religion. The Nasrids seem to have been open to any form of Christianity and religion. The religious policy of the Nasrids had to do with their intention to safeguard their advantageous alliance to the Sasanian empire in the multifaceted and politically charged religious context in which they were situated.⁶⁵

Unlike the Nasrids, the Jafnids were professed Christians. Despite their alliance to the Byzantine empire, the Jafnids of the sixth century supported the miaphysite Christians living in their territory for obvious reasons. Just as the Nasrids were anxious to safeguard their alliance to the Sasanians, so too the Jafnids were eager to maintain their alliance to the Byzantines. However, this required that the Jafnids kept the peace in their territory, in which miaphysite Christianity was dominant, and therefore, supporting the miaphysite Christians was important to the Jafnids. This explains why al-Harith, the leader of the Jafnids between 529 and 569, asked empress Theodora, in 542, for two miaphysite bishops, namely, Jacob Baradaeus and Theodore, for due to the persecutions of miaphysite communities during the reign of Justin I (518–527), the number of bishops, priests, and monks in southern Syria and Arabia had decreased significantly. After the death of al-Harith, his successor, al-Mundhir,

⁶⁴ Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 78–83; Fisher, *Between Empires*, provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between the empires of the Near East, the Byzantines and the Sasanians, and their most important allies, the Jafnids and the Nasrids.

⁶⁵ Fisher, *Between Empires*, 64–70, who, on page 68, writes that the Nasrids “did not prevent anti-Chalcedonian missionaries from working in the environs of al-Hirah, and Simeon of Beth Arsham was active in promoting miaphysite Christianity in opposition to the local Nestorians. While this may not have endeared the Nasrids to the Nestorian hierarchy, it did have the benefit of avoiding any clear religious institutional commitment and preserved a long-lived ability to move between the diverse religious communities that made up the part of the Sasanian Empire which fell under nominal Nasrid control.” See also, Fisher, “Arabs and Christianity”, 357–363.

continued to support the miaphysite Christians.⁶⁶ Clearly, then, miaphysite Christianity, particularly as expressed in the West-Syriac tradition, was dominantly present in the North-West Arabia. This historical certainty is evidenced not only by the religious policy of the Jafnids, but also, in the words of Khorchide and von Stosch, “by the foundation of miaphysite monasteries in the North-West Arabia.”⁶⁷

1.1.3.4. *Summary*

Syriac Christianity was present throughout Arabia by the time of the Quran and even centuries before that. While East-Syriac Christianity was dominant in East-Arabia, West-Syriac Christianity was prevalent in South-Arabia, particularly in Najran, and in the North-West Arabia. Although we cannot exclude the possibility that Syriac literary traditions entered Hijaz from East-Arabia, it seems that we have more evidence that Syriac literary traditions found their way into Hijaz from South-Arabia and North-Arabia.

In emphasising the presence of the Syriac tradition in Arabia, I do not want to imply the absence of other traditions, whether any Christian (Greek/Aramaic Chalcedonian or Ethiopian), Jewish, or Arabian polytheistic.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, in my view, based on the evidence presented in this subsection, it is clear that the Quran emerged in a religious milieu significantly marked by the Syriac tradition, particularly the West-Syriac tradition, which explains why the Quran betrays a remarkable closeness to the Syriac tradition, particularly the West-Syriac tradition.

⁶⁶ Fisher, *Between Empires*, 49–64. See also, Fisher, “Arabs and Christianity”, 313–350.

⁶⁷ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 37.

⁶⁸ Concerning the Arabian polytheistic tradition, Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 1, notes that it is surprising “to find how little of the religious life of this Arabian paganism is reflected in the pages of the Quran,” and he goes on to observe that the only traces of Arabian paganism that one can find in the Quran are “names of a few old deities; odd details of certain pagan ceremonies connected with rites of sacrifice and pilgrimage; a few deep-rooted superstitions connected with Jinn, etc., and some fragments of old folk-tales.”

1.1.4. The Syriac background of the Quran

The scholars of what I have called the century-long sources-hunt have in varying degrees emphasised the Syriac background of the Quran.⁶⁹ Other scholars, working on the vocabulary and language of the Quran, have identified a great number of Syriac loanwords in the Quran, and they have also shown that most proper names of biblical figures in the Quran follow the Syriac form and that the writing of quranic words and the structure of quranic sentences reflect Syriac orthography and syntax.⁷⁰ Moreover, recall Luxenberg's thesis that the Quran was originally a Syriac lectionary written in a Syriac-Arabic hybrid language.⁷¹ John Bowman has argued that Muhammad's monotheism, his view of the Old Testament, and much of the Quran's vocabulary are in debt to the West-Syriac tradition.⁷² Erwin Gräf has argued that the literary style of the Quran was shaped against the background of liturgical and homiletic texts of the Syriac tradition.⁷³

The aforementioned scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have certainly demonstrated that the Quran emerged in a religious milieu deeply informed by the Syriac tradition, but only recently have a growing number of scholars begun to show that the

⁶⁹ Besides the scholars mentioned in footnotes 2–4, see Lee, *Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammedanism*, 124–138, who highlighted thematic and linguistic similarities between the Quran, on the one hand, and the writings of Ephrem and the Peshitta, on the other hand, to substantiate his claim that Muhammad had acquired his knowledge of Christianity in Syria; and see also Andrae, *Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube* (English translation *Mohammed: The Man and his Faith*), who examined the Syriac background of the Quran's eschatology and piety, and like Lee, he explored similarities between the Quran and Ephrem. For a critical review of both Lee's work and Andrae's work, see Witztum, *The Syriac milieu of the Quran*, 18–42.

⁷⁰ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*; Mingana, "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kuran"; Horovitz, "Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran".

⁷¹ Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* (English translation *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*).

⁷² Bowman, "The Debt of Islam to Monophysite Syrian Christianity", 177–201, in which he also argues that the *Injīl* in the Quran refers to Tatian's second-century harmony of the Gospels, known as the *Diatessaron*, written in Syriac and used by Syriac communities up to the fifth century but was extant even later. For a critical review of Bowman's ideas, see Witztum, *The Syriac milieu of the Quran*, 43–50.

⁷³ Erwin Gräf, "Zu den christlichen Einflüssen im Koran", 111–144. For a critical review, see Witztum, *The Syriac milieu of the Quran*, 50–52.

emergent Quran was not simply a passive recipient of Syriac literary traditions, nor a reservoir of misread theological dogmas and ideas of Syriac Christianity, but a creative participant in the Syriac tradition.⁷⁴ Based on such an understanding of the Quran, Griffith has aptly described how one should approach the Quran, an approach that I will follow in my study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition:

Hermeneutically speaking, one should approach the Quran as an integral discourse in its own right; it proclaims, judges, praises, blames from its own narrative center. It addresses an audience which is already familiar with oral versions in Arabic of earlier scriptures and folklores. The Quran does not borrow from, or often even quote from these earlier texts. Rather, it alludes to and evokes their stories, even sometimes their wording, for its own rhetorical purpose. The Arabic Quran, from a literary perspective, is something new. It uses the idiom, and sometimes the forms and structures, of earlier narratives in the composition of its own distinctive discourse. It cannot be reduced to any presumed sources. Earlier discourses appear in it not only in a new setting, but shaped, trimmed and re-formulated for an essentially new narrative. Syriac in the Arabic Quran is no longer Syriac; it may be a “Syriacism” in Quranic Arabic, or a narrative originally told in Syriac, which in an oral Arabic version has become a point of reference for the Quran’s own discourse. Allusions to, even quotations from, or structural similarities with earlier Syriac narratives do not control the Quran’s

⁷⁴ Hayes, “The Treasury of Prophecy”; Reynolds, *The Quran and the Bible; The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*; Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*; El-Badawi, *The Quran and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*; “Condemnation in the Quran”, *NPQ*, 449–466; “Divine Kingdom”, 1–42; Marx, “Glimpses of a Mariology”, *QC*, 533–564; Griffith, “Christian Lore and the Arabic Quran”, *QHC*, 109–137; “Syriacisms in the Arabic Quran”, 83–110; van Bladel, “The Alexander Legend”, *QHC*, 175–203; Wilde, “Q 33:35”, 419–431.

discourse. Rather, the Quran, framing the new hermeneutical horizon, casts any originally Syriac elements in its Arabic diction into the framework of meaning constructed by its own diction.⁷⁵

Guided by his defined approach to the Quran, Griffith goes on to study the quranic story of the Companions of the Cave (Q 18:9–26), originally a Christian legend about the miraculous life of some youths in Ephesus, also known as the legend of the Seven Sleepers, in light of earlier Syriac retellings, particularly the retelling of Jacob of Serugh. After a careful study, involving a thematic and lexical comparison, Griffith concludes that the quranic study, which is of Meccan origin, evokes the Christian legend, “as it must have circulated orally among the Arabic-speaking ‘Jacobite’ Christians of Muhammad’s day in Arabia,” but removes its “Christian frame” and provides instead a “Quranic horizon within which the legend takes on a whole new hermeneutical significance.”⁷⁶ Griffith argues that, by removing the Christian frame of the legend, according to which Jesus is the Son of God who miraculously saves the youths in Ephesus from persecution for their faith in him, the Quran corrects what it “considers to be one of the major errors of the Christian understanding, namely, the doctrine that God has a son and that he is Jesus, the Messiah.”⁷⁷ To support his argument, Griffith notes that, before evoking the legend, the Quran warns those who say that *ittakaḍa allāhu waladan* ‘God has taken a child’ (Q 18:4, translation mine), whom he takes to be Christians.⁷⁸ Although he is aware that “it is generally assumed that Muhammad’s adversaries in Mecca were given to the polytheist view that angels and lesser goddesses

⁷⁵ Griffith, “Christian lore and the Arabic Quran”, *QHC*, 116. As noted by Griffith, biblical literature must have been circulating orally in Arabic through Arabia by the time of the Quran because, as he argues in *The Bible in Arabic*, 41–53, we have no clear evidence that the Bible, or any other biblical literature, had been translated into Arabic by the seventh century.

⁷⁶ Griffith, “Christian lore and the Arabic Quran”, *QHC*, 130.

⁷⁷ Griffith, “Christian lore and the Arabic Quran”, *QHC*, 118.

⁷⁸ Griffith, “Christian lore and the Arabic Quran”, *QHC*, 117–118.

could be taken to be Allah's children," and that "on this view the warning against 'those who say God has gotten a child' (18:4) was not in the first place addressed to Christians but to Meccan polytheists,"⁷⁹ Griffith still maintains that Q 18:4 addresses not only Meccan polytheists, but also Christians, based on the fact that, in the subsequent verses, the Quran evokes a Christian legend and discusses its details and controversies with the expectation that the listeners, or at least some of them, are deeply familiar with the legend and its details and controversies.⁸⁰ Moreover, as Griffith further notes, in the second stage (Q 18:13–20) of the first narrative phase (Q 18:10–20), the Quran makes the Christian legend its own by formulating it in line with a number of themes recurrently present in earlier Meccan chapters and religiously relevant to the audience.⁸¹

Neuwirth has offered a reading of chapter 90 of the Quran that, in some sense, is similar to Griffith's reading of Q 18:9–26.⁸² Q 90, which is largely an early Meccan chapter, opens with a cluster of two oaths that emphasises the sacredness of urban life and procreation (Q 90:1–3). The next verse states that man was created *fī kabadin* 'in trouble' (Q 90:4). This rather negative statement about man is explained in the subsequent verses, "Does he think that no one will have power over him? 'I have squandered great wealth,' he says. Does he

⁷⁹ This view is held by, for example, Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 75–80, and Neuwirth, "Imagining Mary – Disputing Jesus", 383–416; *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 300–305.

⁸⁰ Griffith, "Christian lore and the Arabic Quran", *QHC*, 118. According to Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 76, those who say that *ittakāda allāhu waladan* 'God has taken a child' (Q 18:4, see also 10:68; 19:88; 21:26) are probably not Christians but Meccan polytheists because "no Christian would ever describe Jesus as the *walad* of God." Here, neither do I want to defend Griffith's contention that Q 18:4 addresses Arabic-speaking Christians and their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, nor do I intend to disclaim the argument of Khorchide and von Stosch that the emphasis in Meccan chapters that God has no *walad* 'child' (Q 17:111; 23:91; 25:2; 39:4; 43:81; 72:3) is levelled not at Christians but at Meccan polytheists, but I do wish to point out that Syriac authors of the fifth and sixth centuries did in fact describe Jesus as God's *yaldā* which is the cognate of the Arabic *walad*. See, for example, Jacob of Serugh's homily *The Incomprehensibility of Christ, his birth of a virgin, and against the dyophysites* in Akhrass, 160 *Unpublished Homilies*, 1:7–16, particularly 1:8–9, and Philoxenos of Mabbug's second letter to the monastery of Beit Gaugal in de Halleux, "La deuxième Lettre de Philoxène aux Monastères du Beit Gaugal", 5–79, particularly 72.

⁸¹ Griffith, "Christian lore and the Arabic Quran", *QHC*, 127–128.

⁸² Neuwirth, "Locating the Quran in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity", 173–176.

think no one observes him?”⁸³ In these verses, the man who follows the Arabian polytheistic behavioural code, evidenced by his inclination toward wealth and overspending, is reproached. Neuwirth explains:

According to the pagan Arab paradigm, overspending and exuberant generosity (*jūd*) is a virtue which earns the hero fame and prestige. In the sūra it is re-interpreted as a vice. The following reproach, *a-yaḥṣabu an lam yarahū aḥad* (“What, does he think none has seen him?”) reveals the boastful person’s epistemic inferiority; he has not realized that he is under the law of eschatological accountability.⁸⁴

Against the typical Arabian polytheistic man, Q 90 pits a new ideal of man:

Did We not give him eyes, a tongue, lips, and point out to him the two clear ways [of good and evil]? Yet he has not attempted the steep path. What will explain to you what the steep path is? It is to free a slave, to feed at a time of hunger an orphaned relative or a poor person in distress, and to be one of those who believe and urge one another to steadfastness and compassion. Those who do this will be on the right-hand side, but those who disbelieve in Our revelations will be on the left-hand side, and the Fire will close in on them.⁸⁵

The new ideal of man is aware that he is divinely endowed with the ability to recognise the sacredness of urban life and procreation and to act accordingly by following the good

⁸³ Q 90:5–7. Unless otherwise noted, all quranic quotations are taken from Abdul Haleem’s translation.

⁸⁴ Neuwirth, “Locating the Quran in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity”, 174.

⁸⁵ Q 90:8–20.

way, that is to say, by doing deeds of charity, such as freeing slaves and caring for the poor, lest he ends up among the people of the left on whom the fire will close in. Interestingly, Neuwirth points out that the last part of Q 90, which says that those who do deeds of charity will be among the people of the right and those who fail to do such deeds will be among the people of the left, is “a later, perhaps late Meccan or Medinan, addition to the originally early Meccan sūra.”⁸⁶ This later addition was introduced into Q 90 as a reaction to the Christian understanding of deeds of charity based on Jesus’ eschatological parable of the sheep and goats as recorded by Matthew:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Then he

⁸⁶ Neuwirth, “Locating the Quran in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity”, 176.

will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” Then they also will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.⁸⁷

According to this parable, all people will be gathered before Jesus on the last day, and he will separate them into two groups. The blessed at his right hand will go away into eternal life because they did deeds of charity for his sake, whereas the accused at his left hand will go away into eternal punishment because they failed to do deeds of charity for his sake. Commenting on the Quran’s participation in Jesus’ eschatological parable, Neuwirth says:

The Quranic reference to “people of the right,” *aṣḥāb al-maymana* (v. 18), and “people of the left,” *aṣḥāb al-mash’ama* (v. 19), seems to echo Matthew’s scenario. What matters, however, is not the positive reference to particular concepts of the Gospel, but the Quran’s refusal to adopt that scripture’s crucial message of the performance of acts of charity for Jesus’ sake. The Quran counters this idea with a completely new argument. Charity is not meritorious

⁸⁷ Mt 25:31–46. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are taken from New Revised Standard Version.

for Jesus' sake, but for creation's sake because it implements an ideal inherent in creation, one of harmony and balanced-ness.⁸⁸

To sum up, at first Q 90 addressed polytheists in Mecca, reproached their behavioural code, and offered them a new way, and later Q 90 was expanded to defend its new way in conversation with Christians in Mecca or Medina.

In my view, Griffith and Neuwirth have shown that, in certain Meccan chapters, the Quran is in conversation not only with polytheists, but also with Christians, and that in its conversation with Christians, the Quran seems to address christological issues. According to Griffith's reading of Q 18:9–26, the Quran seems to address the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. According to Neuwirth's reading of Q 90:18–20, the Quran seems to address the ethical view that deeds of charity are meritorious for Jesus' sake.

Similarly, in his reading of certain quranic texts on Mary in light of the Syriac tradition, Michael Marx argues that the Quran seems to address the belief that Mary is the God-bearer and, by extension, that Jesus is God.⁸⁹ The Syriac tradition describes Mary as the Temple and as the Rod of Aaron because she bore God in her virginal womb. By contrast, the Quran places Mary in the Temple (Q 3:37) instead of describing her as the Temple and calls her

⁸⁸ Neuwirth, "Locating the Quran in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity", 175–176. Neuwirth does not discuss the particular Christian context of the last part of Q 90. I would argue that the context is most likely Syriac for at least two reasons. First, we have already seen that the Syriac tradition was prevalent in Arabia, and this would affirm that Jesus' eschatological parable of the sheep and goats reached Arabia through the Syriac tradition. Second, while Mt 25:31–46 states that Jesus will put the two groups of people, one blessed and the other accused, at his right side and at his left side, respectively, and from there reward the blessed with eternal life and condemn the accused to eternal punishment, Q 90:18–20 designates the blessed group as the people of the *maymana* 'right' and the accused group as the people of the *maš'ama* 'left'. This designation of the two groups of people, which is not clearly stated in, but may be easily deduced from, Mt 25:31–46, is frequent in the Syriac tradition, where we find the good designated as the people of the *yamīnā* 'right' and the wicked designated as the people of the *semālā* 'left'.

⁸⁹ Marx, "Glimpses of a Mariology", *QC*, 533–564.

the sister of Aaron (Q 19:28) instead of describing her as the Rod of Aaron. Against this backdrop, Marx notes:

The allegorical prerogatives of the Christian image of Mary have thus been eliminated. Still, traces of a Mariology have remained. How are these to be interpreted? Simply as signs that have lost their previous theological function? Or should these traces not rather be understood as constituents of a new Quranic Mariology: as indicators of the replacement of a theologically highly implicative notion by a theologically more neutral one, apt to legitimize the appropriation of the discourse of Mary in the Quran — a discourse that in its Christian shape was irreconcilable with Quranic monotheism? Should these traces perhaps be regarded as re-formulations not only fit to appease those listeners who rejected the Christian dogma, but also able to reconcile listeners with a Christian background, who in the Quran found a figure of Mary that, although deprived of her mythic dimension, yet had some of her insignia preserved? These traces of a Christian Mariology — the replacement of Mary, allegorically understood as the Temple/Church, by Mary *in* the Temple, and the replacement of Mary, allegorized as the revived Rod of Aaron by Mary, the “sister of Aaron,” — would then be comparable to the replacement of the Christian title of Jesus as the “son of God” by the Quranic “Jesus, son of Mary.” In both cases, part of the earlier formula is preserved and left audible for the listeners, but at the same time is rid of its Christological implications.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Marx, “Glimpses of a Mariology”, *QC*, 559–561.

Here is not the place to summarise the recent studies, some of which have been referenced in footnote 82, that explore the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition. Suffice it to say, however, that several of these studies, like those of Griffith, Neuwirth, and Marx, show that the Quran is aware of Syriac literary traditions, participates in them, and addresses their christological framework. It is, indeed, interesting that the Quran addresses christological issues not only directly when it discusses Christianity, but also indirectly when it participates in Syriac literary traditions, such as the Christian legend of the youth in Ephesus, Jesus' eschatological parable of the sheep and goats, and the imagery of Mary as the Temple and as the Rod of Aaron. Against this backdrop, and given the typological reading of the Old Testament in the early Church, could it be the case that the Quran is aware of Syriac literary traditions about Old Testament figures, such as Joseph, participates in them, and addresses their christological framework?

1.2. THE JOSEPH STORY

1.2.1. Joseph in the Syriac tradition

The Joseph story in the Bible (Gen 37–50), probably written in the Solomonic court around the tenth century BC or in the Northern kingdom in the eighth century BC, intends to depict Joseph, the ruler of Egypt, as the ideal power figure and to bridge the traditions about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Canaan and those about the Israelites in Egypt.⁹¹ At least from the third century BC and on, the Joseph story caught much attention and was frequently

⁹¹ Coats, "Joseph", 3:976–981; Blum and Weingart, "The Joseph Story", 501–521; For a historical-critical reading of the Joseph story, see Speiser, *Genesis*, 285–378; Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 60–67.

retold and significantly expanded by various authors not only in the Jewish tradition,⁹² but also in the Christian tradition.

As Grypeou and Spurling note, in the Christian tradition, “Joseph was the biblical figure *par excellence* that represented a type for Jesus,”⁹³ and they go on to remark that “the typological approach to Joseph is particularly prominent in the Syriac tradition.”⁹⁴ Already in 1923, Heinrich Näf offered a study of the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition, largely based on Ps Ephrem’s twelve homilies and Ps Narsai’s two homilies, but he discussed the typological approach to Joseph only briefly.⁹⁵ More recently, in 2008, Kristian Heal offered an in-depth study of the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition, and he too used, besides other sources, Ps Ephrem’s twelve homilies and Ps Narsai’s two homilies.⁹⁶ In his study, Heal devoted one chapter to the typological approach to the Joseph story,⁹⁷ and in an appendix to his study, he listed 53 comparisons drawn by several Syriac authors between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus.⁹⁸

Interestingly, in a fifth-century Syriac lectionary, we find readings from the Joseph story prescribed for Easter.⁹⁹ Such a finding is interesting for at least two reasons. First, it reinforces the importance of Joseph as the type of Jesus in the Syriac tradition, for obviously,

⁹² For the Joseph story in the Jewish tradition, see Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House; Traditions of the Bible*, 438–458; Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*; Grypeou, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*, 323–336; Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 327–431; Rottzoll, *Rabbinischer Kommentar zum Buch Genesis*, 429–537.

⁹³ Grypeou, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*, 336. Not only Joseph but most of the Old Testament figures were construed as types of Jesus. In fact, the typological reading of the Old Testament was the primary, though not the only, hermeneutical approach to the Old Testament in the early Church. For a further reading, see Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 165–269; Breck, *Scripture in Tradition*, 33–66; Pentiuc, *The Old Testament*, 169–198.

⁹⁴ Grypeou, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*, 337.

⁹⁵ Näf, *Syrische Josef-Gedichte*. His main discussion on the typological approach to the Joseph story is found on pages 50–52.

⁹⁶ Heal, *Tradition and Transformation*.

⁹⁷ Heal, *Tradition and Transformation*, 81–110. See also Heal, “Joseph as a Type of Christ”, 29–49.

⁹⁸ Heal, *Tradition and Transformation*, 269–272.

⁹⁹ Burkitt, *The Early Syriac Lectionary System*. On pages 8–10, the specified readings are Genesis 37:1–36 (Thursday), Genesis 40:1–23 (Friday), Genesis 42:3–43:14 (Saturday), and Genesis 43:15–45:13 (Sunday).

Easter is all about the most important part of the life of Jesus: his betrayal, suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Second, it demonstrates that the early Syriac Christians must have been deeply aware of the Joseph-Jesus typology, for by participating in the Easter liturgies and listening to the readings from the Joseph story, they would have recognised the typological connection between Joseph and Jesus, and if the readings themselves were not sufficient enough to clarify the Joseph-Jesus typology, then the homilies following the readings would certainly have achieved that aim. It is, of course, impossible to know the content of the homilies on Joseph that were delivered after the readings from the Joseph story each year in the innumerable Syriac communities, but we can, nevertheless, be quite sure that they included a christological construal of Joseph. In fact, as demonstrated by Nāf and Heal, the homilies of Ps Ephrem and Ps Narsai, and to these we can add the homilies of Jacob and Narsai, do construe Joseph as the type of Jesus.¹⁰⁰ In my study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition, I will use the homilies of Ps Ephrem, Ps Narsai, Narsai, and Jacob, among other sources, all of which will be outlined below in section 1.3.

1.2.2. Joseph in the Quran

The Quran recounts its own Joseph story in chapter 12, entitled *Sūrat Yūsuf*, a late Meccan chapter.¹⁰¹ In *Sūrat Yūsuf*, Joseph is depicted neither as the ideal power figure, nor as the type of Jesus, but as the prophet of God.¹⁰² The Joseph story in the Quran has been studied

¹⁰⁰ Emphasising the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition, I do not want to give the impression that the typological reading of the Joseph story was the only kind of reading that interested the Syriac authors, for in their retellings, we find, among other things, paraenetic discourses, spiritual lessons, theological discussions, and exegetical elaborations.

¹⁰¹ Nöldeke, *The History of the Quran*, 124.

¹⁰² Joseph is mentioned twice outside *Sūrat Yūsuf*. In Q 6:84–90, Joseph appears among biblical figures from both the Old Testament and the New Testament, such as Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Jonah, Zachariah, John, and Jesus, whom God “guided on the straight path” and “gave the Scripture, wisdom, and prophethood.” In Q 40:30–34, a secret believer from the Pharaoh’s family by the time of Moses mentions Joseph in an address to his people, saying to them, “Joseph came to you before with clear signs, but you never ceased to doubt the message he brought you.” Both Q 6:84–90 and Q 40:30–34 belong to the late Meccan period.

by many scholars, the earliest of whom, Geiger, Speyer, and Torrey, focused on its sources and argued that it reflects Jewish literary traditions about Joseph, generally ignoring the Syriac tradition.¹⁰³ In 1956, John Macdonald offered a study of the quranic Joseph story in comparison with the biblical story, post-biblical Jewish works, mainly *Genesis Rabba*, and later Muslim commentaries,¹⁰⁴ in which he aimed at “unravelling its distinctive aspects,”¹⁰⁵ concluding that, in the quranic story, “emphasis has been laid on features of Joseph’s history which might illustrate Divine retribution and providence.”¹⁰⁶ Similar studies have been offered by M. S. Stern,¹⁰⁷ Anthony Johns,¹⁰⁸ Abdel Haleem,¹⁰⁹ and Roberto Tottoli,¹¹⁰ who, in contrast to Macdonald, explored more fully the particularity of the quranic Joseph story, concluding not only that it illustrates divine retribution and providence, but also that it was meant to encourage Muhammad and his followers in their tribulations in Mecca at the hands of their opponents, to let their opponents know that the final triumph will be theirs, and to confirm that the religious message of Muhammad stands in line with that of Joseph. Consequently, according to the aforementioned scholars, with whom I agree, the quranic story depicts Joseph as the model of Muhammad,¹¹¹ or to use Tottoli’s words:

¹⁰³ Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, 111–118; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, 187–224; Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, 109–113. Occasionally, Speyer refers to the Syriac tradition, allowing for the possibility that, in some cases, the quranic story may reflect Syriac literary traditions about Joseph.

¹⁰⁴ Macdonald, “Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary” (Part One), 113–131; “Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary” (Part Two), 207–224.

¹⁰⁵ Macdonald, “Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary” (Part One), 116.

¹⁰⁶ Macdonald, “Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary” (Part Two), 224.

¹⁰⁷ Stern, “Muhammad and Joseph”, 193–204.

¹⁰⁸ Johns, “Joseph in the Quran”, 29–55.

¹⁰⁹ Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Quran*, 138–157.

¹¹⁰ Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Quran*, 3–16, 28–31.

¹¹¹ See also Hämeen-Anttila, “We Will Tell You the Best of Stories”, 31–32; Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 251–255; Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 74–76; Robinson, *Discovering the Quran*, 148–149, 157–158.

The aim of the story is to emphasise the nature of Joseph's mission, who was a prophet, and his final victory over the schemes of his brothers and his power over the Egyptians. It is because of these characteristics that he is to be considered a figure who was similar to Muhammad who was also constrained to escape to Medina, but by the end of his life came to know triumph and, like Joseph, was generous with his brothers, the Meccans, who had rejected and despised him.¹¹²

As Stern,¹¹³ Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila,¹¹⁴ and Joseph Witztum have noted,¹¹⁵ Joseph's religious proclamation in prison (Q 12:37–40) is a striking piece of evidence that the Quran formulated its own Joseph story with Muhammad in mind. Before interpreting the dreams of his fellow prisoners, Joseph voices his proclamation as follows:

I can tell you what this means before any meal arrives: this is part of what my Lord has taught me. I reject the faith of those who disbelieve in God and deny the life to come, and I follow the faith of my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because of God's grace to us and to all mankind, we would never worship anything beside God, but most people are ungrateful. Fellow prisoners, would many diverse gods be better than God the One, the All Powerful? [No indeed!] All those you worship instead of Him are mere names you and your forefathers have invented, names for which God has sent down no sanction. Authority

¹¹² Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Quran*, 31.

¹¹³ Stern, "Muhammad and Joseph", 204.

¹¹⁴ Hämeen-Anttila, "We Will Tell You the Best of Stories", 27–28.

¹¹⁵ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 253–254.

belongs to God alone, and He orders you to worship none but Him: this is the true faith, though most people do not realize it.¹¹⁶

Stern comments:

These words seem strange in the mouth of Joseph. When had he ever been of a people who did not follow the faith of the Hebrew patriarchs? Yet, for Muhammad these words would have great meaning. He is, in some way, declaring a break with an important dimension of his past identity.¹¹⁷

Agreeing with Stern, Hämeen-Anttila says that Joseph's proclamation has "enormous weight as it propagates the same message as the whole of the Quran."¹¹⁸ Similarly, commenting on Joseph's proclamation, Witztum states, "Unparalleled in Genesis, not relevant to the prisoners' question, and odd coming from Joseph who never adhered to another religion, these words seem very fitting for Muhammad."¹¹⁹

To sum up, the Quran depicts Joseph as the model of Muhammad, and in this sense, one can speak of Joseph as the type of Muhammad.¹²⁰ Against this backdrop — and bearing in mind that the Quran is aware of Syriac stories of Christian saints (the youths of Ephesus), Syriac retellings of New Testament parables (Jesus' eschatological parable of the sheep and goats), and Syriac readings of New Testament figures (Mary), participates in them, and addresses their christological framework — could it be the case that the Quran is aware of

¹¹⁶ Q 12:37–40.

¹¹⁷ Stern, "Muhammad and Joseph", 204.

¹¹⁸ Hämeen-Anttila, "We Will Tell You the Best of Stories", 27.

¹¹⁹ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 253–254.

¹²⁰ See Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 76, and see also the discussion on typology in the Quran by Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 354–358.

the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition, according to which Joseph is the type of Jesus, participates in it and addresses its christological typology? Before taking a closer look at this question in the next subsection, I would like to briefly mention that recent scholars have studied the quranic Joseph story on the basis of purely literary critical studies. While Angelika Neuwirth, Hämeen-Anttila, and Johns have studied the quranic story's structure and stylistic devices,¹²¹ Ayaz Afsar and Mustansir Mir have studied its plot, themes, motifs, and characters.¹²²

1.2.3. The Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition

As noted above, Geiger, Speyer, and Torrey argued that the quranic Joseph story reflects Jewish literary traditions about Joseph, generally ignoring the Syriac tradition, and later scholars, such as Macdonald and Stern, simply followed their lead.¹²³ In his insightful study of the quranic Joseph story in comparison with both Jewish and Syriac sources, Witztum convincingly demonstrates, against the consensus of previous scholarship, that the quranic story is closer to the Syriac tradition than to the Jewish tradition.¹²⁴ Concluding his study, Witztum states:

¹²¹ Neuwirth, "Zur Struktur der Yusuf-Sure", 123–152; Hämeen-Anttila, "We Will Tell You the Best of Stories", 7–32; Johns, "The Quranic presentation of the Joseph story", *AQ*, 37–70; "Joseph in the Quran", 29–55.

¹²² Afsar, "Plot Motifs in Joseph/Yusuf Story", 167–189; Mir, "The quranic story of Joseph", 1–15; "Irony in the Quran", 173–187.

¹²³ In his study, Macdonald completely ignores the Syriac tradition, assuming that, on a close examination of the quranic Joseph story, "it becomes clear that the Prophet was acquainted with traditions not contained in the Bible, but found in later Jewish legends about Joseph, some of them known to Muslim commentators." ("Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary" (Part One), 113.) As for Stern, he holds, "The ultimate origin of most of the biblical stories in Mecca was the Jewish folk tradition." ("Muhammad and Joseph", 193.)

¹²⁴ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 188–256. For a concise version of Witztum's study, see his article, "Joseph among the Ishmaelites", *NPQ*, 425–448. For a recent study of the quranic Joseph story in comparison with both Jewish and Syriac sources, which is similar in style to the studies of Geiger, Speyer, and Torrey, and which closely follows Witztum's study, see Reynolds, *The Quran and the Bible*, 361–386.

In this chapter as in the previous ones I have argued that a combined examination of motifs, literary form, lexical issues, and typological function suggests that a Quranic story, in this case that of Joseph, is closely related to the Syriac tradition... Some conclusions are in order. First, the evidence suggests that the Quran was aware of Christian Syriac traditions concerning Joseph... There are of course elements in Q 12 which are not found in the Syriac sources. My argument, therefore, is not that the Syriac tradition provides the entire background for the Quranic Joseph story, but that it played a major role in its formation. Moreover, we cannot truly understand what the Quran is doing without it. What the Quran is trying to achieve only becomes clear when it is set against earlier versions which were current at the time. This study suggests that existing scholarship with its focus on Jewish sources does not provide this background adequately.¹²⁵

Based on the study of Witztum, we can be certain that the Quran is aware of and participates in the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition, and since Syriac authors construe Joseph as the type of Jesus, we can be equally certain that the Quran is aware of and participates in the typological construal of the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition. Moreover, given that the Quran addresses the christological framework of Syriac stories of Christian saints (the youths of Ephesus), Syriac retellings of New Testament parables (Jesus' eschatological parable of the sheep and goats), and Syriac readings of New Testament figures (Mary), and given that the Quran depicts Joseph as the model of Muhammad, we should not be surprised — or, perhaps, we should expect — that the Quran addresses the typological construal of the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition. Although many scholars have studied the Joseph

¹²⁵ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 255–256.

story in the Quran from different perspectives, none has, to the best of my knowledge, explored this perspective yet, a perspective that, if true, would be important for our understanding of the Quran's prophetology, and it is from such a perspective that I intend to study the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition.

Recall that the Bible was not available in Arabic by the time of the Quran, yet centuries before that, Jewish and Syriac literary traditions were circulating orally in Arabic throughout Arabia.¹²⁶ Consequently, Arabic versions of Jewish and Syriac literary traditions about Joseph were widespread throughout Arabia, including Mecca, in the seventh century, of which the emergent Quran was aware and in which it participated for the purpose of voicing its own understanding of the Joseph story. A close reading of the quranic story reveals, on the one hand, that it follows the basic storyline of the biblical story but, on the other hand, that it departs from the biblical story in terms of narrative details. That is to say, the quranic story omits details found in the biblical story and adds details not found in the biblical story. How are we to explain the quranic omissions of biblical details and the quranic additions of extrabiblical details?

If we consider the quranic omissions of biblical details about Joseph in light of the Syriac tradition, then an interesting pattern of omission appears. The quranic story frequently omits biblical details that Syriac authors use to establish a typological link between Joseph and Jesus. This would suggest that the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

As for the quranic additions of extrabiblical details about Joseph, by means of which the Quran formulates its own distinctive retelling of the Joseph story, some of them reflect extrabiblical details that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition. How are we to understand the quranic story's participation in Syriac extrabiblical details that are

¹²⁶ See footnote 75.

related to the Joseph-Jesus typology, given that it reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition?

1.3. SOURCES AND STRUCTURE

1.3.1. The Jewish sources on Joseph

The Jewish sources on Joseph that will be used in my study are the following:

1. *Jubilees*: Anonymous retelling of Genesis from the middle of the second century BC which was originally written in Hebrew but has survived only in Greek, Latin, and Geez translations. The complete text of *Jubilees* exists only in Geez.¹²⁷
2. *On Joseph*: Retelling of the Joseph story written in Greek by Philo (d ca 40 or 50).¹²⁸
3. *Jewish Antiquities*: Multivolume work written in Greek by Josephus (d ca 100). The first four books retell the events of the Pentateuch, and as for the Joseph story, it is retold in the second book.¹²⁹
4. *Genesis Rabba*: Collection of rabbinic exegesis on Genesis written predominantly in Hebrew in Palestine. *Genesis Rabba* is usually dated to the fifth century.¹³⁰

In addition, I will make recourse to the work of Dirk Rottzoll who has collected rabbinic traditions about Joseph found in the Jerusalem Talmud (early fifth century) and the

¹²⁷ For the Geez text, see Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text*. For an English translation, see Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*.

¹²⁸ For the Greek text, paralleled by an English translation, see Colson, *Philo*, 136–271.

¹²⁹ For the Greek text of the first four books, paralleled by an English translation, see Thackeray, *Josephus*.

¹³⁰ For the Hebrew text, see Theodor, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*. For an English translation, see Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*.

Babylonian Talmud (early sixth century).¹³¹ Occasionally, I will turn to pre-quranic Targums.¹³²

1.3.2. The Syriac sources on Joseph

The Syriac sources on Joseph that will be used in my study are the following:

1. *Demonstrations*: Artistic prose work written in Syriac by Aphrahat between 337 and 345. The *Demonstrations* consists of 23 demonstrations. In the twenty-first demonstration, Aphrahat develops a remarkable Joseph-Jesus typology by means of a rather complex syncretism.¹³³
2. *Commentary on Genesis*: Prose commentary on Genesis written in Syriac by Ephrem (d 373).¹³⁴
3. *Syriac History of Joseph*: Prose retelling of the Joseph story written in Syriac and wrongly attributed to Basil of Caesarea. The *Syriac History of Joseph* dates from the fourth century or early fifth century.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Rottzoll, *Rabbinischer Kommentar zum Buch Genesis*. Since many of the rabbinic traditions about Joseph in both Talmuds are to be found in our aforementioned Jewish sources, I will refer to Rottzoll only when he provides traditions about Joseph not already found in our aforementioned Jewish sources.

¹³² Targum Onkelos (Drazin, *Onkelos on the Torah*); Targum Neofiti (McNamara, *Targum Neofiti*).

¹³³ For the Syriac text, see Parisot, *Aphraatis*. For an English translation, see Lehto, *The Demonstrations*.

¹³⁴ For the Syriac text, see Tonneau, *Sancti Ephraem Syri*. For an English translation, see Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*.

¹³⁵ The first edition of *Syriac History of Joseph* was published in two parts — the first in 1893 by Magnus Weinberg and the second in 1895 by Samuel Wolf Link — on the basis of one manuscript, Berlin Syriac 74, dated to 1695. The text of *Syriac History of Joseph* begins on folio 24r and consists of 28 leaves. Due to the loss of a leaf after folio 37, there is a lacuna in the text of *Syriac History of Joseph* and consequently in the published edition of Weinberg and Link. Since *Syriac History of Joseph* is preserved in four other manuscripts, dated to a time between 1600 and 1800, Heal was able to fill the gap in the edition of Weinberg and Link. For an English translation of *Syriac History of Joseph*, see Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 85–120.

In addition to the sources in prose on Joseph, I will use homilies in verse on Joseph by four Syriac authors:

4. Ps Ephrem (fourth century or early fifth century) who composed a cycle of twelve homilies.¹³⁶
5. Ps Narsai (fifth century) who composed two homilies.¹³⁷
6. Narsai (d ca 500) who composed one homily.¹³⁸
7. Jacob of Serugh (d 521) who composed a cycle of ten homilies.¹³⁹

I will also refer to the Peshitta version of the Joseph story.¹⁴⁰

1.3.3. The structure of the dissertation

In chapter 2, I consider quranic omissions of biblical details about Joseph in light of the Syriac tradition, and I argue that, by means of its frequent omissions of biblical details about Joseph that Syriac authors use to establish a typological link between Joseph and Jesus, the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

In chapter 3, I look at quranic additions of Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology with the purpose of exploring how the quranic story participates in them, given that it reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

In chapter 4, I examine the character, style, and lexicon of the quranic Joseph story in comparison with the Syriac homilies on Joseph, and I argue that, in terms of its character,

¹³⁶ For the Syriac text, see Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*.

¹³⁷ For the Syriac text, see Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 521–606.

¹³⁸ For the Syriac text, see Mingana, *Narsai*, 265–288.

¹³⁹ For the Syriac text, see Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:493–579.

¹⁴⁰ Jansma (ed), *The Old Testament in Syriac*.

style, and lexicon, the quranic Joseph story is remarkably similar to the Syriac homilies on Joseph.

In chapter 5, I draw some conclusions from my historical and literary study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition.

In chapter 6, I share my comparative theological reflection on my study of the Joseph story in the Quran.

2. QURANIC OMISSIONS OF BIBLICAL DETAILS

2.1. JOSEPH THE SHEPHERD

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.¹

In the opening of the biblical story, we are told that Joseph was a shepherd and that he used to pasture his father's flock with his brothers. The biblical detail that Joseph was a shepherd is mentioned in both Jewish and Syriac sources, but it is omitted in the quranic story.

Seeing in Joseph the ideal statesman, Philo states that the training of statesmanship "was first given to him at about the age of seventeen by the lore of the shepherd's craft, which corresponds closely to the lore of the statesmanship."² In *Genesis Rabba*, a number of similarities between Jacob and Joseph are listed, one of which is that both of them were shepherds.³ As for the Syriac authors, while Ephrem and Ps Ephrem mention the biblical detail that Joseph was a shepherd without further elaboration,⁴ Aphrahat and Jacob construe it typologically, which may explain why the quranic story omits it.

Aphrahat writes, "The persecuted Joseph was the image of the persecuted Jesus... Joseph was a shepherd, along with his brothers, and Jesus is the Chief Shepherd."⁵ The figure of shepherd, which is frequent in early Syriac literature, encompasses several connotations.⁶ In

¹ Gen 37:2.

² Colson, *Philo*, 141.

³ Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 2:773.

⁴ Ephrem (Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 182); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 28).

⁵ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405.

⁶ For a survey of the figure of shepherd and other related figures, see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 154–204.

the quoted passage from Aphrahat's twenty-first demonstration, Joseph is called *rā'yā* 'a shepherd', whereas Jesus, of whom Joseph is an image, is called *rabb rā'awātā* 'the Chief Shepherd'.⁷ What does Aphrahat mean by calling Jesus the Chief Shepherd? Addressing bishops, Aphrahat states:

You are brave shepherds, who lead their flocks to good pasture, and our saviour Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, the Light in the darkness, the Lamp on the lampstand who gives light to the world and has pardoned its sins... For he is the Fountain of life; we who are thirsty drink from him. He is a Table full of rich food and abundance; we who are hungry eat and enjoy ourselves... He is the Gate of the kingdom, which is opened for all who enter.⁸

O shepherds, disciples of our Lord, tend the flock and lead [them] well... Do not be like the ignorant and foolish shepherd who, in his foolishness, is unable to tend the sheep... But when the Leader of the shepherds comes, he will condemn the ignorant and foolish shepherds who did not provide well for his companions. But the one who tends the flock and leads it well and who brings the flock intact to the shepherd is called a good and useful servant.⁹

Aphrahat uses the title of Chief Shepherd to denote the divinity and salvific life of Jesus, of whom Joseph, being a shepherd, is an image.

Interpreting Gen 37:12–17, according to which Joseph was sent to care for the flock and to seek the peace of his brothers and supply them with food, Jacob says:

⁷ Chief Shepherd, as a title, is used once in the New Testament, in 1 Petr 5:4, denoting Christ.

⁸ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 323.

⁹ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 221.

Joseph was sent to care for the flock / like the Son who came to save the rational flock. / Joseph was sent to seek the peace of his brothers / like Christ who made peace along his way. / ... / Joseph brought food with him from his father to his brothers / like Christ who came to heal many.¹⁰

Just as Joseph the shepherd was sent to care for the flock and to seek the peace of his brothers and supply them with food, so too Jesus the shepherd was sent to the world to save humanity and to make peace and heal many. So, the question is, why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that Joseph was a shepherd? It is worth mentioning that the notion that Old Testament figures were shepherds is not completely absent in the Quran, for, in chapter 28, a late Meccan chapter, we are told that Moses was a shepherd for a number of years (Q 28:22–27). So, again, why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that Joseph was a shepherd? I suggest that, by omitting the biblical detail that Joseph was a shepherd, the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of it in the Syriac tradition.

2.2. JOSEPH BROUGHT A BAD REPORT OF HIS BROTHERS TO JACOB

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.¹¹

Having told us that Joseph was a shepherd and that he used to pasture his father's flock with his brothers, the biblical story goes on to tell us that Joseph brought a bad report of his

¹⁰ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:504.

¹¹ Gen 37:2.

brothers to Jacob. This biblical detail is mentioned in *Genesis Rabba*,¹² as well as by Ephrem, Ps Ephrem, and Jacob, but it is omitted in the quranic story. While Ephrem mentions the biblical detail without further elaboration,¹³ Ps Ephrem and Jacob seem to use it to reinforce their typological construal of Joseph.

In the opening of their homiletic retellings of the Joseph story, Ps Ephrem and Jacob emphasise that there was a special bond between Joseph and Jacob that had to do with Jesus. Ps Ephrem says, “Joseph put on / a virtuous way of life. / He was clothed in his father’s image, / truly fearing his Lord.”¹⁴ Similarly, Jacob says that Joseph’s upbringing, unlike that of his brothers, was godly because he, unlike his brothers, was brought up by Jacob.¹⁵ What is more, we are told that both Joseph and Jacob carried the mysteries of Jesus.¹⁶ Interestingly, Jacob goes on to tell us that Joseph’s godly upbringing by Jacob had to do with Jesus:

The mysteries that were carried by Joseph did not allow him / to grow up in the wickedness that the sons of handmaidens were living. / He had his mind fixed on his father, / and from him, he learnt how to conduct himself wisely. / The types of the Son kept Joseph’s sight on his father’s virtuous life, / and he did not look here and there, lest he be troubled.¹⁷

Once the christological bond between Joseph and Jacob has been emphasised, Ps Ephrem and Jacob recount the biblical detail that Joseph brought a bad report of his brothers to

¹² In *Genesis Rabba*, Joseph’s bad report is viewed as a wrongdoing due to which he suffered many troubles later in his life (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 774–775).

¹³ Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 182.

¹⁴ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 5.

¹⁵ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:494. Jacob explains that Joseph’s brothers were brought up wickedly in the house of Laban in Haran under the influence of idolatry. Compare Gen 29–31.

¹⁶ Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 4, 12–13); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:493, 503).

¹⁷ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:494.

Jacob,¹⁸ suggesting that the action of Joseph was related to the christological bond between him and Jacob. Consequently, it seems to me that, in this context, the omission of the biblical detail that Joseph brought a bad report of his brothers to Jacob would entail a reaction to the typological implication of the biblical detail in the homiletic retellings of Ps Ephrem and Jacob, which is, perhaps, why the quranic story omits it.

2.3. JOSEPH THE FAVOURED SON OF JACOB

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.¹⁹

According to the biblical story, Jacob loved Joseph more than any other of his sons. Jacob's favouritism of Joseph is mentioned by Philo, Josephus, and in *Genesis Rabba*,²⁰ as well as by Aphrahat, Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, Narsai, and Jacob,²¹ but it is omitted in the quranic story. In fact, by having the brothers say to each other, "Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we are,"²² the quranic story seems to explicitly disclaim Jacob's favouritism of Joseph. The question is, why would the quranic story disclaim Jacob's favouritism of

¹⁸ Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 6); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:494).

¹⁹ Gen 37:3–4.

²⁰ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 143); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 173); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 775–777).

²¹ Aphrahat (Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405); Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 94); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 7); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 266–267); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:494, 503).

²² Q 12:8.

Joseph? Before offering my answer, let us look at what our Jewish and Syriac sources have to say about Jacob's favouritism of Joseph.

To begin with, according to the biblical story, Jacob loved Joseph more than any other of his sons because "he was the son of his old age."²³ Turning to Philo and Josephus,²⁴ we learn that Joseph was favoured by Jacob by virtue of his good character, and this is also the explanation provided by Ps Ephrem and Narsai.²⁵ As for Ps Basil, he leaves us with no explanation of Jacob's special love for Joseph.²⁶ In *Genesis Rabba*, we find two explanations of Jacob's favouritism of Joseph: the first has to do with Joseph resembling Jacob, and the second has to do with Jacob trusting Joseph.²⁷ It does not seem to me that any of these explanations of Jacob's favouritism of Joseph would be problematic for the quranic story. However, the typological construal of Jacob's favouritism of Joseph in Aphrahat's twenty-first demonstration and Jacob's second homily may be problematic for the quranic story.

According to Aphrahat, Jacob's special love for Joseph typifies that "Jesus was his Father's Loved and Cherished One."²⁸ As for Jacob, he says that Jacob loved Joseph more than any other of his sons "because he saw that Joseph was clothed in the beautiful mysteries of the Son."²⁹ Consequently, I suggest that, by omitting the biblical detail of Jacob's favouritism of Joseph, and by having the brothers say that Jacob has two favoured sons, the quranic story seems to react to the typological construal of Jacob's favouritism of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

²³ Gen 37:3.

²⁴ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 143); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 173).

²⁵ For a detailed discussion, see Heal, *Tradition and Transformation*, 113–121.

²⁶ Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 94

²⁷ Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 775.

²⁸ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405.

²⁹ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:503.

2.4. JOSEPH'S ROBE

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.³⁰

Joseph's robe, or his clothing in general, which is an important motif in the biblical story and in the quranic story, is mentioned at a number of junctures in the two stories. In some cases, Joseph's clothing is mentioned in similar contexts: when the brothers bring Joseph's robe or shirt back to Jacob to show that he has been killed (Gen 37:31–33; Q 12:17–18), and when Potiphar's wife uses Joseph's garment or shirt to accuse him of attempted assault (Gen 39:11–18; Q 12:25–28). In other cases, Joseph's clothing is mentioned in different contexts: while the quranic story mentions it when telling us that Jacob's lost eyesight was recovered when Joseph's shirt was brought to him and placed on his face (Q 12:96), the biblical story mentions it when telling us that Jacob made a robe for Joseph (Gen 37:3), that the brothers stripped Joseph of his robe before throwing him into the pit (Gen 37:23–24), and that Joseph was clothed in fine garments when the Pharaoh raised him to power in Egypt (Gen 41:42).

The quranic mentions of Joseph's clothing in Q 12:17–18, 12:25–28, and 12:96 will be considered in the next chapter. In this chapter, which is devoted to the quranic omissions of biblical details, I will deal with the quranic omissions of Joseph's clothing. In following sections of this chapter, I will look at the quranic omissions of Joseph's robe in Gen 37:23–24 and his fine garments in Gen 41:42. In this section, I will examine the quranic omission of the biblical detail that Jacob made a robe for Joseph (Gen 37:3).

³⁰ Gen 37:3–4.

The question is, why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that Jacob made a robe for Joseph? To begin with, the biblical detail is mentioned in both Jewish and Syriac sources.³¹ Moreover, suggesting that the quranic story omits the biblical detail simply because it portrays Jacob in a negative manner, in that it has him favour Joseph above his other sons, is not fully convincing, for obviously, in the quranic story, Joseph is not only the son of Jacob, but also the prophet of God, who, on that account, deserves a special favour, which both Jacob and the brothers acknowledge.³² Why, then, would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that Jacob made a robe for Joseph? It seems that the typological construal of the biblical detail in the Syriac tradition may explain why the quranic story omits it.

In his twenty-first demonstration, Aphrahat states that “the father of Joseph clothed him in a long-sleeved tunic, and the Father of Jesus clothed him in a body from the Virgin.”³³ In his first homily on Joseph, Jacob says:

The truth compelled Jacob to depict the crucifixion in Joseph, / and therefore, he made a long-sleeved robe and clothe him in it. / In his love, he made a long-armed garment for his son / to portray the great cross of the Son of God. / In a great mystery, he stretched out the long sleeves on the young man, / and this was as if he extended him on a cross while clothing him.³⁴

Both Aphrahat and Jacob construe the biblical detail that Jacob made a robe for Joseph typologically. However, while Aphrahat has the biblical detail typify the incarnation, Jacob

³¹ *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 775); Aphrahat (Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 94); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 19); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 269); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:494).

³² Interpreting Joseph’s dream, Jacob says to Joseph that he is chosen and blessed by God (Q 12:6), and later in the story, the brothers say to Joseph that God did favour him over all of them (Q 12:91).

³³ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405.

³⁴ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:494.

has it typify the crucifixion. I suggest that, by omitting the biblical detail that Jacob made a robe for Joseph, the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of the biblical detail in the Syriac tradition.

Interestingly, it seems that, elsewhere, the Quran discloses its awareness of the christological significance of the imagery of clothing in the Syriac tradition, and if this is the case, then we should not be surprised that the quranic story is aware of the typological construal of Joseph's robe, which is thematically related to the imagery of clothing. Let me spell this out.

The quranic story of the fall of Adam and Eve states that they were wearing clothes before the fall but lost them at the fall (Q 7:20–27; 20:116–123). By contrast, the biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve states that they were naked before the fall (Gen 2:25) and only realised their nakedness at the fall because their eyes were opened (Gen 3:7). The notion of Adam and Eve wearing clothes before the fall but losing them at the fall is the starting point of the Syriac imagery of clothing.³⁵ The Syriac imagery of clothing was developed by Syriac authors, such as Ephrem, Narsai, and Jacob, to produce a creative and complete expression of the course of salvation history,³⁶ which, according to the imagery, consists of the following elements:

- (1) Before the fall, Adam and Eve were clothed in robes of glory and light.
- (2) At the fall, Adam and Eve were stripped of their robes of glory and light.
- (3) At the incarnation, the Son of God became man to reclothe the naked state of mankind in the robe of glory and light.

³⁵ For a detailed treatment of the imagery of clothing in the Syriac tradition, see Brock, "Clothing Metaphors", 11–38.

³⁶ Brock, "Clothing Metaphors", 11, notes that "while individual elements of this imagery are indeed quite often to be found in Greek and Latin writers, it would appear that it is in the Syriac tradition that the imagery is the most consistently and fully developed."

- (4) Through his baptism, the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, sanctified all baptismal water and placed the robe of glory and light there for each Christian to put on at his or her baptism.³⁷

Some conclusions are in order. First, (1) and (2) are clearly reflected in the quranic story of the fall of Adam and Eve, and since these elements do not seem to exist in Jewish sources predating the Quran,³⁸ we can conclude that the Quran is aware of the Syriac imagery of clothing. Second, (3) and (4) are obviously christological,³⁹ and since they are inseparably related to (1) and (2), of which the Quran is aware, we can conclude that the christological significance of the Syriac imagery of clothing is known to the Quran. Third, that the Quran reflects the Syriac imagery of clothing does not mean that it affirms the christological significance of the imagery. In fact, a closer reading of Q 7:20–27 and 20:116–123 suggests that the Quran addresses the christological significance of the Syriac imagery of clothing and offers an alternative understanding of it.⁴⁰ Fourth, the salvific understanding of the Christian baptismal rite, emphasised by element (4) in the Syriac imagery of clothing, is not unknown to the Quran, for in chapter 2 of the Quran, verses 135 to 138, we find not only an argument against Jewish and Christian claims of salvific exclusivism, but also an awareness

³⁷ Brock, “Clothing Metaphors”, 12.

³⁸ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 95–103.

³⁹ Aphrahat even calls Christ “the Garment and the Coat of Glory in which the victorious are clothed.” (Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 323.)

⁴⁰ In the Syriac tradition, the clothes of Adam and Eve are described as robes of glory and light because such a supernatural description of their clothes is obviously appropriate and useful for the christological construal of the imagery. By contrast, the Quran renders the clothes of Adam and Eve as common — there is no mention of glory and light — and it states that they were given to them by God to cover their nakedness. By downplaying the supernatural aspect of the clothes of Adam and Eve, the Quran seems to reject the christological construal of the imagery, and at the same time, it offers an alternative understanding of the issue at hand: the clothes of Adam and Eve were common and given to them by God as covering for their nakedness.

of the Christian belief that baptism is a salvific rite.⁴¹ Fifth, given that the Quran is aware of the christological significance of the Syriac imagery of clothing, we should not be surprised that the quranic story is aware of the christological significance of Joseph's robe, which is thematically related to the imagery of clothing.

2.5. JOSEPH'S FIRST DREAM

Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?"

He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed

⁴¹ Reminding its audience of the faith of Abraham, *millat Ibrāhīm*, who is said to have been neither a Jew nor a Christian yet rightly guided because he was a monotheist, a true believer in the one true God, as were all of the prophets of God, the Quran provides its adherents with an argument against Jewish and Christian claims of salvific exclusivism and invites both Jews and Christians to unity with its emergent community who, it is argued, follows the faith of Abraham, *millat Ibrāhīm* (Q 2:135–137). The Quran goes on to describe *millat Ibrāhīm* as *ṣibġat allāh* 'the dye of God', rhetorically asking its audience, "And whose dye is better than that of God? We worship him alone!" (Q 2:138, translation mine) Interestingly, the Arabic *ṣibġat* is a calque of the Syriac *maṣbū'ītā* 'dye', a metaphor that, in the Christian tradition, denotes the salvific rite of Christian baptism. By using the metaphor of *ṣibġat allāh*, 'the dye of God' or 'the baptism of God', the Quran displays its awareness of the Christian belief that baptism, *maṣbū'ītā*, is a salvific rite. For a further reading, see Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 192; Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 4:1648; Goddard, "Baptism", *EQ*, 1:200; and particularly Anthony, "Further Notes on the Word Ṣibgha in Quran 2:138", 117–129.

come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?”

So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.⁴²

In the biblical story, Joseph has two dreams. The quranic story mentions Joseph’s second dream but omits his first dream. Joseph’s first dream is mentioned in all of our sources except for *Jubilees*.⁴³ The question is, why would the quranic story omit the first dream? Is it, perhaps, because the dream, in which the brothers (represented by their sheaves) bow down to Joseph (represented by his sheaf that rose in the midst), implies an embarrassment to the quranic belief that God alone is worthy of worship? I do not think so, for it is implied elsewhere in the quranic story that bowing down to Joseph is an act of revering a future ruler, not an act of worshipping a deity (Q 12:99–101). Besides, in the quranic account of the second dream, Joseph is bowed down to by celestial bodies (Q 12:4), which means that the quranic story does not find it problematic to ascribe such reverence to Joseph. Why, then, would the quranic story omit the first dream? It seems to me that a reasonable answer is found in Jacob’s first homily on Joseph, in which Joseph’s sheaf is interpreted as the type of the eucharist:

Joseph’s sheaf depicts the body of our Lord, / of which all longing nations were satisfied. / “I am the bread and whoever eats of me will not hunger again, / for in me is fullness and life for the one who is worthy of me.” / This bread came down from above for the hungry nations, / and there is no fullness in any bread

⁴² Gen 37:5–11.

⁴³ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 143–144); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 173); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 776–777); Aphrahat (Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405); Ephrem (Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 182); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 94); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 7–10); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 522); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 270–271); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:497–498).

other than in him. / Joseph's sheaf rose up / to show where the life-giving bread is.⁴⁴

I suggest that, by omitting Joseph's first dream, the quranic story reacts to Jacob's eucharistic interpretation of the dream. Moreover, the so-called table episode of the Quran (5:112–115) refers to Jesus' institution of the eucharist.⁴⁵ In this, they are in line with the scholarly consensus.⁴⁶ Given that the table episode alludes to Jesus' institution of the eucharist, we should not be surprised that the quranic story is aware of and reacts to Jacob's eucharistic interpretation of Joseph's first dream.

2.6. JACOB SENT JOSEPH TO HIS BROTHERS

Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.⁴⁷

According to the biblical story, Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers, who were pasturing the flock, to inquire of their and the flock's welfare. The quranic story not only omits the biblical detail of the sending of Joseph, but also has the brothers ask Jacob for permission to take Joseph out so that he can play, promising that they will take care of him:

⁴⁴ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:498–499.

⁴⁵ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The other Prophet*, 106–109.

⁴⁶ Radscheit, "Table", *EQ*, 5:188–191.

⁴⁷ Gen 37:12–14.

They said to their father, “Why do you not trust us with Joseph? We wish him well. Send him with us tomorrow and he will enjoy himself and play — we will take good care of him.”⁴⁸

In the next chapter, I will say more about this extrabiblical detail and its immediate context, but for now, suffice it to say that, in the quranic story, it is not Jacob who, of his own accord, sends Joseph to his brothers, but it is the brothers who ask Jacob for permission to take Joseph out. Also, note that, while the biblical story depicts Joseph as mature enough to go out alone and search for his brothers and the flock to make sure that they are well, the quranic story has the brothers depict Joseph as a child who needs to play and be taken care of.

The question is, why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail of the sending of Joseph? To begin with, the biblical detail is mentioned in all of our sources except for *Jubilees*.⁴⁹ Two of our Syriac authors, Aphrahat and Jacob, construe the biblical detail typologically, which may explain why the quranic story omits it.

In his twenty-first demonstration, Aphrahat links the episode of the sending of Joseph with the parable of the vineyard (Mt 21:33–46; Mk 12:1–12; Lk 20:9–19), an important christological parable in which Jesus, the Son of God and the heir of the kingdom of God, is sent by his Father to his own but is rejected by some of them and put to death:

⁴⁸ Q12:11–12.

⁴⁹ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 143); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 177); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 779); Aphrahat (Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405); Ephrem (Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 182); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 95); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 20–21); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 523); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 271); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:504).

When Joseph's father sent him to visit his brothers, they saw that he was coming and they made plans to kill him. When his Father sent Jesus to visit his brothers, they said, "This is the heir. Let us kill him!"⁵⁰

In his second homily on Joseph, Jacob provides two interpretations of the sending of Joseph. In the first interpretation, following Aphrahat, he links the sending of Joseph with the christological parable of the vineyard.⁵¹ In the second interpretation, he reads the sending of Joseph as the type of the salvific life of Jesus:

Joseph was sent to care for the flock, / and the Son came to save the rational flock. / Joseph was sent to seek the peace of his brothers, / and Christ made peace along his way. / ... / Joseph brought food with him from his father to his brothers, / and Christ came to heal many.⁵²

By omitting the biblical detail that Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers, who were pasturing the flock, to inquire of their and the flock's welfare, and by having the brothers not only ask Jacob for permission to take Joseph out, but also depict him as a child who needs to play and be taken care of, the quranic story seems to react to the typological construal of the biblical detail of the sending of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

⁵⁰ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 405.

⁵¹ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:505.

⁵² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:504.

2.7. THE BROTHERS SCORNED JOSEPH IN THE WILDERNESS

They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.” But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, “Let us not take his life.” Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him” — that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.⁵³

According to the biblical story, the brothers scorned Joseph in the wilderness by calling him a dreamer when they saw him coming toward them, and then, following Reuben’s command, they threw him into a pit. According to the quranic story, the brothers did throw Joseph into the pit, but they did not scorn him (Q 12:15). Why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that the brothers scorned Joseph in the wilderness?⁵⁴

The biblical detail that the brothers scorned Joseph in the wilderness when they saw him coming toward them is mentioned by both Jewish and Syriac authors.⁵⁵ Moreover, unlike the Jewish authors, the Syriac authors go on to say that the brothers scorned Joseph when

⁵³ Gen 37:18–24.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, later in the quranic story, when the brothers come before Joseph in Egypt, not knowing that it is him, they scorned him by calling him a thief (Q 12:77).

⁵⁵ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 147); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 780); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 96); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 22–35); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 524–527); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 272); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:505–509, 511–517).

they dragged him to the pit and when they had thrown him into it. By doing so, the Syriac authors seem to want to intensify the scorn that Joseph underwent in the wilderness, probably because this would help them to bring about a stronger typological connection between the episode of Joseph being scorned in the wilderness and the episode of Jesus being scorned throughout his passion, a typological connection made by Jacob in his second and third homilies on Joseph:

The image of Joseph is similar to that of Christ, / for Christ's suffering was mystically depicted in Joseph. / "Here comes the dreamer! Let us throw him into a pit / and see what will become of his dreams and if they are true." / This is similar to the scorn at Golgotha: / "If you are the Son of God, save yourself!"⁵⁶

Reuben told his brothers / to throw Joseph into the pit alive. / They seized him like the crucifiers seized the Son of God, / and they stripped him of his garments like the Son was stripped of his garments in court. / They scorned him like our Lord was scorned when he was questioned, / and they dragged him away, but he kept silent like Christ who did not speak. / One called him dreamer in great scorn, / and another seized him and stripped him of his garment. / One sought after a pit in the wilderness into which to throw him, / and another threatened with murder in great wrath. / One said to him, "Where is your crown, dreamer?" / and so, each one was in uproar while Joseph kept silent. / What happened to Joseph resembles what happened to our Lord / when he was sentenced and scorned in court.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:505.

⁵⁷ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:507.

Envy threw Joseph into the pit and was contented because it accomplished its task, / and similarly, the crucifiers were contented when Christ was put in the grave. / Envy buried Joseph in the pit alive, as if he were dead, / and it rejoicefully scorned him like it scorned our Lord. / Joseph's brothers joyfully gathered to have a meal / at the grave in which was life, / and at this meal, which give birth to poisonous wrath, / the wrathful said things like this: / "How will the dreams come true now? If they are true, let them be fulfilled! / Where is the sun that is supposed to bow down to this liar? Look how he is bitterly suffering in the dark!" / ... / They scorned him like the crucifiers scorned the Son of God, / thinking that, by putting him in a grave, they had put an end to his power.⁵⁸

Similarly, in his first homily on Joseph, Ps Ephrem states that the brothers scorned Joseph in the pit like the crucifiers scorned Jesus on the cross:

They scorned him in the pit on account of his dreams / like their descendants did to the crucified. / "Where are your dream?" they shouted at him. / "Will they not come and save you?" / And the crucifiers shouted at the only begotten: / "Come down from the cross!"⁵⁹

According to Ps Ephrem and Jacob, the biblical detail that the brothers scorned Joseph in the wilderness typifies that the crucifiers scorned Jesus throughout his passion. By omitting the biblical detail that the brothers scorned Joseph in the wilderness, the quranic story seems to react to the typological construal of the biblical detail in the Syriac tradition.

⁵⁸ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:511.

⁵⁹ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 34.

2.8. THE BROTHERS STRIPPED JOSEPH OF HIS ROBE

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.⁶⁰

The biblical story says that the brothers stripped Joseph of his robe before throwing him into the pit. The quranic story recounts that the brothers threw Joseph into the pit, but it omits that they stripped him of his clothing (Q 12:15). Why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that the brothers stripped Joseph of his clothing before throwing him into the pit?

As seen in section 2.4, Aphrahat and Jacob construe the biblical detail that Jacob made a robe for Joseph typologically. As for the biblical detail that the brothers stripped Joseph of his robe before throwing him into the pit, Aphrahat and Jacob construe this event typologically as well, linking the stripping of Joseph's robe at the hands of his brothers before throwing him into the pit with the stripping of Jesus' garments by the soldiers before leading him away to the cross. As usual, Aphrahat's typological construal is brief, but clear enough, stating that Joseph gave up his robe to his brothers like Jesus gave up his garments to the soldiers.⁶¹ As for Jacob, as seen in section 2.7, he interprets the scorn that Joseph underwent in the wilderness as the type of the scorn that Jesus endured throughout his passion. In the second of the three passages from Jacob's homilies that we read, the typological connection between the stripping of Joseph's robe by his brothers and the

⁶⁰ Gen 37:23–24.

⁶¹ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406.

stripping of Jesus' garments by the soldiers is made. Let us read the second passage again and pay attention to the typological connection:

Reuben told his brothers / to throw Joseph into the pit alive. / They seized him like the crucifiers seized the Son of God, / and they stripped him of his garments like the Son was stripped of his garments in court. / They scorned him like our Lord was scorned when he was questioned, / and they dragged him away, but he kept silent like Christ who did not speak. / One called him dreamer in great scorn, / and another seized him and stripped him of his garment. / One sought after a pit in the wilderness into which to throw him, / and another threatened with murder in great wrath. / One said to him, "Where is your crown, dreamer?" / and so, each one was in uproar while Joseph kept silent. / What happened to Joseph resembles what happened to our Lord / when he was sentenced and scorned in court.⁶²

The biblical detail that the brothers stripped Joseph of his robe before throwing him into the pit is mentioned by Philo, Josephus, in *Genesis Rabba*, by Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, and Ps Narsai,⁶³ but only Aphrahat and Jacob construe it typologically. By omitting the biblical detail in question, the quranic story seems to react to the typological construal of it in the Syriac tradition.

⁶² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:507.

⁶³ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 149); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 183); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 781); Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 96); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 30); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 525).

2.9. THE EMPTY PIT

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.⁶⁴

The biblical detail that the pit into which Joseph was thrown was empty is mentioned by Josephus, in *Genesis Rabba*, by Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, and Jacob,⁶⁵ but it is omitted in the quranic story. In his second homily on Joseph, Jacob interprets the empty pit as follows:

He fell into a pit that had no water in it, / and Joseph put Christ in a new tomb that had no corpses in it. / A pit and a tomb were prepared for the servant and his Lord, / and in their abiding places were empty of water and corpses.⁶⁶

According to Jacob, the biblical detail of the empty pit is the type of the new tomb: just as Joseph was thrown into a pit that had no water in it, so too Jesus was put in a new tomb that had no corpses in it. I suggest that, by omitting the biblical detail of the empty pit, the quranic story reacts to Jacob's typological construal of the empty pit.

⁶⁴ Gen 37:23–24.

⁶⁵ Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 181); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 781–782); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 96); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 31); Jacob (Akharrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:508).

⁶⁶ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:508).

2.10. THE SALE OF JOSEPH

Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers agreed... They drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.⁶⁷

While Joseph was in the pit, the brothers saw a caravan of Ishmaelites on its way to Egypt, upon which Judah told his brothers to sell Joseph to them, to which they agreed, and so, they lifted him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites. This biblical account of the sale of Joseph is reiterated in all of our sources except *Jubilees*.⁶⁸ According to the quranic story, neither did Judah tell his brothers to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites nor did the brothers lift Joseph out of the pit and sell him to the Ishmaelites, but instead, the quranic story says that, while Joseph was in the pit and when the brothers had returned to Jacob, some merchants came by the pit:

⁶⁷ Gen 37:25–28.

⁶⁸ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 149); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 181–183); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 782–783); Aphrahat (Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406); Ephrem (Mathews Jr., *St. Ephrem*, 182); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 97–98); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 36–47); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 528–530); Narsai, (Mingana, *Narsai*, 273–274); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:512–513)

They sent someone to draw water and he let down his bucket. “Good news!” he exclaimed. “Here is a boy!” They hid him like a piece of merchandise — God was well aware of what they did — and then sold him for a small price, for a few pieces of silver: so little did they value him.⁶⁹

Why would the quranic story omit the biblical details that Judah told his brothers to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites and that the brothers lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites? I suggest that the quranic omissions of the biblical details, both of which are related to the sale of Joseph, have to do with the typological construal of the sale of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

As for the biblical detail that Judah suggested to his brothers to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, Aphrahat and Jacob construe it as the type of Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. Aphrahat writes, “By the counsel of Judah, Joseph was sold into Egypt, and by the Judas Iscariot, Jesus was betrayed to the Jews.”⁷⁰ Jacob says, “Back then Judah handed over Joseph to the Ishmaelites, / and later Judas sold our Lord.”⁷¹

As for the biblical detail that the brothers lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites, Aphrahat, Narsai, and Jacob — quoted below respectively — construe it as the type of the trials and crucifixion of Jesus:

When they sold him, Joseph gave no response to his brothers, and Jesus did not speak or give a response to the judges who were judging him.⁷²

⁶⁹ Q 12:19–20.

⁷⁰ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406.

⁷¹ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:513

⁷² Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406.

Just as the insolent ones rushed against the humble one to sell him, / so too the Jews rushed against our saviour. / The story of Joseph is similar to that of our saviour, / for the evil ones hanged him on a tree although he had not committed any crime.⁷³

The free man was silent and did not open his mouth when he was sold by his brothers / because he resembled our Lord who became a slave. / He took upon himself the yoke of slaves and did not open his mouth / because the mystery of the Son brought him into bondage. / He became a slave, but his freedom was kept in him. / This is like the Son who became a slave but was still free in his being. / ... / Joseph who was free bent his head / and took upon himself to become a slave without losing his freedom. / He resembled the Lord of all nations who became a slave / but kept his freedom hidden in him when he became a slave. / The Ishmaelites bought Joseph and took him away while he was a free man. / The Hebrews bought Jesus to have the giver of life killed.⁷⁴

The biblical details that Judah suggested to his brothers that they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites and that the brothers lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites are used by Aphrahat, Narsai, and Jacob to remind their addressees of the events in the final period in the life of Jesus: his betrayal, trials, and crucifixion. I suggest that, by omitting the biblical details in question, both of which are related to the sale of Joseph, the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of the sale of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

⁷³ Mingana, *Narsai*, 273.

⁷⁴ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:513.

2.11. THE MOURNING SCENE

Then they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. They had the long robe with sleeves taken to their father, and they said, "This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not." He recognized it, and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days.⁷⁵

In the biblical story, Jacob believed in his sons' report of Joseph's death, and he tore his garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned for him. By contrast, in the quranic story, Jacob neither believed in his sons' report of Joseph's death nor mourned for him (Q 12:16–18).

Why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that Jacob tore his garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned for Joseph when he received his sons' report of Joseph's death? First, the mourning scene, as unfolded in the biblical story, is reiterated in both Jewish and Syriac sources.⁷⁶ Second, the quranic notion that Jacob did not believe in his sons' report of Joseph's death does not necessarily explain the quranic omission of the mourning scene, for it is fully perceivable that Jacob could have mourned for Joseph because of the unbearable feeling of missing him. In fact, later in the quranic story, we are told that Jacob lost his eyesight because of his sorrow for Joseph (Q 12:84). Besides, according to most of our Syriac sources, referenced in footnote 76, Jacob did not believe in his sons' report of Joseph's death, yet he tore his garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned for him. Again, why

⁷⁵ Gen 37:31–34.

⁷⁶ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 153); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 185); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 784–786); Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 99); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 59–68); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 530–531); Narsai, (Mingana, *Narsai*, 274–276); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:515–516).

would the quranic story omit the mourning scene? I suggest that the quranic omission of the mourning scene has to do with the following typological construal of the mourning scene in Jacob's third homily on Joseph:

At the death of his Son, the Father tore the veil of the temple, / and it was therefore befitting for old Jacob to do the same. / He saw the robe stained with blood and tore his garments / to make known the great image of the crucifixion. / He put on sackcloth to depict the darkness / that the Father spread over the creation at the death of his Son. / By tearing his garments and by putting on sackcloth, / Jacob grieved for the death of his son. / He imitated the paternity of the Father and represented him, / for although the Father does not grieve, he employed expressions of grief, / as he tore the veil of the temple for the sake of his beloved one, / and as he spread darkness over the world and made it mourn. / By mourning, the Father showed paternal compassion / and elevated the death of his only Son in the entire world. / Jacob put on a great image when he mourned / so that the suffering of the Son would be elevated in a mystery.⁷⁷

According to Jacob's third homily, the mourning scene, in which Jacob tore his garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned for Joseph, typifies Jesus' crucifixion at Golgotha, at which the veil of the temple was torn, the land was covered in darkness, and the world was mourning for Jesus. I suggest that, by omitting the biblical detail that Jacob tore his garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned for Joseph when he received his sons' report of Joseph's death, the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of the mourning scene in Jacob's third homily.

⁷⁷ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:516.

2.12. GOD GAVE JOSEPH SUCCESS AND BLESSED POTIPHAR

Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field.⁷⁸

The biblical story tells us that God gave Joseph success in all that he did in Potiphar's house and that God blessed all that Potiphar had for Joseph's sake. Joseph's success in Potiphar's house and God's blessing over all that Potiphar had for Joseph's sake are mentioned by all of our authors except for Aphrahat and Ephrem.⁷⁹ The quranic story, by contrast, mentions neither that God gave Joseph success in all that he did in Potiphar's house nor that God blessed all that Potiphar had for Joseph's sake. The quranic omissions of Joseph's success in Potiphar's house and God's blessing over all that Potiphar had for Joseph's sake may be explained by the typological construal of both biblical details in Jacob's fourth homily on Joseph:

⁷⁸ Gen 39:1–5.

⁷⁹ *Jubilees* (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 256); Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 161); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 185); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 803–805); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 80–82); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 101); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 535); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 276); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:520).

The Egyptian's house was blessed for Joseph's sake. / All that he had, in the house and in the field, was blessed. / For the image of the Son cast its shadow over Egypt / and made Joseph a source of blessing. / The Son went to a wedding feast and provided the guests with wine, / and he went out to a deserted place and multiplied bread for the hungry ones. / The shadow of the body of the Son came forth / in the Egyptian's house and blessed the house through Joseph. / When Joseph was sold, he put on the grace of the Son, / and by means of it, he was granted success in all that he did. / Joseph resembled his Lord who, in the house and in the desert, / multiplied all kind of things through his divine providence. / Because of the great image of the Son and his blessings, / Joseph was honoured in his master's house, / and all that he did prospered exceedingly, / and everyone around him benefited greatly from all that he did.⁸⁰

According to Jacob, Joseph was given success in Potiphar's house, and he became a source of blessing for Potiphar, because he was the image of Jesus. Just as Jesus provided the guests at the wedding in Cana with wine (Jh 2:1–11) and the hungry multitudes in the desert with food (Mt 14:13–31; 15:32–38; Mk 6:30–44; 8:1–10; Lk 9:10–17, Jh 6:1–15), so too Joseph, the image of Jesus, became a source of blessing for those around him. I suggest that, by omitting that God gave Joseph success in all that he did in Potiphar's house and that God blessed all that Potiphar had for Joseph's sake, the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of both biblical details in Jacob's fourth homily on Joseph.

⁸⁰ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:520.

2.13. JOSEPH WAS FOUND GUILTY OF ATTEMPTED ASSAULT AND WAS SENTENCED TO PRISON

After a time, Potiphar's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and tried to seduce him, but he refused to give in to her, for he knew that that would be a sin against God. One day, as Joseph was working in the house and no one else was close, Potiphar's wife took hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!",⁸¹ but he fled and ran outside, leaving his garment in her hands. She called the members of her household and said to them:

"See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."

When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison.⁸²

In the biblical story, Potiphar seems to believe in his wife's accusation against Joseph, and therefore, he finds him guilty of attempted assault and sentences him to prison. Turning to the quranic story, we also find that Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph and that he refuses

⁸¹ Gen 39:12.

⁸² Gen 39:13–20.

to give in to her (Q 12:23–24). However, in contrast to the biblical story, the quranic story tells us that Potiphar does not believe in his wife’s accusation against Joseph, and therefore, he neither finds him guilty of attempted assault nor sentences him to prison (Q 12:25–29).⁸³

The question is, why would the quranic story disclaim the biblical detail that Potiphar found Joseph guilty of attempted assault and sentenced him to prison? Before offering my answer, let us take a brief look at what our Jewish and Syriac sources have to say about this issue.

The author of *Jubilees*, Philo, Josephus, Ephrem, Ps Ephrem, and Jacob, following the biblical story, say that Potiphar believed in his wife’s accusation against Joseph, found him guilty of attempted assault, and sentences him to prison.⁸⁴ By contrast, the editor of *Genesis Rabba*, Ps Basil, Ps Narsai, and Narsai,⁸⁵ departing from the biblical story, say that Potiphar did not believe in his wife’s accusation against Joseph but nevertheless put him in prison.⁸⁶ Aphrahat’s mention of this biblical detail is too brief to know whether or not he holds that Potiphar believed in his wife’s accusation against Joseph, but it is clear that Aphrahat holds that Potiphar put Joseph in prison.⁸⁷ To sum up, all of our sources, both Jewish and Syriac, have Potiphar put Joseph in prison. Now, why would the quranic story disclaim that Potiphar put Joseph in prison? I suggest that this has to do with the typological construal of Joseph’s imprisonment in the Syriac tradition.

⁸³ Only later in the quranic story does Joseph end up in prison, not because he was found guilty of any crime, but because he asked God to place him there. This quranic development will be considered in the next chapter.

⁸⁴ *Jubilees* (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 258–259); Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 169); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 193); Ephrem (Mathews Jr., *St. Ephrem*, 185); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 91–95); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:528–529).

⁸⁵ *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 812); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 106); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 541–543); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 279).

⁸⁶ According to Ps Narsai and Narsai, Potiphar put Joseph in prison because of jealousy. See footnotes 23 and 24. Commenting on Gen 39:20, “Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison,” the author of *Genesis Rabba* puts these words in Potiphar’s mouth, “I know that you are innocent... but I must do this lest a stigma falls upon my children.” (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 812.)

⁸⁷ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406.

Aphrahat briefly writes, “Joseph’s master wickedly put him in prison and Jesus was condemned by his own people.”⁸⁸ As for Narsai, he says, “Joseph was imprisoned, although he was blameless, / typifying the life-giver whom envy crucified, although he was faultless.”⁸⁹ In his fifth homily on Joseph, Jacob considers at length the typological connection between Joseph’s sentence to prison and Jesus’ sentence to death:

The fair one was wronged but kept quiet and did not speak / while the despised one raised her voice foolishly. / The truth was concealed from those who beheld and heard. / The truth was hidden, and falsehood was declared. / The prosecution was distorted, and there was no place for the truth. / The innocent one was found guilty, and the guilty one raised her head. / However, Joseph had to be found guilty, although he was innocent, / lest he would be detached from the image of the Son. / It befitted the truthful one to be wronged, / lest he would fall away from the beauty of the Son of God. / The Synagogue clamoured, like the Egyptian woman had done because of the truthful one, / and so, the righteous one [= Jesus] was unjustly found guilty of sin. / The daughter of Shem [= the Synagogue] cried out, like the daughter of the despised Ham [= the Egyptian woman] had done, / and so, she [= the daughter of Shem] learnt from her [= the daughter of Ham] to lie about the saviour. / The Hebrew woman exclaimed that he was guilty to death, like the Egyptian woman had done, / but our Lord kept quiet as if he were guilty, like Joseph had done. / Sion clamoured treacherously before Pilate / so that the innocent one would be unjustly found guilty. / The Egyptian woman cried out foolishly before her husband / so that he would

⁸⁸ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406.

⁸⁹ Mingana, *Narsai*, 279.

furiously punish the chaste one as if he was a criminal. / The entire truth was concealed from the Egyptian / so that he would not recognise that Joseph was wronged when he prosecuted him.⁹⁰

I suggest that, by disclaiming the biblical detail that Potiphar found Joseph guilty of attempted assault and sentenced him to prison, the quranic story reacts to the typological construal of the biblical detail in the Syriac tradition and particularly in Jacob's fifth homily.

Moreover, note that Jacob offers a counterfactual exegesis of the biblical detail that Potiphar found Joseph guilty of attempted assault and sentenced him to prison. By this, I mean that Jacob says that the truth was concealed from Potiphar so that he would not recognise that Joseph was wronged when he prosecuted him. In other words, Jacob does not say that the truth was concealed from Potiphar so that he would sentence him to prison, which would be a factual exegesis, but he says that the truth was concealed from Potiphar so that he *would not recognise that Joseph was wronged* when he prosecuted him, which is a counterfactual exegesis. Interestingly, the quranic story has Potiphar *recognise that Joseph was wronged* when he prosecuted him:

When the husband saw that the shirt was torn at the back, he said, "This is another instance of women's treachery: your treachery is truly great. Joseph, overlook this; but you [wife], ask forgiveness for your sin — you have done wrong."⁹¹

⁹⁰ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:529.

⁹¹ Q 12:28–29.

By having Potiphar *recognise that Joseph was wronged* when he prosecuted him, the quranic story reverses Jacob's counterfactual exegesis that the truth was concealed from Potiphar so that he *would not recognise that Joseph was wronged* when he prosecuted him. In this, we perceive an example of counterfactual intertextuality between the Joseph story in the Quran and Jacob's homiletic retelling of the Joseph story, and such an intertextuality serves as the strongest evidence that the quranic story participates in Jacob's homiletic retelling.⁹²

2.14. THE THREE DAYS

Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker had offended him, and therefore, he put them in the prison where Joseph was confined. One night, both of them dreamed. Troubled by their dreams, the cupbearer and the baker told them to Joseph, who, in turn, explained the dreams to them.

So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me, and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms came out and the clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days; within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer."

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favourable, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, and in

⁹² In my argumentation here, I follow Ghaffar, "Kontrafaktische Intertextualität im Koran und die exegetische Tradition des syrischen Christentums", 313–358.

the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.” And Joseph answered, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and hang you on a pole; and the birds will eat the flesh from you.”⁹³

In his dream, the cupbearer saw himself picking grapes from a vine with three branches and pressing them into Pharaoh’s cup, and Joseph explained that he would be restored to his office within three days. Then, the baker told his dream, in which he saw himself carrying three baskets with baked food on his head for Pharaoh but of which birds were eating, and Joseph explained that he would be executed within three days. On the third day, Pharaoh made a feast for all his servants, restoring the cupbearer to his office but executing the baker, just as Joseph had told them.

Turning to the quranic account, which is more or less similar to the biblical account, we find no prediction in the dreams of when they will be fulfilled. According to the quranic story, the cupbearer dreamed that he was pressing grapes but not picking them from a vine with three branches, and the baker dreamed that he was carrying bread on my head but not carrying them in three baskets (Q 12:36), and therefore, Joseph’s explanation of the dreams does not include any prediction of when they will be fulfilled, but instead, he simply tells them, “Fellow prisoners, one of you will serve his master with wine; the other will be crucified and the birds will peck at his head.”⁹⁴

Why would the quranic story omit the time prediction in the dreams that the cupbearer will be restored to his office on the third day and that the baker will be executed on the third

⁹³ Gen 40:9–13, 16–19.

⁹⁴ Q 12:41.

day? Is it a mere coincidence that the quranic story fails to mention that the cupbearer saw three branches in his dreams and that the baker saw three baskets in his dream? I do not think that the quranic omission of the three days is a coincidence, for in the following scene, the quranic story specifies that Pharaoh dreamed that seven fat cows were being eaten up by seven thin cows and that seven green ears of grain were being swallowed up by seven withered ears of grain, meaning, according to Joseph's explanation, that seven years of plenty would come followed by seven years of famine (Q 12:43–49). Besides, in his own dream, Joseph saw eleven stars, the sun, and the moon, referring to his eleven brothers, his father, and his mother (Q 12:4). In my view, the quranic story is indeed interested in the counting of days, years, and persons, and given that most of our sources mention the biblical detail of the three days,⁹⁵ we can conclude that the emergent Quran was aware of it.

Now, the question is, why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail of the three days? Why would the quranic story disclaim that Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were kept in prison for three days before they received their final sentence? I suggest that an explanation of this quranic omission may be found in the following verses in Jacob's sixth homily on Joseph:

Joseph explained that they would be imprisoned for three days / so that the Son's burial would be made known. / During the three days in the dark prison, / the mystery of the Son justified and condemned. / The three days of Joseph's explanation came to an end, / and Pharaoh did what the dreams had already done.

⁹⁵ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 185–189); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 195–199); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 815–818); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 108–109, 112–113); Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 104); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 279–280); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 545–546); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:536).

/ Joseph had declared the sentence before it came to pass. / The dreams pronounced, Joseph explained, and Pharaoh brought to completion.⁹⁶

According to Jacob, the biblical detail of the three days, during which Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were kept in prison and had their dreams explained, typifies Jesus' three days' burial, during which he descended into Sheol, the prison of the dead ones, justifying and condemning. If the quranic story, as I have been arguing, reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology, then it makes perfect sense why the biblical detail of the three days is omitted in quranic story.

2.15. JOSEPH'S AGE

Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt.⁹⁷

According to the biblical story, Joseph was thirty years old when he left prison and entered the service of Pharaoh as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt. The quranic story affirms that Joseph left prison and entered the service of Pharaoh as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt, but it omits that he was thirty years old by that time.

The biblical detail that Joseph was thirty years old when he left prison and entered the service of Pharaoh as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt is mentioned in all of our Jewish

⁹⁶ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:536.

⁹⁷ Gen 41:46.

sources without further elaboration,⁹⁸ but in the works of Aphrahat and Jacob, quoted below respectively, Joseph's age is used to typologically link his inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt at his appearance before Pharaoh with Jesus' manifestation as the Son of God and caretaker of the world at his baptism by John when he was thirty years old:

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh and became lord of Egypt. Jesus was about thirty years old when he came to the Jordan to be baptized, received the Spirit, and went out to preach. Joseph supplied the Egyptians with bread, and Jesus supplied the whole world with the bread of life.⁹⁹

The thirty years of the Son before his manifestation / were completed by Joseph in prison, and then he left. / The mystery hid Joseph in prison / until the full amount of thirty was fulfilled. / ... / Joseph remained in prison until the mysteries were brought to completion in him, / and then he left prison to rule the land with authority. / Our Lord walked among earthly beings for thirty years, / and then he manifested himself through John. / Although he could have performed that which pertained to his nature before his baptism, / he observed the rule of his bodily nature to keep things in order. / Joseph remained in prison until he reached the age of thirty, / and then he left prison to care for the land to which he had been sent.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Jubilees* (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 266); Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 199); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 207); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 830).

⁹⁹ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406.

¹⁰⁰ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:537.

Developing their typological link between Joseph and Jesus, in which the former's inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt typifies the latter's manifestation as the Son of God and the caretaker of the world, Aphrahat and Jacob stress that both Joseph and Jesus were thirty years old by that time. To put it differently, to Aphrahat and Jacob, Joseph's age is crucial for typologically linking his inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt at his appearance before Pharaoh with Jesus' manifestation as the Son of God and caretaker of the world at his baptism by John when he was thirty years old. I suggest that, by omitting that Joseph was thirty years old when he left prison and entered the service of Pharaoh as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt, the quranic story reacts to the typological reading of Joseph's age in the works of Aphrahat and Jacob.

2.16. JOSEPH'S RISE TO POWER IN EGYPT

Two years after the cupbearer had been restored to his office and the baker had been beheaded, Pharaoh had two dreams in which he saw that seven fat cows were being eaten up by seven thin cows and that seven green ears of grain were being swallowed up by seven withered ears of grain. Troubled by his dreams, Pharaoh assembled all his wise men and told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them. At this point, the cupbearer remembered Joseph and mentioned him and his ability to successfully explain dreams, upon which Pharaoh sent for Joseph, told him his dreams, and asked him to explain them. Joseph explained that God was showing Pharaoh that seven years of plenty would come followed by seven years of famine. Joseph went on to advise Pharaoh to make a wise man in charge of the land of Egypt and to have his servants collect and store one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven years of plenty to be used during the years of famine.

The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find anyone else like this — one in whom is the spirit of God?” So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph’s hand; he arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command; and they cried out in front of him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.”¹⁰¹

According to the biblical story, Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt involves solemn inaugural acts, such as having him clothed in fine garments and having the Egyptians bow down to him, which are omitted in the quranic account of Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt (Q 12:54–57). Now, the question is, why would the quranic story recount Joseph’s rise to power but omit that he was clothed in fine garments and bowed down to at his inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt?

To begin with, Joseph’s rise to power, as depicted in the biblical story, is retold by all of our authors except for Aphrahat, but that the Egyptians bowed down to Joseph at his inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt is mentioned only by Narsai and Jacob.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Gen 41:37–43.

¹⁰² *Jubilees* (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 265); Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 198–201, 210–213); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 204–207); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 827–829); Ephrem (Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 186–187); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 132); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 105–106); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 550); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 282); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:544).

That most of our authors fail to mention that the Egyptians bowed down to Joseph at his inauguration has probably to do with the fact that the word *abrēk* in the Hebrew text of Gen 41:43, which is translated as ‘to bow the knee’ in the New Revised Standard Version, may be related to the Egyptian *aprekhu* ‘head of the wise’ or *aburek* ‘at your service’ or to the Akkadian *abrik* ‘vizier’.¹⁰³ The Aramaic Targums of Genesis read *abrēk* not as bowing down to Joseph but as authority given to him, and therefore, they take *abrēk* to mean that Joseph became like a father to the Pharaoh. For example, in the Targum Onkelos, Gen 41:43 reads, “He drove him in his second chariot. They proclaimed before him, ‘This one is father to the king.’ Thus he appointed him over all the land of Egypt.”¹⁰⁴ A similar understanding of *abrēk* in Gen 41:43 is found in the Peshitta, “And he seated him in his other chariot and cried out before him, ‘Father and ruler,’ and thus, he gave him authority over all the land of Egypt.”¹⁰⁵ It seems that this reading of *abrēk* explains why most of our authors fail to mention that the Egyptians bowed down to Joseph. However, bearing in mind that they do retell Joseph’s rise to power, at which he was not only greatly honoured, but also given authority of all the land of Egypt, it would not be surprising if these authors had mentioned that the Egyptians bowed down to Joseph. Therefore, the mention of Narsai and Jacob that Joseph was bowed down to at his inauguration is not unexpected. In fact, the word *abrēk* in Gen 41:43 may also be related to the Egyptian *abrok* ‘to prostrate’ or *āprek* ‘to bow the head’ or to the Semitic root

¹⁰³ Brown, *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 7–8.

¹⁰⁴ Drazin, *Onkelos on the Torah*, 279. The Targum Neofiti of Gen 41:43 reads, “And he made him ride in his second chariot and they acclaimed before him: ‘Long live the father of the king who is master in wisdom, although small in beauty and tender in years.’ And he appointed him master and ruler over all the land of Egypt.” (McNamara, *Targum Neofiti*, 188.) In *Genesis Rabba*, we read, “Abrech (*ib.*), which means, father (*ab*) in wisdom though tender (*rach*) in years.” (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 829.)

¹⁰⁵ My translation of the Syriac text of Gen 41:43 in Jansma (ed), *The Old Testament in Syriac*, 92. Also, recounting Joseph’s rise to power and dealing specifically with Gen 41:43, Ps Ephrem has the Pharaoh exclaim in the presence of the Egyptians that Joseph is like a father to him, “Egyptians, do not hate him, / for he will give your children life in times of calamity. / Since I could not call him lord, / I made him like a father to me. / Anyone who obeys his words / is honouring me.” (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 132.)

BRK ‘to kneel’.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, Narsai says, “The crowned Egyptian feel down before the Hebrew, / and the son of Ham made obeisance to the son of Abraham.”¹⁰⁷ Jacob has the Egyptians not only call Joseph father and lord, but also bow down to him and make obeisance to him:

The king put the signet ring on his hand and made him lord, / and by doing so, it was as if he was saying, “The seal of my kingdom belongs to you.” / He put on garments of fine linen and was seated in power, / and all the land of Egypt bowed down (*brēkh*) to him and made obeisance to him. / They put a gold chain around his neck and made him ruler, / and they proclaimed before him, “Father and lord of all Egypt.”¹⁰⁸

Note that Jacob uses *brēkh*, ‘to bow down’ or ‘to kneel’, which perhaps indicates how he reads *abrēk* in Gen 41:43. Yet, saying that the Egyptians called Joseph father of all Egypt, Jacob evidently follows earlier Jewish and Syriac readings of *abrēk* in Gen 41:43. Be his understanding of *abrēk* as it may, Jacob, like Narsai, certainly says that Joseph was bowed down to at his inauguration. Also, note that Jacob, like our other authors, says that Joseph was clothed in fine garments at his inauguration.¹⁰⁹ Could the mention of our Syriac authors that Joseph was clothed in fine garments and bowed down to at his inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt shed light on why the quranic story omits both solemn inaugural acts? Yes, I think so. First of all, bear in mind that the scene of Joseph’s rise to power is clearly christological in the Syriac tradition in that Joseph’s inauguration as the ruler and caretaker

¹⁰⁶ Brown, *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 7–8; Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 62.

¹⁰⁷ Mingana, *Narsai*, 282.

¹⁰⁸ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:544.

¹⁰⁹ For references, see footnote 90.

of Egypt at his appearance before Pharaoh typifies Jesus' manifestation as the Son of God and caretaker of the world at his baptism by John.¹¹⁰ To this, add the fact that Joseph's robe, or his clothing in general, has a strong christological connotation in the Syriac tradition.¹¹¹ Therefore, the fine garments in which Joseph was clothed at his inauguration must have caused the Meccan recipients of the Syriac retellings of the Joseph story, who were also the addressees of the quranic retelling of the Joseph story, to relate Joseph to Jesus. Finally, according to Jacob, the bowing down to Joseph is essentially an adoration meant for Jesus. Commenting on Joseph's second dream, according to which celestial bodies bowed down to him, Jacob says:

If Joseph were not carrying the image of the Son, / then celestial bodies would not have bowed down to him. / For every knee shall bend at the name of Jesus, as it is written, / and everything in heaven and on earth shall obey him.¹¹²

Again, the Meccan recipients of the Syriac retellings of the Joseph story, who were also the addressees of the quranic retelling of the Joseph story, must have related the bowing down to Joseph at his inauguration to the adoration of Jesus.

Against the backdrop of the aforementioned, it seems reasonable to me that, by omitting that Joseph was clothed in fine garments and bowed down to at his inauguration, the quranic story reacts to the christological framework of both solemn inaugural acts in the Syriac tradition.

¹¹⁰ See 2.14.

¹¹¹ See 2.4 and 2.8.

¹¹² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:499.

2.17. THE BROTHERS BOWED DOWN TO JOSEPH

People from all over the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because the famine became severe throughout the world. When Jacob learnt that there was grain in Egypt, he sent his sons there to buy grain.

Now Joseph was governor over the land; it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.¹¹³

The biblical detail that Joseph's brothers bowed down to him when they came to Egypt to buy grain is mentioned in Jewish and Syriac sources.¹¹⁴ The quranic story says that Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy grain but omits that they bowed down to him (Q 12:58–62). As seen in sections 2.5 and 2.16, the quranic story does not have a problem with the notion of Joseph being bowed down to by his brothers, since such an act could be interpreted as revering a ruler, but it does have a problem with the typological construal of the bowing down to Joseph. Now, in the opening of his second homily on Joseph, Ps Narsai recounts the biblical detail that Joseph's brothers bowed down to him when they came to Egypt to buy grain and construes the biblical detail typologically:

A severe famine began in Egypt and in the land of Canaan, / and for this reason,
Joseph's brothers came to him. / Ten sheaves and one went down, as it is written,

¹¹³ Gen 42:6.

¹¹⁴ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 219); Targum Onkelos (Drazin, *Onkelos on the Torah*, 285); Ephrem (Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 189); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 155); Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 108); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 561); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 270–271); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:553).

/ and eleven stars, just as Joseph had seen in the land of Canaan. / They went down to Egypt and bowed down to the dreamer. / It was the great mystery of the Son of God that made them go down. / They fell on their faces before the son of Rachel and bowed down to him, / and on the day of resurrection, every crucifier will do the same. / The Son of God will appear in glory and come down to judge the living and the dead, / and they will fall before him and bow down to him.¹¹⁵

I suggest that, by omitting the biblical detail that Joseph's brothers bowed down to him when they came to Egypt to buy grain, the quranic story reacts to Ps Narsai's typological construal of the biblical detail in question.

2.18. JOSEPH REVEALED HIMSELF TO ALL OF HIS BROTHERS

According to the biblical story, the brothers made three journeys to Egypt. During the first journey, the brothers arrived in Egypt without Benjamin, and Joseph sent them back to Canaan to bring him Benjamin. During the second journey, the brothers arrived in Egypt with Benjamin, and Joseph revealed himself to all of them. During the third journey, the brothers arrived in Egypt with Jacob and their families to settle there.

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me

¹¹⁵ Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 561.

before you to preserve life... And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.”¹¹⁶

The biblical detail that Joseph revealed himself to all of his brothers during the second journey is mentioned in all of our Jewish and Syriac sources.¹¹⁷ The quranic story omits the biblical detail that Joseph revealed himself to all of his brothers during the second journey, and instead it says that he revealed himself to Benjamin during the second journey (Q 12:69) and that the other brothers recognised him during the third journey (Q 12:90).

Two preceding occurrences seem to have anticipated the brothers’ recognition of Joseph. First, when the brothers left Egypt without Benjamin and came to Jacob, he said to them, “I have knowledge from God that you do not have. My sons, go and seek news of Joseph and his brother and do not despair of God’s mercy.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, when the brothers went to Egypt for the third time, they must have expected to find Joseph and Benjamin. Second, when the brothers came to Joseph for the third time, they told him, “Mighty governor, misfortune has afflicted us and our family.”¹¹⁹ Joseph replied, “Do you now realize what you did to Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?”¹²⁰ which may have caused them to infer, in light of what their father had previously said to them, that the mighty governor in

¹¹⁶ Gen 45:3–5, 12–13.

¹¹⁷ *Jubilees* (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 286); Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 257); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 235); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 861–862); Aphrahat (Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406); Ephrem (Mathews Jr., *St. Ephrem*, 195–196); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 116); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 266–269); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 602–603); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 285–286); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:564).

¹¹⁸ Q 12:86–87.

¹¹⁹ Q 12:88.

¹²⁰ Q 12:88.

whose presence they were standing and with whom they were talking was their brother Joseph.

Now, the question is, why would the quranic story omit the biblical detail that Joseph revealed himself to all of his brothers and say instead that he revealed himself to Benjamin on one occasion and that the other brothers recognised him on another occasion? I suggest that this has to do with the typological construal of the biblical detail in the Syriac tradition. In his twenty-first demonstration, Aphrahat states:

When Joseph made himself known to his brothers, they were ashamed and afraid and amazed at his majesty. When Jesus comes at the end of time so that his majesty will be revealed, his brothers, who previously crucified him, will be ashamed and afraid and troubled.¹²¹

Similarly, in his ninth homily on Joseph, Jacob says:

Joseph did not want to reveal himself / until all of his brothers came to Egypt and were gathered before him. / Since one of them was missing, Joseph did not reveal himself, / and this typifies that the Son will gather all of the nations and then reveal himself. / When all of the nations are gathered, he will reveal himself, / and those who crucified him will be ashamed like Joseph's brothers were ashamed. / "I am Joseph whom you sold into Egypt!" / Perhaps it will be said: "I am Jesus whom you crucified!"¹²²

¹²¹ Lehto, *The Demonstrations*, 406.

¹²² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:567.

By omitting the biblical detail that Joseph revealed himself to all of his brothers — which both Aphrahat and Jacob construe as the type of Jesus' second coming, at which he will reveal himself and manifest his glory to all of the nations, including those who rejected and crucified him — the quranic story seems to react to the typological construal of the biblical detail in the Syriac tradition.

Interestingly, note that Jacob offers a counterfactual exegesis of the biblical detail that Joseph revealed himself to all his brothers. Hence, according to Jacob, it was necessary for all of Joseph's brothers to be gathered before him so that he would reveal himself, or, to put it differently, Joseph would not reveal himself unless all of his brothers were gathered before him. By stating that Joseph revealed himself to Benjamin, the quranic story reverses Jacob's counterfactual exegesis that Joseph would not reveal himself unless all of his brothers were gathered before him. This is another example of counterfactual intertextuality between the Joseph story in the Quran and Jacob's homiletic retelling of the Joseph story.

2.19. JOSEPH WAS MADE KNOWN TO HIS BROTHERS DURING THE SECOND JOURNEY

As noted in the previous section, in the biblical story, and in all of our Jewish and Syriac sources, Joseph revealed himself to all of his brothers during the second journey, but in the quranic story, the brothers recognised Joseph during the third journey. In the previous section, I asked why the quranic story omits the biblical detail that Joseph revealed himself to all of his brothers, leaving aside the issue of when this occurred, for while the biblical story has Joseph reveal himself to his brothers during the second journey, the quranic story has the brothers recognise Joseph during the third journey. In this section, I will ask why the quranic story omits the biblical detail that Joseph was made known to his brothers during the second journey and says instead that he was made known to them during the third journey.

In his ninth homily on Joseph, Jacob asks why Joseph was made known to his brothers not during the first journey but during the second journey:

Why was Joseph not made known to his brothers / when they came to him during the first journey? / That he was made known to them not during the first journey / but during the second journey is a mystery. / The type of the Son allowed Joseph to reveal himself / and manifest his glory to his brothers only during the second journey. / The first journey typifies the Son's ascension on the clouds, / during which his own people failed to recognise him as he was ascending. / The second journey, during which the brothers recognised Joseph and were ashamed, / typifies the great coming, during which the Son will be made known to everyone.¹²³

Jacob says that the second journey, during which Joseph was made known to his brothers, typifies Jesus' second coming, during which Jesus will be made known to everyone. By omitting that Joseph was made known to the brothers during the second journey, and by saying instead that he was made known to them during the third journey, the quranic story seems to react to Jacob's typological construal of the biblical detail that Joseph was made known to his brothers during the second journey.¹²⁴

¹²³ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:567.

¹²⁴ Note that Jacob offers yet another counterfactual exegesis of the biblical detail in question. Hence, by saying that Joseph was made known to his brothers during the third journey, the quranic story reverses Jacob's counterfactual exegesis that Joseph would not be made known to his brothers other than during the second journey.

2.20. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I have provided no less than 19 cases in support of my argument that, by means of its frequent omissions of biblical details about Joseph that Syriac authors use to establish a typological link between Joseph and Jesus, the quranic Joseph story reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition. Taken alone, some cases may not be fully convincing, but taken together, they reinforce each other and make up a strong cumulative case for my argument. In three cases, the quranic Joseph story reverses the counterfactual exegesis of biblical details in Jacob's homiletic retelling, and this so-called counterfactual intertextuality between the quranic story and Jacob's homiletic retelling serves as the strongest evidence that the former participates in the latter.¹²⁵ In some cases, I have showed that the Quran is most likely aware of the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition because it employs concepts and dictions — clothing imagery, baptismal metaphor, and eucharistic allusion — that are reminiscent of the theological language of Syriac authors and relevant to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.¹²⁶

Throughout the chapter, I have referred not only to Syriac sources, but also to Jewish sources to show that literary traditions about Joseph were certainly widespread by the time of the Quran. I think that this is of particular importance when dealing with quranic omissions of biblical details, lest one infers from the lack of mention of certain biblical details about Joseph in the quranic Joseph story that they had fallen into oblivion by the time of the Quran.

In this context, one may ask, could it be the case that the quranic omissions of biblical details about Joseph have to do with the construal of Joseph in the Jewish tradition? I would

¹²⁵ See 2.13, 2.18 and 2.19.

¹²⁶ See 2.4 and 2.5.

not exclude the possibility that this could be the case, but I suggest that a careful study of the quranic omissions of biblical details about Joseph in light of the Jewish tradition is needed before one can answer the question with certainty.¹²⁷ Even if it was the case that the quranic omissions of biblical details about Joseph have to do with the construal of Joseph in the Jewish tradition, the fact remains that we have a strong cumulative case for my argument that the quranic Joseph story reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition. Since I am convinced that storytelling is capable of addressing an audience of diverse backgrounds, I would not be surprised that, by means of its omissions of biblical details about Joseph, the quranic Joseph story reacts to both Jewish and Syriac interpretations of Joseph.

Another important question is, why would the quranic Joseph story react to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition? It seems to me that there is more than one possible answer to this question. In what follows, I outline and discuss four possible answers.

- (1) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because the Quran rejects orthodox christology.

Despite their different approaches to the study of Jesus in the Quran, and despite their different conclusions about the identity of Jesus in the Quran, the great majority of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have held the view that the Quran rejects orthodox

¹²⁷ I think that such a study would be quite complex because, as Niehoff demonstrates in his study *The Figure of Joseph*, the Jewish sources on Joseph construe him differently.

christology,¹²⁸ by which I mean the christology of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, according to which Jesus is God, the second person of the Trinity, who became man and was crucified to save humanity. Given this widely held view, it is plausible to interpret the quranic reaction to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition as the outcome of the quranic rejection of orthodox christology because, as seen in this chapter, the Syriac tradition uses the Joseph-Jesus typology to affirm orthodox christology. However, there is at least one major problem with this answer. What if the widely held view that the Quran rejects orthodox christology is incorrect?

Interestingly, in their joint study of Jesus in the Quran, Khorchide (who is a Muslim) and von Stosch (who is a Christian), reading the quranic texts about Jesus together as faithful to their respective traditions but at the same time being open to learn from each other, conclude that the Quran neither affirms nor rejects orthodox christology. To put it differently, according to Khorchide and von Stosch, the Quran does not explicitly engage with orthodox christology, but it clearly rejects certain christological conceptions that any Christian who affirms orthodox christology would reject. Since this conclusion may strike many as remarkable, we will look at four important arguments of Khorchide and von Stosch.

First, as noted above, Khorchide and von Stosch argue that the emphasis in Meccan chapters that God has no *walad* ‘child’ is levelled not at Christians but at Meccan polytheists because, unlike the Christians, the Meccan polytheists held the view that the angels are the biological children of God.¹²⁹ In fact, we have evidence in the Quran that the Meccan polytheists used to take the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God to mean that he, like

¹²⁸ In *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, Robinson summarises the quranic texts about Jesus, examines the classical Muslim commentaries on Jesus in the Quran and outlines the traditional Christian responses to the quranic representation of Jesus. For a recent survey of the studies of Jesus in the Quran by western scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus*, 2–17, who, in the subsequent pages, offers his reading of Jesus in the Quran, a reading that Abdulla Galadari, in his review, describes as revisionist.

¹²⁹ See footnote 85 in chapter 1.

their angels, is the biological child of God (Q 43:57–60), and therefore, by disclaiming that Jesus is the *walad* ‘child’ of God, the Quran, to use the words of Khorchide and von Stosch, “is criticizing pagan Meccans who have included Jesus in their pantheon of gods while still insisting that their own goddesses are superior to him.”¹³⁰

Second, in Medinan chapters, both Jews and Christians are warned not to deify any human being (Q 3:64; 9:30–31). According to Khorchide and von Stosch, it is in such a context that the Quran disclaims that Jesus is God (Q 5:17, 72, 116) or the *ibn* ‘son’ of God (Q 9:30–31), not as a rejection of orthodox christology, according to which the God became man, but as a rejection of the deification of human beings, according to which men are elevated to divine status and made gods. In other words, the Quran rejects not the conception that God became man in Jesus but the conception that the man Jesus became God.¹³¹

Third, according to Khorchide and von Stosch, the quranic texts that seem to disclaim the Trinity are not addressing the orthodox belief of the Trinity but rejecting either the deification of Jesus and Mary (Q 5:116) or tritheism (Q 4:171).¹³²

Forth, Khorchide and von Stosch argue that Q 4:157 does not disclaim that Jesus was crucified, which is the traditional understanding of the verse, but in this verse, to use their words, “the Quran counters the Jews’ claim that they killed Jesus with an insistence that

¹³⁰ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 77.

¹³¹ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 109–112. In his concluding remarks on their joint study of Jesus in the Quran, Khorchide says, “Our book should have demonstrated that the proclaimer of the Quran does not mean to reject Christianity as a whole. That is because it is obvious that Christianity is not interested in the deification of Jesus but in the belief that God’s Word becomes experiential reality in Jesus Christ. This is not about a human being elevated to divine status, but about God doing the opposite and showing His affection for humans — an idea to which the Quran repeatedly attests, even if Islam gives priority to other images and other paths to bear witness to this affection.” (*The Other Prophet*, 210.)

¹³² Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 114–115. Q 4:171 is the only quranic text where Christians are warned not to say that Jesus is the *walad* ‘child’ of God. Commenting on this, Khorchide and von Stosch write, “The proclaimer of the Quran appears to be giving the following warning: if Christians go so far in their trinitarianism (flying in the face of their own tradition!) to claim that there are three denumerable entities in God, then they are speaking like the pagan Arabs who ascribe children to God in the biological sense and do not understand that God requires neither advocates nor intermediaries.” (*The Other Prophet*, 115.)

Jesus lives and is saved with God because God has raised him (see Q 4:158). The proclaimer of the Quran quite clearly does not deny his death, and presupposes it in other places,”¹³³ referring to Q 3:55, 5:177, and 19:33.¹³⁴ However, the Quran does not engage with the soteriological significance of Jesus’ crucifixion.¹³⁵

If the aforementioned arguments of Khorchide and von Stosch are valid, then it is not a clear-cut case that the Quran rejects orthodox christology, and this, in turn, would cast serious doubt on the suggestion that the quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because the Quran rejects orthodox christology.

- (2) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because the Quran rejects Christian claims of salvific exclusivism.

As noted above, the Quran takes issue with Jewish and Christian claims of salvific exclusivism.¹³⁶ For example, in chapter 2, an early Medinan chapter, we read:

They also say, “No one will enter Paradise unless he is a Jew or a Christian.”

This is their own wishful thinking. [Prophet], say, “Produce your evidence, if you are telling the truth.” In fact, any who direct themselves wholly to God and do good will have their reward with their Lord: no fear for them, nor will they grieve.¹³⁷

¹³³ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 77.

¹³⁴ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 77, fn 104.

¹³⁵ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 184–201.

¹³⁶ See 2.4.

¹³⁷ Q 2:111–112. See also Q 2:120–121, 135–136. As for the quranic position on the issue of salvation, Khorchide says, “We have seen that the Quran never criticizes Christianity or Judaism *per se*, only ever specific groupings and specific positions within them; otherwise, the Quran offers no shortage of praise and

The view of salvific exclusivism was held by many early Christians. These Christians did not only believe that Jesus is the saviour of the world, which was and still is the view of the Christian Church, but they were convinced that no one outside the Christian Church could be saved by Jesus. This soteriological position may be the underlying reason why the Quran reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology. In other words, by reacting to the Joseph-Jesus typology, the Quran addresses the view of salvific exclusivism, a view that could be implied in the typological construal of Joseph or any other Old Testament figure.¹³⁸

- (3) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because the Quran takes issues with the imperial policy of the Byzantine empire.

It is important to remember that the Quran emerged against the backdrop of the the imperial policy of the Byzantine empire which undeniably was using Christianity to justify its imperial policy. Taking this historical situation into consideration, could it be that, by reacting to the Joseph-Jesus typology, which may imply a sense of Christian superiority, the Quran addresses the imperial policy of the Byzantine empire?¹³⁹

recognition for the two religions. We also encounter this inclusive spirit of the Quran in the late phase of Muhammad's activity, i.e. when his political power was at its peak. We have already referred to the oft-cited passage at Q 5:48. This explains that, in the Qur'an's view, a variety of different beliefs is in accordance with God's salvific will. The Quran criticizes Judaism's and Christianity's exclusive vision of salvation and supports the diversity of religions. It rejects any kind of hierarchy of religious groups. As a Muslim theologian, I interpret this as a clear rebuttal of Islam's current claims to be the only route to salvation." (*The Other Prophet*, 209.)

¹³⁸ See Mehr, "Can there be an Islamic comparative theology?"

¹³⁹ The anti-imperial and anti-Byzantine character of the quranic proclamation is highlighted at length in Ghaffar, *Der Koran in seinem religions- und weltgeschichtlichen Kontext*. Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 117, notes that, since Q 9:29 may have been the order, issued in 630, to mobilise to Tabuk for battle against the Byzantines, the Christians and the Christian leaders criticised in Q 9:30–31 belonged to the imperial Byzantine Church. By extension, I would suggest that much of the criticism of Christianity in chapters 5 and 9, the two final chapters of the Quran, may have been directed against the Byzantine empire.

- (4) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because it is incompatible with the Quran's prophetology.

As noted above, the Quran depicts Joseph not as the type of Jesus but as the model for Muhammad.¹⁴⁰ In fact, the Quran depicts not only Joseph but also other biblical and non-biblical figures as models for Muhammad.

The quranic retellings of the stories of biblical and non-biblical figures follow a prophetology that, according to a recent study by Griffith, may be characterised by these attributes:

- Catholic: God's prophets and messengers have come to both biblical and non-biblical people.
- Recurrent: The pattern of experience of God's prophets and messengers, such as facing disbelief, rejection, and persecution, is recurrent.
- Dialogical: God's prophets and messengers interact in reproving dialogue with the people to whom they are sent.
- Singular in its message: God's prophets and messengers proclaim the same monotheistic message, namely, that God is one, worthy of worship, has no equals, and will reward good and punish evil on the day of judgment.
- Vindicated: God vindicates his prophets and messengers in their struggles.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ See 1.2.2.

¹⁴¹ Griffith, "The Sunna of Our Messengers", 215–216.

Moreover, as Griffith underlines, it is the Quran's prophetology that determines the quranic retellings of the stories of biblical and non-biblical figures, and these quranic retellings are ultimately meant to support the mission of Muhammad.¹⁴²

In the opening of his article on Muhammad's prophethood, Hartmut Bobzin argues that, just as Aphrahat reads the stories of the Old Testament figures with Jesus in mind, so too "the Quran interprets the traditional Judeo-Christian histories of the prophets in a similar fashion, yet does so with regard to Muhammad."¹⁴³ What is more, having examined the difference between the concept of prophet and that of messenger in the Quran, Bobzin notes that only biblical figures (Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Job, Zacharias, John, Jesus) and Muhammad are described as prophets in the Quran, whereas non-biblical figures (Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb) are described not as prophets but only as messengers in the Quran.¹⁴⁴ Bobzin goes on to consider how the concept of prophet came to be applied to Muhammad, leaving aside another interesting issue, on which he touched only briefly in his opening, namely, the relationship between the typological reading of the Old Testament figures in the Syriac tradition and the Quran's reading of the same figures as the models for Muhammad. However, this relationship has been examined in a recent study by Zishan Ghaffar.

Ghaffar opens his examination by remarking that the title of prophet occurs for the first time in the Quran in *Sūrat Maryam* and is applied to Jesus (Q 19:30), and he goes on to note

¹⁴² To be sure, there is more to say about the Quran's prophetology. The current scholarship on quranic prophetology is still in its infancy. There are questions that await further research. For example, what is the difference between a prophet and a messenger in the Quran? How does the concept of prophetology develop in the Quran? What is the relationship between prophetology, typology, and christology? For a further reading on these and other related questions, see Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Quran*, 3–16; Rubin, "Prophets and Prophethood", *EQ*, 4:289–307; Bobzin, "The 'Seal of the Prophets'", *QC*, 565–583; and Ghaffar's chapter, "Jesus's Position in Quranic Prophetology", in Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 119–156. My study will hopefully contribute to the question of the relationship between the relationship between prophetology, typology, and christology.

¹⁴³ Bobzin, "The 'Seal of the Prophets'", *QC*, 566.

¹⁴⁴ Bobzin, "The 'Seal of the Prophets'", *QC*, 571–572.

that the Old Testament figures mentioned in *Sūrat Maryam* (Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron) and those mentioned in other quranic chapters (Lot, Joseph, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Job) are typologically related to Jesus in the Syriac tradition.¹⁴⁵ Against this backdrop, Ghaffar suggests:

The term ‘prophet’ (*nabīy*) is therefore the new link connecting all of these figures, and so in Medina at the latest, prophetology... becomes a counter-discourse to Christology.

This is not to say that prophetology should be viewed entirely as a counter-discourse. In developing his prophetology, the proclaimer of the Quran focuses on constructive aspects, not just critical ones...

It is obviously important to the proclaimer of the Quran to make it clear that the title of prophet does not distinguish Jesus but instead binds him into the tradition that preceded him. In Q 3:84 he implicitly labels Jesus a prophet in a line that includes Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, and insists that we must not distinguish between them.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Ghaffar, “Jesus’s Position in Quranic Prophetology”, 152–153. On page 153, Ghaffar asserts that “none of the persons described as a prophet in the middle Meccan surahs are considered a prophet in the Christian or Jewish tradition. At any rate, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for instance, are regarded as patriarchs or fathers outside the Muslim tradition, but not as prophets.” In fact, many, if not all, of the Old Testament figures described as prophets in the Quran are considered prophets in the Syriac tradition. In the liturgical life of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, the persons that came before Jesus, namely, the Old Testament figures, are contrasted with the persons that came after Jesus, namely, the New Testament figures, and while the latter are called *šālīḥē* ‘apostles’ because they were chosen by Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, to proclaim the Gospel, the former are called *nabīē* ‘prophets’ because they were chosen by the Son of God to foretell the Gospel by virtue of either seeing the types of Jesus or being the types of Jesus. This understanding of the Old Testament figures is outlined by Jacob of Serugh in his homily *The Mysteries of our Lord in the Old Testament*, which is to be found in Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:121–127.

¹⁴⁶ Ghaffar, “Jesus’s Position in Quranic Prophetology”, 153.

In this view, according to which Jesus is not intrinsically distinguished from the Old Testament figures but at the same level as them and the model for Mohammad like them, the typological reading the Old Testament figures, according to which Jesus is intrinsically distinguished from them, above them, and typologically prefigured by them, is incompatible with the Quran's prophetology, and therefore, the quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition.

To sum up, I have presented four possible answers as to why the quranic Joseph story would react to the Joseph-Jesus typology. There could be more possible answers to this question. Be that as it may, I leave it to the readers to consider my suggested answers and to judge for themselves if any of them seems reasonable.

In this chapter, I have considered quranic omissions of biblical details about Joseph. In the next chapter, I look at quranic additions of Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology with the purpose of exploring how the quranic story participates in them, given that it reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.

3. QURANIC ADDITIONS OF EXTRABIBLICAL DETAILS

3.1. JOSEPH'S SECOND DREAM

Joseph said to his father, “Father, I dreamed of eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them all bow down before me,” and he replied, “My son, tell your brothers nothing of this dream, or they may plot to harm you — Satan is man’s sworn enemy. This is about how your Lord will choose you, teach you to interpret dreams, and perfect His blessing on you and the House of Jacob, just as He perfected it earlier on your forefathers Abraham and Isaac: your Lord is all knowing and wise.”¹

As noted above, the quranic story omits Joseph’s first dream,² according to which the brothers’ sheaves bowed down to Joseph’s sheaf as they were biding sheaves in the field (Gen 37:5–8), but it mentions Joseph’s second dream, according to which the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to Joseph:

He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, “Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, “What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?” So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.³

¹ Q 12:4–6.

² See 2.5.

³ Gen 37:9–11.

The quranic account of Joseph's dream includes a number of extrabiblical details, three of which will be considered in this section: (1) Jacob believes in Joseph's dream, (2) he warns him not to tell it to his brothers, lest they harm him, for (3) Satan is man's enemy. In the next section, I will look at Jacob's interpretation of Joseph's dream, but for now, suffice it to note that Jacob interprets Joseph's dream as a divine declaration of his prophethood.

The extrabiblical detail that (1) Jacob believes in Joseph's dream is mentioned by Josephus, in *Genesis Rabba*, by Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, Ps Narsai, Narsai, and Jacob.⁴ While Josephus, the reports in *Genesis Rabba*, Narsai, and Jacob simply comment that Jacob believes in Joseph's dream, Ps Basil and Ps Ephrem have Jacob say to himself that Joseph's dream is true, which is close to what we find in the quranic story, but even closer to the quranic story is Ps Narsai's first homily in which Jacob says to Joseph that he believes in his dream:

One day, Joseph slept and saw dreams, / and the Lord showed him hidden
mysteries and their manifestations. / He said to Jacob, "Father, hear the dreams
that I have seen, / and if they are, interpret them as they will be. / ... / Then I saw
another second dream after this one: / the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were
downing down to me." / Jacob said, "Be quiet child. Do not reveal your dream,
/ lest your brothers become jealous and kill you."⁵

Also, note that Ps Narsai has Jacob warn Joseph not to reveal his dreams to his brothers, lest they kill him, which is clearly reflected in the quranic story. None of our other authors

⁴ Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 175); *Genesis Rabba* (Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 777–778); Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 95); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 14–16); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 522–523); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 271); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:500).

⁵ Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 522–523.

mentions the extrabiblical detail that (2) Jacob warned Joseph not to tell it to his brothers, lest they harm him, except for Jacob,⁶ who, moreover, is the only author to mention Satan in this context.

Recounting Joseph's dreams in his first homily, Jacob emphasises the brothers' jealousy and hate for Joseph, and then, he turns to his listeners to give them a moral lesson on jealousy and hate, exhorting them to free themselves from these cruel passions because they have poisonous effect on the soul and can eventually lead to murder.⁷ Here, Jacob introduces Satan and calls him man's *bə'ēldarrā* 'enemy',⁸ which seems to be the background of the quranic addition of the extrabiblical detail that Jacob says to Joseph that (3) Satan is man's *'aduwa* 'enemy'.

What does all this mean for my study? First, the quranic story uses Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are in agreement with the religious message of the Quran. Therefore, the notion in Jacob's first homily that Satan is man's *bə'ēldarrā* 'enemy' is used by the quranic story because it is a frequent motif in the Quran.⁹ Second, the quranic story seems to embrace Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are relevant to the Meccan situation. That is to say, it is clear from the Meccan chapters of the Quran, and from the oldest preserved biography of Muhammad (henceforth the *sīra*),¹⁰ not only that Muhammad and his followers suffered many tribulations in Mecca, but also that Muhammad was largely rejected by the Meccan polytheists, including his own tribe, the Quraysh, and in such a situation, it is relevant to Muhammad, his followers, and his tribe members to know that Joseph, the prophet of God, was, on the one hand, rejected by his own brothers, who were

⁶ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:500.

⁷ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:494–497.

⁸ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:495.

⁹ See, for example, Q 2:168, 208; 7:22; 17:53; 36:60; 43:62.

¹⁰ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 109–218.

inclined to harm him, as the result of Satan's enmity toward humanity, but was, on the other hand, recognised by Jacob, who himself was a prophet of God.

3.2. JACOB'S INTERPRETATION OF JOSEPH'S DREAM

Joseph said to his father, "Father, I dreamed of eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them all bow down before me," and he replied, "My son, tell your brothers nothing of this dream, or they may plot to harm you — Satan is man's sworn enemy. This is about how your Lord will choose you (*yağtabīka rabbuka*), teach you to interpret dreams, and perfect His blessing on you and the House of Jacob, just as He perfected it earlier on your forefathers Abraham and Isaac: your Lord is all knowing and wise."¹¹

Abdel Haleem rightly points out that Jacob interprets Joseph's dream as a divine declaration of his prophethood:

In the Qur'an Jacob is a prophet who can interpret the dream... Naturally he is pleased to read in the dream that Joseph will be chosen as a prophet and that God will perfect His blessing upon him (and on Jacob's house) as He did with his fathers Abraham and Isaac before him. It is a joy for Jacob to see the line of prophethood continue in his family, and good education to tell young Joseph that he descends from such a line so that his beliefs and conduct may befit his ancestry.¹²

¹¹ Q 12:4–6.

¹² Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Quran*, 140–141.

Note that Abdel Haleem reads *yağtabīka rabbuka* as future tense, ‘your Lord will choose you’, which seems to be the standard reading, but *yağtabīka rabbuka* can also be read as present tense, ‘your Lord is choosing you’ or ‘your Lord chooses you’. If we accept the former reading, then we have to clarify when God chose Joseph as a prophet. According to Abdel Haleem, God chose Joseph as a prophet when he was about to voice his proclamation in prison in the presence of Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker (Q 12:37–40).¹³ This suggestion is problematic, for already before Joseph was taken to Egypt, that is to say, when his brothers threw him into the pit and left him there, God addresses him as a prophet:

Then they took him away with them, resolved upon throwing him into the hidden depths of a well. We inspired (*auḥainā*) him, saying, “You will tell them of all this [at a time] when they do not realize [who you are].”¹⁴

Would God inspire Joseph in the pit if he were not a prophet? In fact, the verb *auḥā* ‘to inspire’ or ‘to reveal’, which denotes the nature of God’s address to Joseph, is almost always used in the Quran to describe the way by which God addresses his prophets and messengers and reveals his scriptures and message to them. In *Sūrat Yūsuf*, the verb *auḥā* occurs three times, apart from when God addresses Joseph in the pit, namely, once in the opening and twice in the closing:

We tell you [Prophet] the best of stories in revealing (*’auḥainā*) this Quran to you. Before this you were one of those who knew nothing about them.¹⁵

¹³ Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Quran*, 146.

¹⁴ Q 12:15.

¹⁵ Q 12:3.

This account is part of what was beyond your knowledge [Muhammad]. We revealed it (*nūḥīhi*) to you: you were not present with Joseph's brothers when they made their treacherous plans.¹⁶

All the messengers We sent before you [Muhammad] were men to whom We made revelations (*nūḥī 'ilaihim*), men chosen from the people of their towns...¹⁷

Hence, Joseph was addressed as a prophet in the pit. How then was he chosen as a prophet in the prison? It seems to me that God chose Joseph as a prophet in the dream, or to be more accurate, he chose him in the *ru'yā* 'vision' that he bestowed on him (Q 12:5).

Be the issue of when Joseph was chosen as a prophet as it may, it is clear that, in the quranic story, Jacob interprets Joseph's dream as a divine declaration of his prophethood. By contrast, in the biblical story, Jacob explains that Joseph's dream is about how his family will eventually bow down to him (Gen 37:10), which seems to mean that Joseph will become a ruler, a meaning voiced by the brothers in their interpretation of Joseph's first dream (Gen 37:8) and disclosed later in the story (Gen 41:37–45; 42:6–11; 43:26–28; 45:4–9, 25–26).

While both Philo and Josephus, following the biblical story, have Jacob recognise that Joseph's dream means that his family will eventually bow down to him as an act of revering a man of power and authority, the former says that the dream is the result of Joseph's wishful thinking, whereas the latter states that the dream is from God.¹⁸ Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, Ps

¹⁶ Q 12:102.

¹⁷ Q 12:109.

¹⁸ Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 145); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 175).

Narsai, Narsai, and Jacob, likewise following the biblical story, have Jacob explain that Joseph's dream means that he will become a ruler.¹⁹

Having Jacob interpret Joseph's dream as a divine declaration of his prophethood, the quranic story is both highly creative — for none of our Jewish or Syriac sources has Jacob take Joseph's dream to mean that he will become a prophet — and arguably participating in our Syriac sources, particularly in the homiletic retellings of Ps Ephrem and Jacob.

In his first homily on Joseph, Ps Ephrem tells his audience that, when Jacob had heard Joseph recount his dreams, he understood that they were of divine origin because they made him remember his own dreams in which God *gəḥā* 'chose' him,²⁰ and then, he told his sons, who were upset because of Joseph's dreams, not to discard the possibility that God may have made Joseph a ruler in his dreams.²¹ In this, we perceive two notions that seem to be reflected in the quranic account of Jacob's interpretation of Joseph's dream. First, Jacob understands that Joseph's dream is of divine origin. Second, Jacob recognises that God may choose his prophets in dreams. Interestingly, in Ps Ephrem's homily, Jacob says that God *gəḥā* 'chose' him in his dreams, and similarly, in the quranic story, Jacob says to Joseph that God *yaḡtabī* 'chooses' him in his dream. The Syriac *gəḥā*, whose root is GBY, is equivalent of the Arabic *yaḡtabī*, whose root is ĠBY.

Turning to Jacob's first homily on Joseph, we find the following typological reading of Joseph's dream:

The sun and the moon bend their heads and bowed down to Joseph, / for they
beheld the mystery of the Son in the virtuous one. / Celestial bodies assigned

¹⁹ Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 95); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 16); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 522–523); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 271); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:497–500).

²⁰ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 14–15.

²¹ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 16.

honour to the one bearing the mysteries, / and from their places, they bowed down to him as to a ruler. / Through sheaves and celestial bodies, heaven and earth bowed down to him, / for all this is due to the Son whose rule has no end. / The day and the night bowed down to Joseph because they beheld / that he was carrying the types of the great sun of righteousness. / The dream summoned celestial bodies and had them surrender to the servant / who was carrying his Lord's image so that he would be held in honour because of the image.²²

According to Jacob, the bowing down to Joseph, who would become a ruler, is essentially an adoration meant for Jesus, the Son of God whose rule has no end, because Joseph was the type of Jesus. Having Jacob interpret Joseph's dream as a divine declaration of his prophethood, the quranic story seems to participate in Jacob's typological reading, agreeing that the dream has a deeper meaning but disclaiming any typological meaning and providing instead a meaning to the effect that Joseph is construed not as the type of Jesus but as the prophet of God and the model for Muhammad. Interestingly, according to the *sīra*, Muhammad was called to his mission and given divine revelation, in a dream:

Wahb b. Kaisān told me that 'Ubayd said to him: Every year during that month the apostle would pray in seclusion and give food to the poor that came to him. And when he completed the month and returned from his seclusion, first of all before entering his house he would go to the Ka'ba and walk round it seven times or as often as it pleased God; then he would go back to his house until in the year when God sent him, in the month of Ramaḍān in which God willed concerning him what He willed Hid grace, the apostle set forth to Ḥirā as was his wont, and

²² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:497.

his family with him. When it was the night on which God honoured him with his mission and showed mercy on His servants thereby, Gabriel brought him the command of God. “He came to me,” said the apostle of God, “while I was asleep, with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing, and said, ‘Read!’ I said, ‘What shall I read?’ He pressed me with it so tightly that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said, ‘Read!’ I said, ‘What shall I read?’ He pressed me with it the third time so that I thought it was death and said, ‘Read!’ I said, ‘What then shall I read?’ — and this I said only to deliver myself from him, lest he should do the same to me again. He said:

‘Read in the name of thy Lord who created,
Who created man of blood coagulated.
Read! Thu Lord is the most beneficent,
Who taught by the pen,
Though that which they knew not unto men.’

So I read it, and he departed from me. And I awoke from my sleep, and it was as though these words were written on my heart.²³

To sum up, in this section, we have seen that the quranic story draws on Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are construed typologically with the purpose of voicing its own understanding of Joseph and making him relevant to Muhammad.

²³ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 105–106.

3.3. THE BROTHERS' PLAN TO DO AWAY WITH JOSEPH

There are lessons in the story of Joseph and his brothers for all who seek them. The brothers said [to each other], “Although we are many, Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we are — our father is clearly in the wrong.” [One of them said], “Kill Joseph or banish him to another land, and your father’s attention will be free to turn to you. After that you can be righteous.” [Another of them] said, “Do not kill Joseph, but, if you must, throw him into the hidden depths of a well where some caravan may pick him up.”

They said to their father, “Why do you not trust us with Joseph? We wish him well. Send him with us tomorrow and he will enjoy himself and play — we will take good care of him.” He replied, “The thought of you taking him away with you worries me: I am afraid a wolf may eat him when you are not paying attention.” They said, “If a wolf were to eat him when there are so many of us, we would truly be losers!”²⁴

While the biblical story says that the brothers wanted to do away with Joseph when they were in the wilderness and saw him coming toward them (Gen 37:18–20), the quranic story states that the brothers planned to do away with Joseph before leaving their father’s house and that they asked him for permission to take Joseph with them as part of their deceitful plan. As Witztum rightly observes, in the quranic story, “we are dealing with premediated murder,”²⁵ and he goes on to show that, in this, the quranic story reflects extrabiblical developments in the work of Josephus and particularly in the Syriac sources.²⁶

²⁴ Q 12:7–14.

²⁵ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 197.

²⁶ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 198–200.

Josephus notes that, after Jacob interpreted Joseph's second dream, the brothers "were sorely aggrieved by these predictions... and they were eager to slay the lad."²⁷ Nevertheless, after some time, when the brothers had gone out to pasture the flock in the wilderness, "in his ignorance of their movements," Jacob "sent Joseph off to the flocks to learn what had befallen his brothers and to bring him word of their doings."²⁸

Closer to the quranic account are the extrabiblical developments in the works of Ps Basil and Ps Narsai and particularly in the work of Ps Ephrem. Ps Basil and Ps Narsai state that, after the brothers had heard Joseph's dreams, they planned to do away with him, and to protect him from them, Jacob sent them to pasture the flock in the wilderness, but later, since he had not heard anything from them for some time and was worried about them, he sent Joseph to them.²⁹ Unlike Josephus, Ps Basil and Ps Narsai explain that Jacob sent Joseph to the brothers not because of his ignorance of their movements but because of his worry about them.³⁰ Turning to the work of Ps Ephrem, we find not only that the brothers planned to do away with Joseph before leaving their fathers' house, but also that they tried to deceitfully convince him to eventually send Joseph to them in the wilderness to make it possible for them to carry out their plan:

The jealous brothers of Joseph / agreed among themselves to do away with him.

/ "For the time being, let us talk to Jacob / and deceive his mind by our words. /

Let us show him that we believe / in what has been said about Joseph. / Let us

talk peacefully, / hiding the wrath in our hearts, / and he will send / Joseph to the

²⁷ Thackeray, *Josephus*, 175.

²⁸ Thackeray, *Josephus*, 177.

²⁹ Ps Basil (Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 95); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 523).

³⁰ In fact, Josephus does also say that Jacob sent Joseph to the brothers because he was worried about them (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 177), but his ignorance of their severe resentment toward Joseph seems to be the precondition for sending Joseph.

flock and to us. / Here, Jacob can protect him, / but in the mountain, he will not be able to keep him alive. / There, Joseph can recount his dreams, / for the wilderness is vast enough for his arrogance. / Here, it is difficult for us to act, / for he is in the presence of his father. / In the mountains, free of men, / we will take vengeance on him. / Let us leave in peace from the presence / of our old father and not cause him pain. / Let us hide in our minds / the deadly poison that we have planned. / If he recognises that we are wrathful, / he will not send him to us. / Let us say to him, ‘remain in peace, / you and Joseph your beloved one, / and if it happens that we are delayed, / inform us of your health, / and forgive our brother his folly, / in that he made you and us his servants, / for youth is hasty / to speak as it wishes.’” / In his uprightness, Jacob heard / and believed in their words. / He accepted the words that / they deceitfully spoke in his presence.³¹

Having the brothers plan to do away with Joseph before leaving their father’s house, and having them ask him for permission to take Joseph with them as part of their deceitful plan, the quranic story seems to follow the tracks of Ps Basil and Ps Narsai and particularly Ps Ephrem.

Recall from the precious chapter that, by omitting the biblical detail of the sending of Joseph, and by having the brothers not only ask Jacob for permission to take Joseph out, but also depict him as a child who needs to play and be taken care of, the quranic story seems to react to the typological construal of the sending of Joseph in the Syriac tradition.³² Yet, as seen in this section, the quranic story participates in Syriac extrabiblical details that are

³¹ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 17–18.

³² See 2.6.

related to the biblical detail of the sending of Joseph. In this, we perceive that the quranic story does not categorically reject Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology, but it uses them to voice its own understanding of Joseph and make him relevant to Muhammad. But how could the aforementioned Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph have been relevant to Muhammad? This is not difficult to see if we consider Muhammad's experiences in Mecca. Given that Muhammad was rejected by the Meccan polytheists, even by the men of his own tribe, the Quraysh, and suffered long persecution in Mecca, we should not be surprised that the Meccan polytheists, or at least some of them, planned to kill Muhammad. In fact, in the *sīra*, there is evidence of attempted premeditated murder of Muhammad. We are told that some leading men of Quraysh called Muhammad to discuss his religious message. They asked him to perform some miracles to support his religious message. He replied that he was sent not to perform miracles but to convey the message that he had received from God. After this, Muhammad left them, sad and grieving, because he had hoped that they would accept his message, and then, we read:

When the apostle had gone Abū Jahl spoke, making the usual charges against him, and saying, "I call God to witness that I will wait for him tomorrow with a stone which I can hardly lift," or words to that effect, "and when he prostrates himself in prayer I will split his skull with it. Betray me or defend me, let the B. 'Abdu Manāf do what they like for that." They said that they would never betray him on any account, and he could carry on with his project. When morning came Abū Jahl took a stone and sat in wait for the apostle, who behaved as usual that morning. While he was in Mecca he faced Syriac in prayer, and when he prayed, he prayed between the southern corner and the black stone, putting the Ka'ba between himself and Syria. The apostle rose to pray while Quraysh sat in their

meeting, waiting for what Abū Jahl was to do. When the apostle prostrated himself, Abū Jahl took up the stone and went towards him, until when he got near him, he turned back in flight, pale with terror, and his wand had withered upon the stone, so that he cast the stone from his hand. The Quraysh asked him what had happened, and he replied that when he got near him a camel's stallion got in his way. "By God," he said, "I have never seen anything like his head, shoulders, and teeth on any stallion before, and he made as though he would eat me."³³

Just as God had saved Joseph from his brothers' plan to kill him, so too God saved Muhammad from Abū Jahl's plan to kill him, a plan to which the Quraysh, Muhammad's own tribe, agreed.

3.4. THE WOLF

They said to their father, "Why do you not trust us with Joseph? We wish him well. Send him with us tomorrow and he will enjoy himself and play — we will take good care of him." He replied, "The thought of you taking him away with you worries me: I am afraid a wolf (*di'bu*) may eat him when you are not paying attention." They said, "If a wolf (*di'bu*) were to eat him when there are so many of us, we would truly be losers!"³⁴

³³ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 135.

³⁴ Q 12:11–14.

The quranic story goes on to say that the brothers took Joseph out and threw him into a pit, and then, at nightfall, they returned to their father, saying, “We went off racing one another, leaving Joseph behind with our things, and a wolf (*ḏi’bu*) ate him.”³⁵ Hence, in the quranic story, a *ḏi’bu* ‘wolf’ allegedly ate Joseph. By contrast, in the biblical story, the brothers deceived Jacob into believing that a *rayah rā’āh* ‘wild animal’ devoured Joseph (Gen 37:20, 33). In other words, while the biblical story makes a general reference to a wild animal in regard to Joseph’s alleged death, the quranic story specifies that the wild animal was a wolf or perhaps wolves since *ḏi’b* may be read as a generic noun.

Considering the quranic addition of the extrabiblical detail that Joseph was killed by wolves, Witztum says, “To the best of my knowledge, no rabbinic source mentions a wolf in this context,”³⁶ and he goes on to note, “We do, however, find wolves in Christian retellings of the Joseph story. As part of the Joseph-Jesus typology, Joseph is referred to as the lamb. Hence his brothers are wolves.”³⁷ Witztum refers particularly to the homiletic retellings of Ps Ephrem and Ps Narsai,³⁸ and he rightly states that, unlike their homiletic retellings, the quranic story does not explicitly link the brothers with wolves,³⁹ but such a link would not be difficult to see implicit in the quranic story, and therefore, later Muslim exegetes draw that link.⁴⁰

It is remarkable that the quranic story, on the one hand, reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology but, on the other hand, uses the metaphor of wolves and lamb that Syriac authors employ in their typological construal of Joseph.⁴¹ To be sure, the quranic story does not

³⁵ Q 12:17.

³⁶ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 201.

³⁷ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 202.

³⁸ Ps Ephrem (*Histoire complete de Joseph*, 21, 48, 79); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 524, 527).

³⁹ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 202.

⁴⁰ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 203, fn 61.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that *ḏi’b* — which is the Arabic cognate of the Syriac *dībā* ‘wolf’ that both Ps Ephrem and Ps Narsai use in their homiletic retellings — occurs three times in the Quran and only in the Joseph story.

describe Joseph as a lamb,⁴² which is a crucial part of the Syriac metaphor of wolves and lamb that links Joseph with Jesus. By not describing Joseph as a lamb, the quranic story is perhaps making a statement to the effect that it is favourably participating in the Syriac reading of the Joseph story insofar as such a reading does not turn Joseph into the type of Jesus. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the Quran describes humans as animals with the purpose of pointing out the reprehensible condition of their religious and moral life,⁴³ and accordingly, by describing Joseph's brothers as wolves, the quranic story apparently underlines their menacing hatred for him.

3.5. JOSEPH'S DIVINE INSPIRATION IN THE PIT

Then they took him away with them, resolved upon throwing him into the hidden depths of a well (*ḡayābati l-ḡubbi*). We inspired him, saying, "You will tell them of all this [at a time] when they do not realize [who you are]."⁴⁴

In the quranic story, while in the pit, Joseph receives divine inspiration, through which God assures him that he will not perish in it but that he will be rescued from it and eventually tell his brothers of all this. In the biblical story, and in our Jewish sources, there is no mention of God addressing Joseph in the pit, but in the homilies of Ps Narsai and Jacob, we find God doing just that.⁴⁵ Hence, in his first homily on Joseph, Ps Narsai says:

⁴² The Quran mentions *ḡanam* 'lambs' or 'sheep' in 6:146, 20:18, and 21:78, but in each case, the meaning of *ḡanam* is not metaphorical but literal.

⁴³ See, for example, Q 2:65, 5:60, 7:166, 25:44; 47:12, and 74:50. Commenting on Q 2:65, Abdel Haleem writes, "Just as the Quran describes the disbelievers as blind, deaf, and dumb, here the transgressors are apes."

⁴⁴ Q 12:15.

⁴⁵ This has been noted by Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 203–205.

The deceitful brothers led Joseph to the pit (*gubbā*) / and said to him: “Descend into the bottom of the pit (*’ēšteh d-gubbā*). / Become king in the pit (*gubbā*), as you said, / and descend into it headlong whether you wish to or not.” / The wolves seized the rational lamb and threw him down, / but his father’s God descended with him into the pit (*gubbā*). / Twenty hands hurled Joseph into the pit (*gubbā*), / but two caught him and were with him undoubtedly. / The hidden divine will descended with Joseph into the pit (*gubbā*) / to console and encourage him, saying, / “Do not fear, righteous Joseph, and do not be sad, / for I am with you for all the days of your life. / I will neither leave you alone nor disregard you wherever you go, / and I will be with you until you see old Jacob.”⁴⁶

In Ps Narsai’s homily, the brothers throw Joseph into a pit, and then, by means of his divine will, God descends with Joseph into the pit, encourages him, and assures him that he will not perish in it. The thematic similarity between Ps Narsai’s homily and the quranic story is obvious.

Besides, note the lexical similarity between the two accounts. In Ps Narsai’s homily, Joseph is thrown into the *’ēšteh d-gubbā*, and similarly, in the quranic story, he is thrown into the *ḡayābati l-ḡubbi*. The quranic *ḡubb* ‘pit’ is a borrowing from the Aramaic/Syriac *gubbā*,⁴⁷ which interestingly, but not unexpectedly, occurs frequently not only in Ps Narsai’s homily but also in our other Syriac sources, all of which follow the Peshitta.⁴⁸ The quranic development that Joseph was thrown into the *ḡayābati* of the pit, which denotes “the part of

⁴⁶ Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 526–527.

⁴⁷ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 98–99. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the quranic *ḡubb* occurs only in the Joseph story (Q 12:10, 15).

⁴⁸ In the Hebrew text of Gen 37, we have *bôr* for pit, but in both the Peshitta and the Targums, we find *gubbā*.

anything that *veils*, or *conceals*, one,”⁴⁹ is reminiscent of Ps Narsai’s statement that Joseph was thrown into the *’ešteḥ* ‘bottom’ of the pit.⁵⁰

Turning to Jacob’s third homily on Joseph, we find the following typological construal of Joseph’s divine inspiration in the pit:

The mystery of the Son of God looked after Joseph in the pit and helped him out of it / to increase his virtue as the image of the Son of God. / This was said to the virtuous one in the pit: / “Joseph, do not be afraid of the darkness of the pit. / You will have to walk more miles along the way of the Son. / You will not perish in the pit. / You will have to go to Egypt to prepare / the way of your Lord, for he will also go there. / Go proclaim to the land which has rebelled against admonition / that the teacher is coming to teach the truth. / Go tell the princess of sorcery that the mighty one will come / to completely expose the falsehood. / Come ascend Joseph, you will not die here, / for it does not fall on you to fight death. / Miles of blood and dishonour are placed along the way / because your Lord is coming to grant peace by his great death. / Come go to Egypt, for the Son will go there, / and place in it the emblem of the slain king who will rule it. / Go tell the erring land that the great shepherd will come to you / to search for the lost ones. / Ascend from the pit and proclaim / that the way is terrifying and that a great slaughter will be carried about along it.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 6:2314.

⁵⁰ A similar language is used by our other Syriac homilists. Ps Ephrem has Reuben tell his brothers not to kill Joseph but to throw him into the *’ūmqā* ‘depth’ of the pit, and then, having stripped him of his garment before throwing him into the pit, Joseph asks his brothers to give him any covering for his nakedness, upon which they say that he does not need any covering because the inner part of the pit is *ḥešuk* ‘dark’ (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 29–30). Narsai has Joseph pray to God in the *’ešteḥ d-gubbā* ‘bottom of the pit’ (Mingana, *Narsai*, 273). Jacob has the brothers throw Joseph into the *ḥēšūḳā* ‘darkness’ of the pit (Akhress, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:511).

⁵¹ Akhress, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:512.

In Jacob's homily, the mystery of the Son of God looks after Joseph in the pit, helps him out of it, and tells him that he will be sent to Egypt as the type of the Son of God to foretell the Gospel.

To sum up, having God inspire Joseph in the pit and assure him that he will not perish in it but that he will be rescued from it, the quranic story participates in the homilies of Ps Narsai and Jacob but simultaneously develops its own reading of Joseph's divine inspiration in the pit, a reading that, among other things, confirms Ghaffar's suggestion, discussed above,⁵² that the Quran's prophetology is, among other things, a counter-discourse to the typological reading of the Old Testament figures. In Jacob's homily, while in the pit, Joseph is not only addressed and encouraged by God — which we find in both Ps Narsai's homily and the quranic story — but also construed as the type of Jesus. I suggest that, by having God address Joseph as a prophet in the pit,⁵³ the quranic story counters Jacob's typological construal of Joseph in the pit. In a word, Jacob says that, while in the pit, Joseph was addressed as the type of Jesus, and the quranic story responds that, while in the pit, Joseph was addressed not as the type of Jesus but as the prophet of God.

Moreover, as noted above,⁵⁴ according to the *sīra*, Muhammad was called to his mission and given divine revelation, that is to say, he was addressed as a prophet, when he was in seclusion probably in a cave on Hira. Despite the obvious differences between Muhammad's experience in the cave of Hira and its circumstances and Joseph's experience in the pit and its circumstances, each experience entails an encounter between God and his prophet, an encounter in which God vindicates his prophet. In this light, Joseph's experience in the pit, into which he was thrown by his own brothers who failed to recognise that he was a prophet, must have been relevant to Muhammad and his followers in their tribulations in Mecca and

⁵² See 2.20.

⁵³ Recall the discussion in 3.2.

⁵⁴ See 3.2.

a warning to the Meccan polytheists, many of whom were of Muhammad's own tribe, who rejected him and tried to do away with him.

3.6. DIVINE PRESENCE ENABLES JOSEPH TO RESIST POTIPHAR'S WIFE

The woman in whose house he was living tried to seduce him: she bolted the doors and said, "Come to me," and he replied, "God forbid! My master has been good to me; wrongdoers never prosper." She made for him, and he would have succumbed to her if he had not seen evidence of his Lord (*burhāna rabbihī*). We did this in order to keep evil and indecency away from him, for he was truly one of Our chosen servants (*'ibādina l-muḳlašīna*).⁵⁵

According to both the quranic story and the biblical story (Gen 39:7–10), Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but he did not give in to her, for he knew that that would be wrong. However, unlike the biblical story, the quranic story tells us that, in the face of temptation, Joseph saw *burhāna rabbihī* 'evidence of his Lord', which I take to mean some kind of evidence of divine presence, with the help of which he was able to resist Potiphar's wife, and God did this to keep evil away for Joseph because he was one of God's *'ibādi l-muḳlašīna* 'chosen servants' or simply God's *'abd* 'servant'.

As James Kugel points out, Jewish sources say that, when Joseph was seduced by Potiphar's wife, he saw his father Jacob in a vision that enabled him to resist her.⁵⁶ It has been argued by Reynolds that this Jewish extrabiblical detail serves as the background of the

⁵⁵ Q 12:23–24.

⁵⁶ Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 448, quoting a report in *Genesis Rabba*, "R. Huna said in the name of R. Matna: He saw the image of his father and his desire departed," and a comment in the Babylonian Talmud, "And she seized him by the garment... [Gen. 39:12]. At that moment, the image of his father entered and appeared to him in a vision."

quranic detail that Joseph saw evidence of divine presence when he was seduced by Potiphar's wife.⁵⁷ To be sure, there is a difference between the Jewish sources and the quranic story in regard to what Joseph saw when he was seduced by Potiphar's wife. While the Jewish sources say that Joseph saw Jacob in a vision, the quranic story states that he saw evidence of divine presence. In fact, in this case, the quranic story stands closer to the Syriac tradition than to the Jewish tradition. In Jacob's fifth homily on Joseph, we are told that Joseph was able to resist Potiphar's wife because he saw God:

Come near, listeners, and behold a wondrous struggle. / A young man struggles against a woman in a chamber. / A mistress desires her servant (*'abdā*) who does not give in to her. / A young man disregards his master's wife and does not look at her. / ... / In a place hidden from people's sight, Joseph saw God, / and he was afraid to commit any sin in secret because he beheld God. / In a closed room, Joseph gazed upon him who observes everything / and who sees the seen and unseen.⁵⁸

Some verses earlier, in the opening of the homily, Jacob says that Joseph saw the image of God:

Impious lust went to battle against chastity. / Come, let us consider the wondrous victory. / Joseph the pure is struggling against the Egyptian woman. / Be witnesses and give praise to the one who conquers. / ... / How was he able to

⁵⁷ Reynolds, *The Quran and the Bible*, 368–369, who, on page 369, maintains that the quranic detail, that Joseph saw evidence of divine presence when he was seduced by Potiphar's wife, "has an antecedent in Jewish tradition, but not in Christian tradition," which is simply not true, as we will see.

⁵⁸ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:527.

overcome the lust in his body? / And how could he conquer? / ... / His eyes were fixed on the image of God, / and he did not take his eyes off it, lest he be agitated.⁵⁹

In both the quranic story and Jacob's fifth homily, Joseph resists Potiphar's wife because he perceives God's presence. By contrast, in the Jewish sources, Joseph resists Potiphar's wife because he perceives his father Jacob in a vision. Hence, saying that Joseph was able to resist Potiphar's wife because he saw evidence of divine presence, the quranic story seems to participate in Jacob's fifth homily.

Interestingly, in Jacob's fourth homily on Joseph, we find the following typological construal of Joseph's resistance of Potiphar's wife:

In his virtues and beauty, Joseph resembled the Son, / and therefore, resenting him, sin strove to throw its filth on the virtuous one. / His master's wife saw that he was beautiful, / and in her deadly lust, she tried to harm his precious chastity. / Behold, Joseph's virtues belong to Christ, / and like him, he went to battle but did not surrender. / Just as sin stared at our Lord, so too the Egyptian woman looked at Joseph / and offered herself to him in a persistent battle for a long time. / ... / Our saviour defeated sin in every battle, / and therefore, it befitted Joseph to conquer, for he resembled our Lord.⁶⁰

Again, in this, we perceive that the quranic story uses Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are construed typologically by Syriac authors, but at the same time, it carefully

⁵⁹ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:526.

⁶⁰ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:521.

makes sure to distance itself from the Joseph-Jesus typology. Hence, the quranic story uses Jacob's interpretation that Joseph was able to resist Potiphar's because he saw God's presence, but it disregards his typological construal that Joseph's resistance had to do with Jesus, and instead it reminds its audience that Joseph was one of God's *'ibād* 'servants'.

Recall that in the first of the three quoted passages above from Jacob's homiletic retelling, Joseph is called a *'abdā* 'servant' of Potiphar's wife. That Joseph is a servant in Potiphar's house is clear from the biblical story. In fact, Potiphar's wife tells her husband, "The Hebrew servant (*'ebed*), whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me,"⁶¹ and, "This is the way your servant (*'abdeka*) treated me."⁶² By contrast, the quranic story depicts Joseph not as a servant of Potiphar and his wife — for he is their adopted son (Q 12:21) — but as one of God's *'ibād* 'servants'.

The concept of *'ibād*, which is an important element in both the quranic community's self-identity and the Quran's prophetology, has been studied diachronically by Ghaffar. Summarising the concept of *'ibād* in regard to the quranic community's self-identity from the middle Meccan period to the Medinan period, Ghaffar writes:

While the servants in the middle Meccan period become synonymous with Muhammad's community, the identity-defining role of the term wanes in the late Meccan and Medinan periods, when *'ibād* is more frequently employed as a collective noun for humanity and can therefore be increasingly translated as 'people'. In the context of creation theology and the economy of salvation, the term *'ibād* now refers to the relationship between God and humankind... The

⁶¹ Gen 39:17.

⁶² Gen 39:19.

middle Meccan definition of the *‘ibād* as believers (*al-mu‘minūn*) becomes the exclusive *nomen/genus proprium* of the early Muslim community in Medina.⁶³

Recall from the previous chapter that the title of prophet occurs for the first time in the Quran in *Sūrat Maryam* and is applied to Jesus.⁶⁴ To be more precise, in *Sūrat Maryam*, Jesus himself says, “I am a servant of God (*‘abdu llāhi*). He has granted me the Scripture; made me a prophet.”⁶⁵ Hence, Jesus himself declares that he is not only a prophet but also a servant of God. As Khorchide and von Stosch note, Jesus is the only person in the Quran who presents himself as a servant of God.⁶⁶ Commenting on Jesus’ self-presentation as a servant of God against the backdrop of the quranic community’s self-identity as servants of God, Ghaffar writes:

If we remind ourselves at this juncture that Jesus presented himself as a servant for the very first time in Surah Maryam, then this statement takes on a new meaning (Q 19:30). We saw in an earlier chapter that the term ‘servant’ was one of the first Christological titles and also a name monks and nuns commonly used to refer to themselves. The proclaimer of the Quran obviously democratises this term and uses it for all those who respond to his call. In doing so, he relativises the distinction granted to Christ. This is not at all to suggest that describing Jesus as a servant of God represents his demotion. The aim of the Quran’s prophetology is instead to extend Jesus’ grandeur to the Quranic community. Just as Christians would say that we are all God’s children because

⁶³ Ghaffar, “Jesus’s Position in Quranic Prophetology”, 132.

⁶⁴ See 2.20.

⁶⁵ Q 19:30.

⁶⁶ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 73.

Jesus is the Son of God, the proclaimer of the Quran can also say that we are all servants of God because Jesus was God's servant.⁶⁷

Moreover, that the Quran has Jesus presents himself as a servant of God, which is a prominent title of Jesus in orthodox christology that involves his salvific suffering,⁶⁸ does not mean that the Quran confirms Jesus' salvific suffering. Instead, the title of servant as applied to Jesus in the Quran, in the words of Khorchide and von Stosch, is "re-appropriated and re-embedded in its wider biblical context (see Gen. 34:5 and Josh. 1:13 in relation to Moses; Job 1:8 in relation to Job; Ps. 113:1 and Ezra 5:11 in relation to Israel, to name but a few). Nevertheless, its pointed use with regard to Jesus places a peculiar emphasis on his person, raising Christological implications."⁶⁹

Against the backdrop of the quranic concept of *'ibād*, how are we to understand the mention of Joseph as one of God's *'ibād* 'servants' in the quranic story, given the fact that Joseph is frequently described as a servant of Jesus in Jacob's homiletic retelling? In previous sections, I quoted two passages from Jacob's homiletic retelling in which Joseph is described not only as the type of Jesus but also as his servant.⁷⁰ More such passages may be provided. Here follows one more passage:

The story of Joseph is ineffable unless it is told in our Lord, / for through him,
Joseph seized the land of Egypt once he had gone down to it. / He brought the
emblem of the king to place it among the Egyptians, / and the sign seized the

⁶⁷ Ghaffar, "Jesus's Position in Quranic Prophetology", 130.

⁶⁸ Already in the New Testament, the title of servant as applied to Jesus carries salvific connotations. Compare the proclamation of Peter in Solomon's Portico (Acts 3:11–26) and the early Christian hymn in Paul's letter to the Philippians (Phil 2:5–11).

⁶⁹ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The Other Prophet*, 73.

⁷⁰ See 2.9 and 3.2.

rebellious land of Egypt. / The Son of God set his witness in his servant (*‘abdā*) Joseph / and sent him to Egypt so that he would depict the image in Egypt.⁷¹

According to Jacob, Joseph is the servant of Jesus because the former is the type of the latter, but such a relationship between Joseph and Jesus is not possible according to the Quran’s prophetology. Ghaffar explains:

It is obviously important to the proclaimer of the Quran to make it clear that the title of prophet does not distinguish Jesus but instead binds him into the tradition that preceded him. In Q 3:84 he implicitly labels Jesus a prophet in a line that includes Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and insists that we must not distinguish between them. According to his conception, prophets should not be taken as lords (Q 3:80), nor should the gift of prophethood cause anyone to become the servant of a prophet (Q 3:79).⁷²

When all is said and done, it seems to me that, by saying that Joseph is a servant of God, the quranic story counters Jacob’s statement that Joseph is the servant of Jesus.

3.7. JOSEPH’S SHIRT AS PROOF OF HIS INNOCENCE

They raced for the door — she tore his shirt from behind — and at the door they met her husband. She said, “What, other than prison or painful punishment, should be the reward of someone who tried to dishonour your wife?” but he said,

⁷¹ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:534.

⁷² Ghaffar, “Jesus’s Position in Quranic Prophetology”, 153.

“She tried to seduce me.” A member of her household suggested, “If his shirt is torn at the front, then it is she who is telling the truth and he who is lying, but if it is torn at the back, then she is lying and he is telling the truth.” When the husband saw that the shirt was torn at the back, he said, “This is another instance of women’s treachery: your treachery is truly great. Joseph, overlook this; but you [wife], ask forgiveness for your sin — you have done wrong.”⁷³

In the quranic story, Joseph’s shirt plays a decisive role in proving his innocence, for by examining his shirt, Potiphar concludes that his wife’s accusation against Joseph is false, and therefore, Potiphar neither punishes nor imprisons Joseph. By contrast, in the biblical story, Joseph’s garment is mentioned without any forensic value, and instead, Potiphar is moved by his wife’s words and puts Joseph in prison:

Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside.” When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, “This is the way your servant treated me,” he became enraged. And Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison.⁷⁴

Construing Joseph’s shirt as proof of his innocence, the quranic story reflects extrabiblical developments in Jewish and Syriac sources, for all of our Jewish and Syriac sources, except

⁷³ Q 12:25–29.

⁷⁴ Gen 39:16–19.

for *Genesis Rabba* and the works of Aphrahat and Jacob, ascribe forensic value to Joseph's garment.⁷⁵ However, while the author of *Jubilees*, Philo, Josephus, Ephrem, and Ps Ephrem have the garment convince Potiphar that his wife's accusation against Joseph is true,⁷⁶ Ps Basil, Ps Narsai, and Narsai have the garment convince Potiphar that his wife's accusation against Joseph is false.

In Narsai's homily, having heard his wife's accusation and seen Joseph's garment in her hands, Potiphar says to her:

“Who is your witness that Joseph did this thing? / For I do not wish to judge him unjustly. / Behold, his garment is in your hands, yet you cry out that it is you who have been victimised. / I will not believe you because you are not truthful.”⁷⁷

A similar response is found in Ps Narsai's homiletic retelling:

“If you are blameless, why does the servant's garment remain with you? / If Joseph dared to come to lie with you, / he would have taken your covering and

⁷⁵ *Jubilees* (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 258–259); Philo (Colson, *Philo*, 169); Josephus (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 193); Ephrem (Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 185); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 91–95); Ps Basil (Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 106); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 541–543); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 279). For a summary of how Philo, Ephrem, Ps Ephrem, Ps Basil, Ps Narsai, and Narsai construe Joseph's garment, see Heal, *Tradition and Transformation*, 228–233. For a discussion of the quranic construal of Joseph's shirt in comparison with Jewish and Syriac sources, see Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 211–217.

⁷⁶ It is worth noting that Philo and Josephus do comment that Potiphar's inference was incorrect and based on a careless examination of the truth. Josephus states that since Potiphar was influenced by his love for his wife, “he was not careful to investigate the truth.” (Thackeray, *Josephus*, 193.) Philo argues that Potiphar committed a great error in not apprehending that Joseph's garment actually proved his innocence, for “if force were used by him, he would retain his mistress's robe; if against him he would lose his own.” (Colson, *Philo*, 169.)

⁷⁷ Mingana, *Narsai*, 279. In the next verse, we learn that, despite his disbelief in his wife's accusation, Potiphar put Joseph in prison because of jealousy, “The Egyptian was strongly moved with jealousy by his wife's words, / and he fiercely confined Joseph in prison.”

not you his. / Behold, your stupidity is revealed together with your transgression.

/ Do not shout, be in uproar, or raise your voice.”⁷⁸

In Ps Basil’s retelling, after Joseph rises to power, Potiphar says to his wife that Joseph’s garment, which she kept in her hands after her accusation against him, bore witness of his innocence:

“Joseph did not commit any offense against you. Instead you in your unseemliness yearned for his beauty, and he like a free man let go of his garment and fled from you: For if he had been assaulting you, you would have left your clothes in his hands.”⁷⁹

Having the shirt convince Potiphar that his wife’s accusation against Joseph is false, the quranic story is closer to the Syriac tradition than to the Jewish tradition. More importantly, I find it remarkable that the quranic story construes the shirt in such a way as to make it vindicate Joseph. In this sense, the shirt seems to be miraculous and one of God’s *āyāt* ‘signs’.⁸⁰ In the later Muslim exegetical tradition, the *šāhidu* ‘witness’ who *šahida* ‘testified’ that Joseph is innocent if his shirt is torn at the back (Q 12:26–27) is identified, among other suggestions, as the torn shirt itself.⁸¹ To me, the remarkable thing about the quranic construal of the shirt in this context is that it reminds me of Jesus. Recall from the previous chapter that, in the Syriac tradition, the robe that Jacob made for Joseph is linked typologically with

⁷⁸ Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 541–542.

⁷⁹ Heal, “The Syriac History of Joseph”, 106. The jealousy motif may explain why Joseph ended up in prison according to Ps Basil and Ps Narsai.

⁸⁰ In the next section, I will say more the quranic concept of God’s *āyāt* ‘signs’.

⁸¹ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 212, fn 99.

Jesus, a link that the quranic story is aware of.⁸² In other words, the quranic story is aware of the christological meaning of Joseph's shirt. As I have argued in the previous chapter, the quranic story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology, but this does not mean that the quranic story categorically rejects narratives, themes, motifs, or notions that carry christological meaning in the Syriac tradition. The vindicating shirt of Joseph, which is miraculous and one of God's signs, is a case in point. As a Christian, I recognise all of these characteristics in Jesus: he is the vindicator of the oppressed, the performer of miracles, and God's sign. Interestingly, in the Quran, Jesus is God's sign (Q 19:21), performs various miracles (Q 3:49), and vindicates his mother Mary as a child in her arms:

She went back to her people carrying the child, and they said, "Mary! You have done something terrible! Sister of Aaron! Your father was not an evil man; your mother was not unchaste!" She pointed at him. They said, "How can we converse with an infant?" [But] he said: "I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scripture; made me a prophet; made me blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live, to cherish my mother. He did not make me domineering or graceless. Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again." Such was Jesus, son of Mary.⁸³

⁸² See 2.4.

⁸³ Q 19:27–34.

3.8. JOSEPH’S IMPRISONMENT

As noted in the previous section, in the quranic story, the accusation of Potiphar’s wife that Joseph tried to assault her is proven false, and therefore, Potiphar neither punishes nor imprisons Joseph. To explain why Joseph ended up in prison, despite his declared innocence, the quranic story recounts the following extrabiblical event:

Some women of the city said, “The governor’s wife is trying to seduce her slave! Love for him consumes her heart! It is clear to us that she has gone astray.” When she heard their malicious talk, she prepared a banquet and sent for them, giving each of them a knife. She said to Joseph, “Come out and show yourself to them!” and when the women saw him, they were stunned by his beauty, and cut their hands, exclaiming, “Great God! He cannot be mortal! He must be a precious angel!” She said, “This is the one you blamed me for. I tried to seduce him and he wanted to remain chaste, but if he does not do what I command now, he will be put in prison and degraded.” Joseph said, “My Lord! I would prefer prison to what these women are calling me to do. If You do not protect me from their treachery, I shall yield to them and do wrong,” and his Lord answered his prayer and protected him from their treachery — He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing. In the end they thought it best, after seeing all the signs of his innocence, that they should imprison him for a while.⁸⁴

This extrabiblical event — the women’s banquet — has no antecedent in the Syriac tradition, but it occurs in various, more or less developed, versions in late Jewish sources, all of which,

⁸⁴ Q 12:30–35.

except for one, postdate the Quran.⁸⁵ The source that predates the Quran is an Aramaic poem, which was included in the liturgy of the holiday of Shavuot, a holiday that commemorates the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and which was recited as a panegyric to Joseph who, in accordance with the seventh law of the Decalogue, refused to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife. In this ancient poem, after Joseph's refusal to give in to her seduction, Potiphar's wife summons the neighbouring women to tell them about Joseph, the object of her desire, and to express her frustration over his refusal to submit to her advances. Once the women are in her palace, Potiphar's wife has them recline at the table and calls Joseph to serve them:

With serving-bowels in his hand, he went and mixed their wine. / They held their cups, but take no taste of them. / For when they beheld him, their faces grew quite pale. / Yet though his face was toward his mistress, his heart was to his father.⁸⁶

In another, probably later, version of this ancient poem, we read that the women had knives and citrons in their hands and that they did not cut the citrons, yet their hands were full of blood, implying that they cut their hands:

With serving-bowels in his hand, he went and mixed their wine. / They held their cups, but take no taste of them. / When they beheld him, in their hands were

⁸⁵ For a survey of the various versions of the women's banquet and the Jewish sources in which they appear, and for a discussion of how the versions in Jewish sources relate to each other and to the version in the quranic story, see Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 28–65; Bar-Ilan, "Surat Yusuf (XII) and Some of Its Possible Jewish Sources", 189–210.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 32.

knives and citrons. / The citrons they did not cut, and their hand were full of blood.⁸⁷

According to Kugel, writing in 1990, the date of the ancient poem and its later version(s) is uncertain.⁸⁸ However, in his article on the Jewish background of the quranic Joseph story, published in 2016, Bar-Ilan dates the later version(s) of the poem to the fourth to sixth century:

This Aramaic poem is built as an alphabetical acrostic. It tells that Potiphar's wife invited her female friends to a feast. They were holding knives and etrogim while they watched Joseph, and, shocked by the handsome slave's beauty, they cut their hands. Concerning the date of this poem and its counterparts, the situation is clear: the Aramaic texts are full of Greek words, and there is no doubt that these poems come from the Byzantine era, around the fourth to sixth centuries. That is to say, once and for all, the argument is settled: The Aramaic poem in which the narrative of the women's feast appears predated the Quran, so it is clear that the ladies' feast in the Quran is based on a Jewish source, and not vice versa.⁸⁹

It is quite clear that the women's banquet in the quranic story, according to which the women at the banquet are stunned by Joseph's beauty and cut their hands, is reflecting the later version(s) of the ancient Aramaic poem. It is equally clear that the quranic story is not simply

⁸⁷ Quoted in Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 37.

⁸⁸ Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 32, 37–38. The ancient poem has more than one version which, however, are quite similar in content.

⁸⁹ Bar-Ilan, "Surat Yusuf (XII) and Some of Its Possible Jewish Sources", 193. As for the date of the ancient poem, Bar-Ilan suggests, on page 199, a date of the third century.

copying the poem but rather using it for its own purpose. Commenting on Kugel's reading of the women's banquet in the quranic story, Witztum rightly observes:

Kugel compares the Quranic scene to several parallels in late Jewish sources and offers a reconstruction of the development of this motif stage by stage. He does not, however, accord sufficient importance to the distinctive part this scene plays in the Quran. Here it serves to explain why Joseph, who has already been declared innocent, is nonetheless imprisoned. When the women are convinced of Joseph's divine beauty, the wife states that if he does not succumb to her he will be imprisoned. Joseph then addresses God saying that he prefers prison to the women's plan. God responds and saves him from their trickery. Finally, "It seemed right to them, after they had seen the signs, to imprison him for a time" (v. 35). In none of the parallel Jewish sources is Joseph previously declared to be innocent.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 213, fn 102. Witztum's evaluation of Kugel's reading applies to that of Bar-Ilan as well. It is worth mentioning that *Midrash ha-Gadol*, an anthology of midrashic comments on the Pentateuch from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, is the only late Jewish source that, like the quranic story, construes the women's banquet as a transition to Joseph's imprisonment, but there is an important difference between them in regard to the nature of the imprisonment. As seen, in the quranic story, the prison is viewed as a safe haven, a gift from God, which Joseph prayed for and in which he could be protected from the threatening temptation of the women at the banquet. By contrast, in *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Joseph's imprisonment is regarded both as a punishment for his attempted assault and as an opportunity for Potiphar's wife to keep the object of her desire confined and close to her. Consequently, in *Midrash ha-Gadol*, having her female friends visiting at her palace, Potiphar's wife prepares a banquet and calls Joseph to appear before them. Stunned by his beauty, they cut their hands and then say to her that she has to make Potiphar lock him up in prison so that he would be entirely hers, upon which she asks them to join her in accusing him of attempted assault so that Potiphar would believe in the accusation. Finally, Joseph is accused before Potiphar, declared guilty, and imprisoned. As for the other late Jewish sources, they make no causal connection between the women's banquet and Joseph's imprisonment, for they commonly have the women's banquet take place before Joseph is accused of attempted assault.

The quranic construal of the women's banquet fits perfectly with the Quran's prophetology, according to which God always protects his prophets and never abandons them in their tribulations.

What is more, note that Q 12:35, according to Abdel Haleem's translation, says, "In the end they thought it best, after seeing all the signs of his innocence, that they should imprison him for a while." However, the Arabic text of Q 12:35, which reads, *tumma badā lahum min ba'di mā ra'awu l-āyāti la-yasğununnahū ḥattā ḥīnin*, does not explicitly identify the *āyāti* 'signs' as those of Joseph's innocence, and therefore, as seen in the quotation above, Witztum translates Q 12:35 as, "It seemed right to them, after they had seen the signs, to imprison him for a time." Commenting on Q 12:35, Rudi Paret writes:

Es ist nicht recht klar, was mit den „Zeichen“ (*āyāt*) in Vers 35 gemeint ist. Die Kommentatoren verstehen darunter die Zeichen von Josephs Unschuld. Aber nachdem sich gezeigt hatte, daß Joseph unschuldig war, lag eigentlich kein Grund vor, ihn gefangen zu setzen (es sei denn — wie die Kommentatoren vermuten — zu dem Zweck, den Skandal nicht Öffentlichkeit dringen zu lassen.) Schapiro (S. 45f.) und Speyer (S. 206f.) verweisen in diesem Zusammenhang auf einem Midraš, nach dem Joseph, wenn er schuldig gewesen wäre, die Todesstrafe und nicht nur Gefängnis verdient hätte. Vielleicht sind aber mit dem Ausdruck *al-āyāt* eher die aufsehenerregenden „Zeichen“ und Wirkungen von Josephs berückender Schönheit gemeint.⁹¹

To my mind, the suggestions that the *āyāt* 'signs' are those of Joseph's innocence or those of his beauty are not convincing given the context. In what follows, I will suggest another

⁹¹ Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 250.

reading of Q 12:35, a reading that takes into account the context of Q 12:35 and the quranic concept of God's *āyāt* 'signs', and I will argue that Q 12:35 participates in Jacob's typological construal of Joseph's imprisonment.

The quranic concept of God's *āyāt*, which has to do with the ways in which God reveals his existence, power, will, and message to humanity, has been studied by a number of scholars.⁹² It is commonly held among them that the word *āya* (singular of *āyāt*), which occurs almost four hundred times in the Quran, derives from the Syriac word *āṭā* (singular of *āṭwāṭā*). In this, they follow Arthur Jeffery who says that *āya* is a Syriac loanword.⁹³ Moreover, some of them point out that the concept of signs in the Quran reflects that in the Syriac tradition.⁹⁴

According to the Quran, God reveals his existence, power, will, and message to humanity by means of his various signs, which are to be found in physical nature, as textual units of the Quran, and in human history. As for the first kind of signs, those in physical nature, the following passage serves as a representative example:

Your God is the one God: there is no god except Him, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy. In the creation of the heavens and earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that sail the seas with goods for people; in the water which God sends down from the sky to give life to the earth when it has been barren, scattering all kinds of creatures over it; in the changing of the winds and

⁹² Abrahamov, "Signs", *EQ*, 5:2–11; Netton, "Nature as Signs", *EQ*, 3:528–535; Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 80–103, 264–277; "Verse(s)", *EQ*, 5:419–429; Rubin, "Prophets and prophethood", *BCQ*, 234–247; Griffith, "The Sunna of Our Messengers", 207–227; Marshall, "Punishment Stories", *EQ*, 4:318–322; Graham, "The Quran as a Discourse of Signs", 263–275; Madigan, *The Quran's Self-Image*, 96–103.

⁹³ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 72–73.

⁹⁴ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 274–275; Griffith, "The Sunna of Our Messengers", 210, 221. For an overview of the concept of signs in the works of Ephrem and Jacob, see Brock, *The Luminous Eyes*, 40–43; *St. Ephrem the Syrian*, 39–49; Griffith, *Faith Adoring the Mystery*; Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism"; Kollamparampil, *Salvation in Christ*, 49–75.

clouds that run their appointed courses between the sky and earth: there are signs (*āyāt*) in all these for those who use their minds. Even so, there are some who choose to worship others besides God as rivals to Him, loving them with the love due to God, but the believers have greater love for God. If only the idolaters could see — as they will see when they face the torment — that all power belongs to God, and that God punishes severely.⁹⁵

As for the second kind of signs, those pertaining to textual units of the Quran, scholars point particularly to quranic passages in which the verb *talā* ‘to recite’ occurs in connection with the word *āyāt*.⁹⁶

The third kind of signs has to do with God’s involvement in human history through his prophets who proclaimed his message, were guided by him throughout their lives, and were protected by him in their tribulations. This kind of signs is not only evident in the quranic Joseph story,⁹⁷ but also reminiscent of the use of signs in the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition. Consequently, in the quranic story, we find that Joseph, the prophet of God, proclaimed God’s message, was guided by him throughout his life, and was protected by him in his tribulations, and similarly, in the Syriac tradition, by virtue of being the type of Jesus, Joseph proclaimed the Gospel, was guided by Jesus, and was protected by him in his tribulations.⁹⁸ With this in mind, let us take a new look at Joseph’s imprisonment in the quranic story and in Jacob’s homiletic retelling.

⁹⁵ Q 2:163–165.

⁹⁶ Q 2:129, 151, 252; 3:58, 101, 108, 113, 164; 8:2, 31; 10:15; 19:58, 73; 22:72; 23:66, 105; 28:45, 59; 31:7; 34:43; 39:71; 45:6, 8, 25, 31; 46:7; 62:2; 65:11; 68:15; 83:13. This enumeration of references is taken from Madigan, *The Quran’s Self-Image*, 96, n 56.

⁹⁷ Interestingly, in Q 12:7, we are told that, in the quranic story, there are *’āyātun li-s-sā’ilīna* ‘signs for those inquiring’ about the truth.

⁹⁸ We saw several examples of such a construal of Joseph in the previous chapter.

In the quranic story, it is clear that Joseph prayed to God to protect him from the women at the banquet by having him imprisoned (Q 12:33), and God, who protects his prophets in their tribulations, answered Joseph's prayer for imprisonment (Q 12:34). Now, the question is, how would God bring about Joseph's imprisonment? If the signs in Q 12:35 are understood within the quranic concept of God's signs, then the answer is clearly perceived in Q 12:35. That is to say, Potiphar and his servants saw God's signs, by means of which God enacted his will to have Joseph imprisoned, and therefore, *badā lahum min ba'di mā ra'awu l-'āyāti la-yasğununnahū ḥattā ḥīnin*, 'it occurred to them, after they had seen the signs, to imprison him for a while' (translation mine).

Moreover, in Jacob's homiletic retelling, we are repeatedly told that Jesus protected Joseph and guided him throughout his life to make sure that he proclaimed the Gospel. Hence, in Jacob's third homily, Jesus comes to Joseph in the pit the following way:

The mystery (*rāzā*) of the Son of God looked after Joseph in the pit and helped him out of it / to increase his virtue as the image (*šalmā*) of the Son of God. / This was said to the virtuous one in the pit: / "Joseph, do not be afraid of the darkness of the pit. / You will have to walk more miles along the way of the Son. / You will not perish in the pit. / You will have to go to Egypt to prepare / the way of your Lord, for he will also go there. / Go proclaim to the land which has rebelled against admonition / that the teacher is coming to teach the truth. / Go tell the princess of sorcery that the mighty one will come / to completely expose the falsehood. / Come ascend Joseph, you will not die here, / for it does not fall on you to fight death. / Miles of blood and dishonour are placed along the way / because your Lord is coming to grant peace by his great death. / Come go to Egypt, for the Son will go there, / and place in it the emblem (*nīšā*) of the slain

king who will rule it. / Go tell the erring land that the great shepherd will come to you / to search for the lost ones. / Ascend from the pit and proclaim / that the way is terrifying and that a great slaughter will be carried about along it.”⁹⁹

By means of his *rāzā* ‘mystery’, Jesus comes to Joseph, who is the *ṣalmā* ‘image’ of Jesus, to protect him from dying in the pit and to send him to Egypt to proclaim the Gospel among the Egyptians and place the *nīšā* ‘emblem’ of Jesus in their land. In the opening of his sixth homily, Jacob reiterates:

The story of Joseph is ineffable unless it is told in our Lord, / for through him, Joseph seized the land of Egypt once he had gone down to it. / He brought the emblem (*nīšā*) of the king to place it among the Egyptians, / and the sign (*āṭā*) seized the rebellious land of Egypt. / The Son of God set his witness in his servant Joseph / and sent him to Egypt so that he would depict the image (*ṣalmā*) in Egypt.¹⁰⁰

Jacob’s use of *rāzā*, *ṣalmā*, *nīšā*, and *āṭā* in his reading of the Joseph story is equivalent of how *āyāt* ‘signs’ are used in *Sūrat Yūsuf* in particular and in the Quran in general.¹⁰¹ As for

⁹⁹ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:512.

¹⁰⁰ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:534.

¹⁰¹ In Q 12:1–2, we read, *alif-lām-rā tilka ’āyātu l-kitābi l-mubīn ’innā ’anzalnāhu qur’ānan ’arabiyyan la’allakum ta’qilūna*, ‘Alif-lam-ra. These are the signs of the clear scripture. We have sent it down as an Arabic reading so that you can understand’. The *āyāt* here, namely the letters *alif*, *lām*, and *rā*, which are related to the second kind of signs within the quranic concept of God’s signs, seem to have the same function as the *nīšā* ‘emblem’ and *āṭā* ‘sign’ in the passages from Jacob’s homilies that we just read. In Jacob’s homilies, the *nīšā* and *āṭā* are the emblem and sign of Jesus, and they are not only related to the Gospel, but also a kind of confirmation of the Gospel. Similarly, in the opening of Q 12, the three letters, which are said to be the *āyāt* of the Quran, seem to serve as a confirmation of the divine origin of the quranic message. Compare the discussion of Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 80–89, 145–147.

Joseph's imprisonment, Jacob says that Joseph entered prison to care for the prisoners because Jesus entered the prison of the dead ones, Sheol, to give them life:

The wronged one, who had not committed any crime, entered prison, / and similarly, the Son, in his freedom, dwelled in Sheol. / Our Lord poured mercy and grace on Joseph in prison, / for our Lord's descent to Sheol was depicted in him. / In his virtuous freedom, Joseph entered prison / to abundantly care for the prisoners. / With his soul, the only begotten Son entered Sheol, / and in his divine providence, he cared for the dead ones in their dwelling place. /... / The prison became like a grave for Joseph, and there, he proclaimed / that the firstborn would descend to the dead ones in Sheol. / Joseph was imprisoned in Egypt, although he had not committed any crime, / and this is, as it were, our Lord in Sheol giving life to the dead ones.¹⁰²

To sum up, according to Jacob's homiletic retelling, by means of his signs, Jesus protected Joseph and guided him throughout his life, even in his imprisonment, to make sure that he proclaimed the Gospel, and by virtue of being the type of Jesus, Joseph had to enter prison to care for the prisoners because Jesus entered the prison of the dead ones, Sheol, to give them life. With all this in mind, it is clearly perceivable that the quranic account of Joseph's imprisonment participates in Jacob's typological construal of Joseph's imprisonment. Of course, this does not mean that the quranic story embraces the Joseph-Jesus typology. Rather, the quranic story makes use of developments in Jacob's typological construal of Joseph's imprisonment that seem significant for its own construal of Joseph's imprisonment.

¹⁰² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:530.

3.9. JOSEPH'S RELIGIOUS PROCLAMATION IN PRISON

Both the biblical story (Gen 40:5–19) and the quranic story (Q 12:36) say that, while in prison, Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker told Joseph their dreams so that he would explain them. However, unlike the biblical story, the quranic story goes on to say that, before explaining their dream, Joseph voices his religious proclamation in their presence:

I reject the faith of those who disbelieve in God (*'innī taraktu millata qaumin lā yu'minūna bi-llāhi*) and deny the life to come, and I follow the faith of my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because of God's grace to us and to all mankind, we would never worship anything beside God, but most people are ungrateful. Fellow prisoners, would many diverse gods be better than God the One, the All Powerful? [No indeed!] All those you worship instead of Him are mere names you and your forefathers have invented, names for which God has sent down no sanction. Authority belongs to God alone, and He orders you to worship none but Him: this is the true faith, though most people do not realize it.¹⁰³

As noted in the introduction, a number of scholars take Joseph's religious proclamation in prison as clear evidence that the quranic Joseph story was formulated with Muhammad in mind.¹⁰⁴ Before elaborating more on this point, I want to suggest that, having Joseph voice his proclamation in prison, a proclamation that stands in line with that of Muhammad, the quranic story seems to participate in Jacob's typological construal of Joseph in prison,

¹⁰³ Q 12:37–40.

¹⁰⁴ See 1.2.2.

according to which Joseph proclaimed the Gospel in prison. Since the relevant passage from Jacob's homiletic retelling was quoted at the end of the previous section, there is no need to quote it again here. However, here follows another relevant passage from Jacob's sixth homily:

In prison, Joseph was entirely immersed in the likeness of the Son / as he was in the midst of the two thieves at Golgotha. / Joseph separated the king's servants apart, / giving one life and the other death. / He made one enter the kingdom and Pharaoh's residence, / and he delivered the other to become food for birds. / Who has ever been able to depict a more splendid image / than Joseph who, in all his virtues, depicted Christ. / Our saviour was in the midst of the two thieves at Golgotha, / condemning one and justifying the other, like Joseph had done. / He made one enter the kingdom because of his faith, / and cast the other to Gehenna because of his offence. / To one, he said, "You will be with me in the Garden of Eden," / and as for the other, he left him among the crucifiers in great disgrace. / One was called heir, friend, and son of the kingdom. / The other joined the blasphemers who are sons of the left side. / Similarly, Joseph, who proclaimed these things symbolically, / made a chasm between the right side and the life side. / He restored the chief cupbearer to his kingly office, / and the Son made the son of the right side enter the kingdom. / In his explanation, Joseph gave a cross (*zəqīpā*) to the chief baker, / for this happened to the thief of the left side. / Through Joseph's mouth, death and life came forth, / for by his ability to explain dreams, he had the power to give life and death. / Similarly, by our

Lord's word, the kingdom of heaven came forth, / for he has the power to give
life to anyone who seeks him.¹⁰⁵

In this passage, Jacob turns the prison into the Golgotha, Joseph into Jesus, and the two prisoners into the two thieves. Clearly, according to Jacob, while in prison, Joseph proclaims the Gospel, the heart of which is Jesus life-giving death on the cross. Following the tracks of Jacob, the quranic story has Joseph voice his religious proclamation in prison, but it makes sure that his proclamation stands in line with that of Muhammad.

Furthermore, according to Gen 40:19, explaining the dream of the baker, Joseph tells him that Pharaoh *yissā rōšākā* 'will lift up your head' and *tālāh 'ōwtkā* 'hang you' on a pole, meaning that the baker will be beheaded or hanged and then impaled on a pole.¹⁰⁶ By contrast, according to Q 12:41, Joseph explains that the baker *yuṣlabu* 'will be crucified'. Commenting on Q 12:41, Reynolds notes, "The Quran has the baker crucified, whereas Genesis has him hanged, although crucifixion was first practiced long after the traditional dates of Joseph's life."¹⁰⁷ Yet, Reynolds fails to note that, having Joseph explain that the baker *yuṣlabu* 'will be crucified', the quranic story seems to reflect Jacob's reading of Gen 40:19 — found in the closing verses of the passage quoted above — according to which Joseph gives a *zəqīpā* 'cross' to the baker, meaning that the baker will be crucified to death. Jacob's reading of the baker's death makes sense within his typological framework, and the quranic story's reading of the baker's death makes sense against the background of Jacob's typological reading.

¹⁰⁵ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:535. A similar, though less developed, typological construal of Joseph in prison is found in Narsai's homily (Mingana, *Narsai*, 279).

¹⁰⁶ See Speiser, *Genesis*, 306–307; Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 61.

¹⁰⁷ Reynolds, *The Quran and the Bible*, 371.

To sum up, having Joseph voice his proclamation in prison, and having him explain that the baker will be crucified, the quranic story participates in Jacob's typological construal of Joseph in prison. Before turning to the issue of the relation between Joseph's proclamation in prison and Muhammad's proclamation in Mecca, I would like to remind the readers that, according to Khorchide and von Stosch, the Quran does not disclaim, in Q 4:157, that Jesus was crucified but presupposes, in Q 3:55, 5:177, and 19:33, that he died.¹⁰⁸ It seems to me that the finding that the quranic Joseph story participates, both thematically and lexically, in Jacob's typological construal of Joseph in prison, which points to Jesus' death on the cross, reinforces the view that the Quran does not disclaim that Jesus was crucified but presupposes that he died on the cross.

As for the relation between Joseph's proclamation in prison and Muhammad's proclamation in Mecca, at least three arguments have been offered in support of such a relation.

First, in Q 12:37–38, according to the Abdul Haleem's translation, Joseph proclaims:

I reject the faith of those who disbelieve in God (*'innī taraktu millata qaumin lā yu'minūna bi-llāhi*) and deny the life to come, and I follow the faith of my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because of God's grace to us and to all mankind, we would never worship anything beside God, but most people are ungrateful.

Abdul Haleem's translation of *'innī taraktu* as 'I reject' is not convincing. Such a translation gives the impression that Joseph simply disagrees with those who disbelieve in one God. In fact, *taraktu*, which is in past tense, has to do with not only rejecting, but also abandoning,

¹⁰⁸ See 2.20.

forsaking, or leaving something, in this case, the faith of polytheists. Therefore, several translators render *taraktu* as ‘I have abandoned’ (Yusuf Ali; Hilali & Khan), ‘I have forsaken’ (Pickthall; Arberry), or ‘I have left’ (Sale; Dawood). On such a reading, Joseph says that he was a polytheist but abandoned/forsook/left his polytheistic faith and followed the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, as Stern observes, “These words seem strange in the mouth of Joseph. When had he ever been of a people who did not follow the faith of the Hebrew patriarchs?” and he goes on to note, “Yet, for Muhammad these words would have great meaning. He is, in some way, declaring a break with an important dimension of his past identity.”¹⁰⁹

Second, as Johns notes, in Q 12:39, Joseph addresses his fellow prisoners, using the dual, *yā-ṣāhibayī s-siġni*, ‘O my two fellow prisoners’, (Johns’ translation) and asks them, “would many diverse gods be better than God the One, the All Powerful?” but then, in Q 12:40, using the plural, Joseph seems to address an audience outside the story, namely, the Meccan polytheists, and declares, “All those you worship instead of Him are mere names you and your forefathers have invented, names for which God has sent down no sanction. Authority belongs to God alone, and He orders you to worship none but Him: this is the true faith, though most people do not realize it.”¹¹⁰

Third, several formulations of Joseph’s proclamation in prison are to be found in other quranic verses addressed by Muhammad to the Meccan polytheists. These formulations and their counterparts in the Quran have been identified and outlined by Hämeen-Anttila.¹¹¹

In addition, note that, the quranic story has Joseph proclaim his religious message in the presence of the cupbearer and the baker in a setting where a meal is expected to be served:

¹⁰⁹ Stern, “Muhammad and Joseph”, 204. In this, Stern is not alone. See my discussion in 1.2.2.

¹¹⁰ Johns, “Joseph in the Quran”, 33.

¹¹¹ Hämeen-Anttila, “We Will Tell You the Best of Stories”, 15–16.

Two young men went into prison alongside him. One of them said, “I dreamed that I was pressing grapes”; the other said, “I dreamed that I was carrying bread on my head and that the birds were eating it.” [They said], “Tell us what this means — we can see that you are a knowledgeable man.” He said, ‘I can tell you what this means before any meal arrives: this is part of what my Lord has taught me.’”¹¹²

Having said this, Joseph begins to proclaim his message (Q 12:37–40), and then, after his proclamation, he explains their dreams (Q 12:41–42). I find it noteworthy that the quranic story mentions a meal in this context, which seems to be an original development in the quranic story, for such a development is found neither in the biblical story nor in any of our Jewish or Syriac sources. Interestingly, in the *sīra*, Muhammad summons the leading men of Quraysh to share a meal with him, and at this meal, he proclaims his religious messages:

“O Sons of ‘Abdul-Muṭṭalib, I know of no Arab who has come to his people with a nobler message than mine. I have brought you the best of this world and the next. God has ordered me to call you to him.”¹¹³

I find this parallel remarkable. Both Joseph, according to the quranic story, and Muhammad, according to the *sīra*, proclaim their religious message in the context of a shared meal with polytheists.

¹¹² Q 12:36–37.

¹¹³ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 118.

3.10. SATAN MADE THE CUPBEARER FORGET TO MENTION JOSEPH TO PHARAOH

Joseph said to the one he knew would be saved, “Mention me to your master,” but Satan made him forget to do this, and so Joseph remained in prison for a number of years.¹¹⁴

In the quranic story, having explained the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker (Q 12:41), Joseph tells the former to mention him to Pharaoh, “but Satan made him forget to do this.” In the biblical story, we are told that, on the day that he was his release from prison and restored to his office, “the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him,”¹¹⁵ but we are not told why he forgot him. Turning to our Jewish and Syriac authors, we find that some of them expounded on why the cupbearer forgot Joseph.

Philo suggests that the cupbearer forgot Joseph, “perhaps because the ungrateful are always forgetful of their benefactors, perhaps also in the providence of God who willed that the happy events which befell the youth should be due to God rather than to man.”¹¹⁶ Suggesting that it was God who released Joseph from prison, through the dreams that he sent to Pharaoh which only Joseph could interpret, Josephus stands close to Philo’s second suggestion.¹¹⁷ In *Genesis Rabba*, we are told that God made the cupbearer forget to mention Joseph to Pharaoh as a rebuke to Joseph because, by asking the cupbearer to remember him and consequently get him out of prison, he distrusted God and put his trust in the cupbearer.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Q 12:42.

¹¹⁵ Gen 40:23.

¹¹⁶ Colson, *Philo*, 189.

¹¹⁷ Thackeray, *Josephus*, 199–201

¹¹⁸ Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 818–819.

Turning to our Syriac authors, we find that two of them, Ps Ephrem and Jacob, expounded on why the cupbearer forgot to mention Joseph to Pharaoh. Ps Ephrem writes, “God heard that Joseph / beseeched the chief cupbearer, / and therefore, he became angry, for he saw that his servant / sought the help of a man.”¹¹⁹ Ps Ephrem goes on to write that, having rebuked Joseph for his distrust, God says to him, “I will cause the one whom you asked for help to forget you, / and therefore, he will not remember you.”¹²⁰ Finally, Ps Ephrem has Joseph ask God for forgiveness and recall God’s kindness and protection for him throughout his life.¹²¹ As for Jacob, he interprets the cupbearer’s forgetfulness as part of his typological reading of the biblical detail that Joseph was thirty years old when he left prison and entered the service of Pharaoh as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt (Gen 41:46). Recall from the previous chapter that, according to Jacob, Joseph had to remain in prison until he reached the age of thirty so that, by means of his inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt at his appearance before Pharaoh, he could typify Jesus’ manifestation as the Son of God and the caretaker of the world at his baptism by John when he was thirty years old.¹²² Consequently, according to Jacob, the reason why the cupbearer forgot to mention Joseph to Pharaoh was because the *rāzā* ‘mystery’ of Jesus, which led Joseph to prison,¹²³ wanted him in prison until he reached the age of thirty:

The thirty years of the Son before his manifestation / were completed by Joseph in prison, and then he left. / The mystery (*rāzā*) hid Joseph in prison / until the full amount of thirty was fulfilled. / The chief cupbearer forgot Joseph, for truth covered him, / lest he would inform about him at the wrong moment. / The seed

¹¹⁹ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 110.

¹²⁰ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 111.

¹²¹ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 111–112.

¹²² See 2.15.

¹²³ See 3.10.

was hidden, and all kinds of tribulations were trampling on it, / until the proper time for fruits, at which it would sprout. / The mystery (*rāzā*) covered the picture until all of its colours were gathered, / and then it brought it forth so that the world would behold how beautiful it was. / Joseph remained in prison until the mysteries were brought to completion in him, / and then he left prison to rule the land with authority. / Our Lord walked among earthly beings for thirty years, / and then he manifested himself through John.¹²⁴

To sum up, our Jewish and Syriac authors offer four different reasons why the cupbearer forgot to mention Joseph to the Pharaoh:

- (1) The cupbearer was ungrateful, and therefore, he forgot Joseph because the ungrateful always forget those who do them good (Philo).
- (2) In his divine providence, God made the cupbearer forget Joseph because God willed that the good fortunes that would befall Joseph should be due to him rather than to man (Philo and Josephus).
- (3) God made the cupbearer forget Joseph as a rebuke to Joseph because he had distrusted God and put his trust in the cupbearer (*Genesis Rabba* and Ps Ephrem).
- (4) The mystery (*rāzā*) of Jesus made the cupbearer forget Joseph because he had to remain in prison until he reached the age of thirty (Jacob).

With these different reasons in mind, let us consider the quranic development that Satan made the cupbearer forget to mention Joseph to Pharaoh. Expounding on why the cupbearer forgot Joseph, the quranic story follows the tracks of our Jewish and Syriac authors, but

¹²⁴ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:537.

having Satan make the cupbearer forget Joseph, the quranic story goes beyond our Jewish and Syriac authors.

To be sure, the quranic development is not equivalent of (3). While (3) says that God made the cupbearer forget Joseph, the quranic development says that Satan made the cupbearer forget Joseph. Also, in contrast to (3), nowhere in the quranic development do we find any clear indication that Joseph was rebuked for distrusting God. Merely asking the cupbearer to mention him to the Pharaoh does not mean that Joseph was distrusting God. In fact, remember that, before explaining the dreams of the cupbearer and baker, Joseph proclaimed his firm trust in God (Q 12:37–40), which makes it rather preposterous to think that, asking the cupbearer to mention him to the Pharaoh (Q 12:42), Joseph was distrusting God.

Why then does the quranic story have Satan make the cupbearer forget Joseph? First, that Satan makes people forget is a recurrent motif in the Quran (Q 6:68; 18:63; 58:19). Second, it seems to me that the quranic development has to do with (4). As seen in the previous chapter, the quranic story mentions that Joseph left prison and entered the service of Pharaoh as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt, but it omits that he was thirty years old by that time, probably because Jacob uses Joseph's age to typologically link his inauguration as the ruler and caretaker of Egypt at his appearance before Pharaoh with Jesus' manifestation as the Son of God and caretaker of the world at his baptism by John when he was thirty years old.¹²⁵ With this in mind, it is not difficult to see that, by stating that Satan made the cupbearer forget Joseph, the quranic story may be reacting to (4). Also, it is worth remembering that, in the context of Joseph's second dream and his brothers' jealousy and evil plans to do away with him (Q 12:4–10), the quranic story mentions Satan and calls him man's *'aduw* 'enemy' (Q 12:5), which seems to be a reflection of Jacob's first homily on Joseph, in which Jacob,

¹²⁵ See 2.15.

emphasising the brothers' jealousy and hate for Joseph, mentions Satan and calls him man's *bā'ēldarrā* 'enemy'.¹²⁶ In his first homily, Jacob uses the figure of Satan in a moral lesson on jealousy and hate, and in such a context, the quranic story seems to agree with Jacob and therefore uses the figure of Satan as well. However, in the context of the cupbearer's forgetfulness, the quranic story seems to disagree with Jacob's typological construal that the mystery of Jesus made the cupbearer forget Joseph, and instead, it holds Satan, man's enemy, responsible for the cupbearer's forgetfulness.

3.11. POTIPHAR'S WIFE ADMITTED THAT SHE TRIED TO SEDUCE JOSEPH

After some time, Pharaoh has a dream, and he asks his counsellors to explain it, but they tell him they are not able to explain dreams. At this moment, the cupbearer remembers Joseph, and he goes to him, while he is still in prison, to ask him to explain Pharaoh's dream, which he does. The cupbearer goes back to Pharaoh with Joseph's explanation, upon which Pharaoh says:

"Bring him to me," but when the messenger came to fetch Joseph, he said, "Go back to your master and ask him about what happened to those women who cut their hands — my Lord knows all about their treachery." The king asked the women, "What happened when you tried to seduce Joseph?" They said, "God forbid! We know nothing bad of him!" and the governor's wife said, "Now the truth is out: it was I who tried to seduce him — he is an honest man (*wa-'innahū la-mina ṣ-ṣādiqīna*)." [Joseph said, "This was] for my master to know that I did not betray him behind his back: God does not guide the mischief of the

¹²⁶ See 3.1.

treacherous. I do not pretend to be blameless, for man's very soul incites him to evil unless my Lord shows mercy: He is most forgiving, most merciful.”¹²⁷

In the biblical story, the last appearance of Potiphar's wife is in the episode where she accuses Joseph of attempted assault and causes his imprisonment. In the quranic story, Potiphar's wife appears again among the women who cut their hands and admits that she tried to seduce Joseph. It has already been pointed out that this notion, which has no antecedent in Jewish sources, reflects developments in the works of Ephrem, Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, and Ps Narsai.¹²⁸

According to Ephrem, Potiphar is present when Joseph appears before Pharaoh and is raised to power. When Potiphar returns home, he tells his wife about Joseph's new status, and he expresses his fear of meeting him, upon which she says:

“Do not fear Joseph to whom you did no evil, for he knows that the disgrace that came upon him in our domicile, whether justly or not, came upon him from my hands... To show you that he is not evil, I will now speak the truth which is contrary to my previous lie. I was enamored of Joseph when I falsely accused him. I made assault in his clothing because I was overcome by his beauty.”

Then she tells him that Joseph will not harm anyone of them because his imprisonment ultimately led to his rise to power. When Potiphar goes out to join the Egyptians following

¹²⁷ Q 12:50–53.

¹²⁸ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 217–222. For a detailed discussion of this notion in the works of Ephrem, Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, and Ps Narsai, see Heal, *Tradition and Transformation*, 238–254.

Joseph's chariot, Joseph does him no harm because he knows that what befell him was part of God's plan.¹²⁹

According to Ps Ephrem, Potiphar's wife beholds Joseph from a distance, while he is riding in his royal chariot as the ruler of Egypt, and she plans a speech — in case he would summon her — according to which she beseeches Joseph neither to remember her sin nor to hold Potiphar accountable for her past wrongdoing.¹³⁰

According to Ps Basil, when Potiphar learns that Joseph has become the ruler of Egypt, he reproaches his wife for what she did to Joseph, upon which she admits that she sinned and wronged Joseph, and then, she sends a letter to him, in which she writes:

“I adjure my lord, by the God of his fathers and by the authority of his greatness, that you forgive your handmaiden her offense. And may he be merciful to the servant of my lord — and so that I do not do away with myself for fear of my lord, let him send me words of consolation and comfort, and also to the servant of my lord, for behold, he has fled and is hiding in the inner rooms because of his shame and his fear. Yea, my lord, I beseech you, bring about joy for us today that we may rejoice with you, in your elevation to greatness, with all Egypt, in the new lord who has been made for her.”

Joseph answers her in a letter, in which he assures her that she can be at peace, for she is an honourable woman, full of modesty, and far from blame, and he invites her and Potiphar to

¹²⁹ Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 187–188.

¹³⁰ Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 133–138. The planned speech of Potiphar's wife is found on page 135.

meet with him in his royal residence so that they can be further assured that he has forgiven them.¹³¹

According to Ps Narsai, when Potiphar learns that Joseph has become the ruler of Egypt, he goes out to meet him and to ask for his forgiveness, and then, he returns home and tells his wife about his encounter with Joseph, upon which she admits that she tried to seduce him. Potiphar goes on to tell her that Joseph told him that he was safe and that he should not be distressed. Potiphar's wife becomes fearful for her life, writes a letter to Joseph, admitting her guilt and asking for his forgiveness, and delivers it to him in person, falling down before him and asking him with tears to forgive her. Joseph reads her letter, forgives her, and dismisses her with peace.¹³²

Despite their differences in details, Ephrem, Ps Basil, Ps Ephrem, and Ps Narsai have Potiphar's wife admit that she tried to seduce Joseph, and this is what we find in the quranic story as well. The link is obvious.

Also, note that, in the quranic story, Potiphar's wife says that Joseph is *ṣādiq* 'truthful'. Interestingly, in Ps Narsai's homiletic retelling, Potiphar's wife says something similar about Joseph. First, in the opening of her letter, she writes, "To the *zāḏīqā* and the *məzaddəqānā*, servant and lord, / to the chaste and the pure who has suddenly been elevated and become king."¹³³ Then, meeting him in person, she says, "You are just and *zāḏīqā* and merciful, / and lord and king, and I am a servant, forgive my wrongdoing."¹³⁴ As for the morphology and meaning of *zāḏīqā* and *məzaddəqānā*, both are participles, like *ṣādiq*, but while *zāḏīqā* is a passive participle of the form 1 verb of the root ZDQ, properly understood as an adjective, *məzaddəqānā* is an active participle of the form 2 verb of the root ZDQ, which has

¹³¹ Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 106–107.

¹³² Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 550–555.

¹³³ Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 553.

¹³⁴ Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 555.

a causative meaning. According to Smith, *zādīqā* means ‘upright, righteous’,¹³⁵ which, to my mind, has to do with being truthful. Can someone upright or righteous be untruthful? Is not the upright or righteous always truthful? Therefore, it seems to me that *zādīqā* and *ṣādiq* are related not only lexically but also semantically, and their context is indeed similar: Potiphar’s wife is admitting her guilt and declaring that Joseph is *zādīqā/ṣādiq*. As for *məzaddəqānā*, it denotes someone who justifies or declares righteous,¹³⁶ and this is how Joseph, who forgives Potiphar’s wife,¹³⁷ seems to be construed in both the Syriac tradition and the quranic story.

Commenting on the construal of Potiphar’s wife in Ps Narsai’s retelling, in comparison with that in Ps Basil’s retelling, Heal observes:

It is in the ending of this episode that PsN departs most strikingly from the *Syriac History*. The figure of Potiphar’s wife is marginalized simply by the abruptness with which the narrative moves on. There are no gifts, no preferments, no invitations or celebrations. In fact none of this is even sought. The sole concern of Potiphar and his wife is that Joseph not exact retribution, and the object of their petition is simply that he would forgive them. Thus by marginalizing the figures of Potiphar and his wife, the author of PsN succeeds in prompting the pursuit of forgiveness, and the peace of mind forgiveness brings. As we place this in the broader typological framework, Potiphar and his wife become types of everyone who would seek forgiveness of the Lord...

¹³⁵ Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 110.

¹³⁶ Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 261.

¹³⁷ The text of Q 12:50–53 does not explicitly say that Joseph forgives Potiphar’s wife, but such a reading of the text is highly plausible, if not evident, when we read it in light of the overall meaning of the quranic story and against the backdrop of Muhammad’s situation in Mecca. I will say more about this in the next section.

We should also note how in PsN Potiphar and his wife model the remorse and fear that seems to befit the penitent... Tears, physical suffering, self-deprecation, fear and other mental torment all play their part in preparing the penitent to receive forgiveness... The best that can be hoped for is to be dismissed with peace, so that the mind caught up in turmoil can finally rest. In PsN, Potiphar's wife joins other model penitents in the Syriac tradition, such as Pelagia of Antioch and the thief crucified on the right hand of Jesus, each of whom plot a path of hope for those seeking forgiveness.¹³⁸

Heal's observation sheds interesting light on the central issue of this chapter: the quranic story's participation in Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are construed typologically by Syriac authors. Having Potiphar's wife admit her past wrongdoing against Joseph and seek his forgiveness, Ps Narsai seems to encourage his addressees to seek the forgiveness of Jesus with penitent hearts, thus indirectly linking Joseph with Jesus.¹³⁹ Reading the stories of biblical women in such and similar ways is common in the Syriac tradition and particularly in the Syriac liturgy. In the words of Susan Harvey:

In liturgy, biblical women were often clustered in types to demonstrate virtues or vices. Sarah the mother of Isaac, Hannah the mother of the prophet Samuel, and Elizabeth the mother of Joseph were types of the Barren Woman whose belated fruitlessness fulfilled divine promise. The Widow of Sarepta demonstrated (humorously!) the obstinacy of the righteous faith.

¹³⁸ Heal, *Tradition and Transformation*, 249.

¹³⁹ Recall from section 3.10 that, according to Jacob's homiletic retelling, by virtue of being the type of Jesus, Joseph had power to forgive the cupbearer and to grant him life.

The courageous outsider who declares true faith was imaged by the Samaritan Woman, the Canaanite Woman, or Pilate's wife. Or again, that courage was shown through the righteous gentiles of the Old Testament Tamar the daughter-in-law of Judah, Ruth, or even Potiphar's Wife, who in Syriac was sometimes portrayed as repenting of her wrong-doing against Joseph and leading her husband to seek forgiveness and mercy. Women were models for the power of faith to perform miracles in the stories of the Hemorrhaging Woman or the Widow of Nain. Women demonstrated the perfection of discipleship in the stories of Mary and Martha of Bethany. In stories of righteous women who suffered unjust persecution, women provided models of Christ himself — a typology Syriac writers did not fail to draw in their presentations of Tamar the daughter-in-law of Judah, Jephthah's Daughter, Susanna, or the Maccabean Mother.¹⁴⁰

With this in mind, we perceive that the construal of Potiphar's wife as admitting her past wrongdoing against Joseph and seeking his forgiveness, which the quranic story reflects, is part of the theme of repentance in the Syriac tradition, a theme that is not only fundamental in the Gospel, but also inseparable from Jesus, who is the source of forgiveness and eternal life. Likewise, repentance is fundamental in the Quran, but it is not inseparable from Jesus or any other prophet in the Quran. Ultimately, the concept of repentance in the Quran has to do with believing in and (re)turning to God,¹⁴¹ and the role of the prophet is, among other

¹⁴⁰ Harvey, "Singing Women's Stories in Syriac Tradition", 182–183. In "Holy Impudence, Sacred Desire", 27–48, Harvey outlines and discusses the christological framework of the Old Testament stories of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba in the liturgical works of Ephrem and Jacob.

¹⁴¹ For a concise presentation of the quranic concept of repentance, see Rubin, "Repentance and Penance", *EQ*, 4:426–430.

things, to call people to repentance, which is what Joseph did in Egypt, what Jesus did in Jerusalem, and what Muhammad did in Mecca.

To sum up, having Potiphar's wife admit her past wrongdoing against Joseph and seek his forgiveness, which he seems to grant her, the quranic story participates in the Syriac extrabiblical development that Potiphar's wife repented from her past wrongdoing against Joseph and was forgiven by him, a development that not only places Potiphar's wife among other penitents in the Syriac tradition, but also links Joseph to Jesus. However, interestingly, the quranic story seems to underscore that Potiphar's wife was ultimately forgiven by God, and that Joseph simply granted her, or rather communicated, God's forgiveness. This seems to come out in the closing part of Q 12:50–53 when Joseph says, “I do not pretend to be blameless, for man's very soul incites him to evil unless my Lord shows mercy: He is most forgiving, most merciful.”

3.12. THE BROTHERS' REPENTANCE

Then, when they presented themselves before Joseph, they said, “Mighty governor, misfortune has afflicted us and our family. We have brought only a little merchandise, but give us full measure. Be charitable to us: God rewards the charitable.” He said, “Do you now realize what you did to Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?” and they cried, “Could it be that you are Joseph?” He said, “I am Joseph. This is my brother. God has been gracious to us: God does not deny anyone who is mindful of God and steadfast in adversity the rewards of those who do good.” They said, “By God! God really did favour you over all

of us and we were in the wrong!” but he said, “You will hear no reproaches today. May God forgive you: He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.”¹⁴²

During their third journey to Egypt, the brothers recognise Joseph, repent, and acknowledge that he is favoured by God, that is to say, that he is God’s prophet, upon which Joseph assures them that they will not be reproached but forgiven. Again, we perceive the theme of repentance. Similarly, in the next episode, in which the brothers bring Jacob to Egypt, they say to him, “Father, ask God to forgive our sins — we were truly in the wrong,”¹⁴³ and Jacob replies, “I shall ask my Lord to forgive you: He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”¹⁴⁴

Commenting on the repentance of the brothers (and Potiphar’s wife) and the forgiveness that they received, Johns notes:

The most striking feature of the *sūra* is the completeness of the resolution of conflict, the restoration of peace and harmony after the disruption caused by envy. Many of the early prophets bring dire punishments upon those who reject them. For example *sūra* 54 *al-Qamar* warns of various peoples destroyed because they rejected the messengers sent to them... By contrast neither Jacob nor Joseph make threats nor need to exact vengeance. Jacob accepts his trials, he forgives his penitent sons for the pain they caused him. His patience and endurance never waver. Joseph likewise forgives Zulaikha for her lies, and his brothers for their envy, declaring: “No reproach is held against you today” (*lā taṭrība ‘alaikumu l-yauma*).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Q 12:88–92.

¹⁴³ Q 12:97.

¹⁴⁴ Q 12:98.

¹⁴⁵ Johns, “Joseph in the Quran”, 43.

As attested by the Meccan chapters of the Quran and by the *sīra*, Muhammad's foremost desire in Mecca was that his message would be embraced by the Meccan polytheists, and particularly by his own tribe, for this would bring about not only peace and harmony but also their salvation. This explains the centrality of repentance in the quranic story. By telling the Meccan polytheists, and particularly the Quraysh, that Joseph's own brothers repented, acknowledged that he was God's prophet, and were forgiven for their past wrongdoing against him, Muhammad tries wholeheartedly to convince his own people to follow the way of Joseph's brothers, assuring them that his aim is not to reproach them but to evoke their repentance.

Neither the biblical story nor the Jewish tradition has the brothers confess their wrongdoing before Joseph and Jacob, ask for forgiveness, and receive forgiveness, but such a development is found in the works of Ephrem and Ps Ephrem,¹⁴⁶ demonstrating again that the quranic story uses Syriac extrabiblical details to enhance its own themes, in this case, the theme of repentance. Actually, there are at least two other Syriac extrabiblical details in the quranic account of the brothers' second journey to Egypt that seem to be related to the theme of repentance. The quranic account of the brothers' second journey to Egypt story reads as follows:

Then, when they presented themselves before Joseph, he drew his brother apart and said, "I am your brother, so do not be saddened by their past actions," and, once he had given them their provisions, he placed the drinking-cup in his brother's pack. A man called out, "People of the caravan! You are thieves!" and they turned and said, "What have you lost?" They replied, "The king's drinking-

¹⁴⁶ Ephrem (Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 196–197); Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 271–274, 295–296). This has been pointed out by Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 238–239, 243–245.

cup is missing,” and, “Whoever returns it will get a camel-load [of grain],” and, “I give you my word.” They said, “By God! You must know that we did not come to make mischief in your land: we are no thieves.” They asked them, “And if we find that you are lying, what penalty shall we apply to you?” and they answered, “The penalty will be [the enslavement of] the person in whose bag the cup is found: this is how we punish wrongdoers.” [Joseph] began by searching their bags, then his brother’s, and he pulled it out from his brother’s bag... [His brothers] said, “If he is a thief then his brother was a thief before him,” but Joseph kept his secrets and did not reveal anything to them. He said, “You are in a far worse situation. God knows best the truth of what you claim.”¹⁴⁷

Comparing the quranic account with the biblical counterpart (Gen 44:1–17), we note that, unlike the biblical story, the quranic story says that (1) the brothers decided that the punishment for the guilty person should be enslavement and that (2) they insulted Joseph by calling him thief. Both (1) and (2) reflect developments in the Syriac tradition,¹⁴⁸ and they seem to be used in the quranic story in relation to the brothers’ repentance. As for the brothers’ decision that the punishment for the guilty person should be enslavement, they go on to say that this is how they punish wrongdoers, but what wrongdoing did Joseph do to deserve to be thrown into a pit, to be picked up by some merchants, and to be sold as a slave? — all this in accordance with the brothers’ plan to do away with him. Yet, despite all this, Joseph was patient, even when his brothers insulted him by calling him thief, for his aim was not to reproach them but to evoke their repentance, and eventually, they did repent, and they did acknowledge Joseph’s prophethood. Similarly, what wrongdoing was Muhammad doing in

¹⁴⁷ Q 12:69–77.

¹⁴⁸ This has been pointed out by Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 229–234.

Mecca to deserve all the tribulations that his own people were causing him? As attested by the Quran elsewhere and by the *sīra*, Muhammad’s own people were insulting him and also trying to murder him. Yet, like Joseph, Muhammad was patient, hoping that, like Joseph’s brothers, his own people would eventually repent and acknowledge his prophethood.

3.13. JOSEPH’S SHIRT GAVE JACOB HIS EYESIGHT BACK

When the brothers return to Jacob, after their second journey to Egypt, and tell him that Benjamin has been enslaved in Egypt, he remembers Joseph and loses his eyesight because of his sorrow, telling them to go to Egypt again and seek news of Joseph and Benjamin. Doing as they are told, the brothers go to Egypt, and this time, they recognise Joseph, upon which he tells them, “Take my shirt and lay it over my father’s face: he will recover his sight. Then bring your whole family back to me.”¹⁴⁹ Then, we are told:

Later, when the caravan departed, their father said, “You may think I am senile but I can smell Joseph (*’innī la-’ağidu rīḥa yūsufa*)” but [people] said, “By God! You are still lost in that old illusion of yours!” Then, when the bearer of good news came (*fa-lammā ’an ḡā’a l-bašīru*) and placed the shirt on to Jacob’s face, his eyesight returned and he said, “Did I not tell you that I have knowledge from God that you do not have?” The [brothers] said, “Father, ask God to forgive our sins — we were truly in the wrong.” He replied, “I shall ask my Lord to forgive you: He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Q 12:93.

¹⁵⁰ Q 12:94–98.

The extrabiblical quranic notion that Jacob lost his eyesight because of his sorrow for Joseph and recovered it when Joseph's shirt was placed on his face has no antecedent in the Jewish tradition but it seems to reflect developments in the Syriac tradition.¹⁵¹ For example, according to Ps Basil's retelling, when Jacob sees Joseph's robe stained with blood, "the light of his eyes grew dim," and he mourns over him, saying, "Woe is me because of you, the light of my eyes,"¹⁵² and later, when Jacob reunites with him, he says, "My eyes were enlightened at the sight of you, oh my beloved, and the grief and the suffering and the sadness fled from your father."¹⁵³ Similar developments are to be found in the homiletic retellings of Ps Ephrem, Ps Narsai, Narsai,¹⁵⁴ and Jacob.¹⁵⁵

To be sure, there are differences between the quranic story and the Syriac tradition in this regard. To give but two examples. First, in the quranic story, Jacob loses his eyesight as he remembers Joseph when the brothers return to him after their second journey to Egypt, but in the Syriac tradition, Jacob loses his eyesight as he sees Joseph's robe stained with blood when the brothers return to him from the wilderness where they sold Joseph as a slave. Second, in the quranic story, Jacob recovers his eyesight when Joseph's shirt is placed on his face, but in the Syriac tradition, Jacob recovers his eyesight when he is reunited with Joseph. Also, it is not entirely clear if Jacob's loss and recovery of eyesight should be understood figuratively or literally. I am more convinced of a figurative understanding of Jacob's loss and recovery of eyesight.

Be the differences between the quranic story and the Syriac tradition, and the figurative or literal understanding of Jacob's loss and recovery of eyesight, as they may, I think that

¹⁵¹ This has been pointed out by Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 223–224.

¹⁵² Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 99.

¹⁵³ Heal, "The Syriac History of Joseph", 118.

¹⁵⁴ For references, see Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 224, fn 135.

¹⁵⁵ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:573, 576–577.

the quranic story's participation in the Syriac tradition in this case is highly remarkable for at least two major reasons.

First, Joseph's shirt appears to be miraculous, healing not only Jacob's lost eyesight but also his sorrow. In a previous section, we saw that Joseph's shirt — linked typologically with Jesus in the Syriac tradition — proved Joseph's innocence against the accusation of Potiphar's wife, and I stated that such a construal reminds me of Jesus, who is the vindicator of the oppressed according to the Gospel, and who vindicates his mother Mary against the accusation of sexual immorality according to *Sūrat Maryam*.¹⁵⁶ In regard to Jacob's lost eyesight, Joseph's shirt gives Jacob his eyesight back and takes away his sorrow, and similarly, Jesus makes the blind see and takes away their sorrow according to both the Gospel (Mt 11:4–5; Mk 8:22–26; Lk 7:22; Jh 9:1–7) and the Quran (3:49; 5:110). Furthermore, both the Gospel and the Quran speak of other kinds of blindness that are related to the spiritual life. One kind of blindness is that of hypocrisy.¹⁵⁷ Another kind of blindness is that of disbelief.¹⁵⁸ Yet another kind of blindness has to do with a certain level of doubt that, on the one hand, makes believers sorrowful or at least distressed, but that, on the other hand, makes them seek divine reassurance. In the Quran, God's signs, and particularly the stories of the prophets, may provide believers with divine reassurance and heal their sorrow or distress. In the Gospel, the eucharistic liturgy is the foremost source of divine reassurance for believers who may or may not feel sorrow or distress, and the Quran itself bears witness of this in the aforementioned table episode,¹⁵⁹ which, interestingly, occurs after the mention of Jesus' miracles (Q 5:110), and which reads:

¹⁵⁶ See 3.7.

¹⁵⁷ Compare Mt 15:1–14 and Q 2:8–20.

¹⁵⁸ Compare Jn 12:20–40 and Q 27:65–68.

¹⁵⁹ See 2.5.

When the disciples said, “Jesus, son of Mary, can your Lord send down a feast to us from heaven?” he said, “Beware of God if you are true believers.” They said, “We wish to eat from it; to have our hearts reassured; to know that you have told us the truth; and to be witnesses of it.” Jesus, son of Mary, said, “Lord, send down to us a feast from heaven so that we can have a festival — the first and last of us — and a sign from You. Provide for us: You are the best provider.” God said, “I will send it down to you, but anyone who disbelieves after this will be punished with a punishment that I will not inflict on anyone else in the world.”¹⁶⁰

Commenting on this, Khorchide and von Stosch aptly writes:

In our opinion, the best interpretation of the sending down of the table is as an allusion to the Eucharist, since this is the central event for the Church from which it derives trust in its faith. It is the *sign* that constantly renews the Christian faith over the ages, and it is the lynchpin of the enduring legitimacy of Christian testimony. It is noteworthy that the proclaimer of the Quran obviously accepts this testimony and even urges the disciples to take it seriously. That is because God not only fulfils the disciples’ wish put to him by Jesus in verse 115 but also enrolls them in a special responsibility founded on the Eucharist. Anyone who ignores the gift of the Eucharist and continues in unbelief, anyone who, with open eyes, refuses communion with Christ in the Lord’s Supper will receive the harshest imaginable punishment. This statement fits perfectly with the Christian self-conception of there being nothing worse than for a person to turn away from God’s pledge when it is offered in binding and intelligible fashion and when he

¹⁶⁰ Q 5:112–115.

or she has previously been accepted into the community of Jesus's disciples. We would of course express this less bluntly nowadays, but the text is completely in line with Christian beliefs in late antiquity and even the Middle Ages and is also open to modern interpretations.¹⁶¹

To this, I would add, or rather emphasise, that the eucharistic liturgy opens the eyes of believers who for various reasons need divine reassurance of the faith in Jesus that they already profess. In this context, the Emmaus story is a wonderful reading, reminding us that it is the eucharistic liturgy that opens the eyes — or, to put it differently, heals the inner blindness — of the believers. The opening of the Emmaus story says that, on the Sunday of Jesus' resurrection, two of his disciples were going to Emmaus, talking with each other about the things that had happened to Jesus, and:

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us.

¹⁶¹ Khorchide and von Stosch, *The other Prophet*, 107.

They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.¹⁶²

In the breaking of the bread, in the eucharistic event, the eyes of Jesus’ disciples were opened, that is to say, their inner blindness was extinguished together with any sorrow or distress that may or may not have been haunting them. In this context, it is worth mentioning

¹⁶² Lk 24:15–35.

that the three-part structure of the eucharistic liturgy of the Church up till these days follows the structure of the breaking of the bread in the Emmaus story: (1) the liturgy of the word, where biblical texts are read out, and on the basis of which the sermon is given; (2) the breaking of the bread and the partaking of it as the body of Jesus; and (3) the concluding thanksgiving.

To sum up, having Joseph's shirt give Jacob his eyesight back and take away his sorrow, the quranic story reminds me not only of Jesus healing the blind and their sorrow, a miracle attested in the Quran, but also of Jesus reassuring believers, who may or may not be sorrowful or distressed, by means of the eucharistic event that he instituted, an event attested in the Quran, and that the Church was certainly celebrating by the time of the Quran. This leads me to my second reason for thinking that the quranic story's participation in the Syriac tradition in this case is highly remarkable.

Note that, in Q 12:94, when the brothers' caravan departs from Egypt,¹⁶³ carrying Joseph's shirt, Jacob, who is in Canaan,¹⁶⁴ says *'innī la- 'ağidu rīḥa yūsufa* 'I sense Joseph's fragrance' (translation mine). Then, in Q 12:96, we are told, *fa-lammā 'an ḡā'a l-bašīru 'alqāhu 'alā waḡhihī fa-rtadda bašīran* 'when the announcer of good news came and placed it [= the shirt] on his [= Jacob's] face, he recovered his eyesight' (translation mine). To me, this scene is highly remarkable because it is reminiscent of two important elements in the eucharistic liturgy of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, namely, the use of incense and the partaking of the body of Jesus.

To begin with, from a far distance, Jacob senses Joseph's *rīḥa* 'fragrance' (Q 12:94). This has to be read figuratively, lest one wants to argue that, in a literal sense, Jacob in Canaan

¹⁶³ This seems to be the reading of Abdel Haleem, but it is certainly the readings of others such as Johns, "Joseph in the Quran", 35, 53.

¹⁶⁴ The quranic story does not mention that Jacob and his whole family lived in the land of Canaan by that time, but this information was certainly known to the audience of the quranic story.

could smell Joseph's *rīḥa* in Egypt. But how then are we to understand *rīḥ* in Q 12:94? Usually, the quranic noun *rīḥ* means 'wind' and is described as one of God's signs.¹⁶⁵ In a number of passages, such as Q 7:57, 25:48–50, and 35:9, we are told that God sends forth the *riyāḥ* 'winds' which raise up the clouds so that the dead earth may be relieved and renewed by the rain of the clouds. Joseph's *rīḥa* in Q 12:94 has a similar meaning as the *riyāḥ* in Q 7:57, 25:48–50, and 35:9, for in both cases, that which has been worn out is relieved and renewed. Hence, sensing Joseph's *rīḥa*, Jacob feels relieved and renewed. This is reminiscent of the use of incense in the eucharistic liturgy. In a seventh-century commentary on the eucharistic liturgy of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, written by George, bishop of the Arab tribes,¹⁶⁶ we read:

The censer, which the deacon takes about the whole nave, signifies the care of God for all, and the condescension and sweet savour (*rīḥtānūtā*) of Christ. The return again of the censer to the sanctuary signifies the fixedness and unwaveringness of the divine care, which remains as it is, without diminution: even as a lamp, which is not diminished by the taking from it of many lights.¹⁶⁷

The root of *rīḥtānūtā* 'savour' or 'fragrance' is RWH, from which we also get *rīḥā*, which means 'savour' or 'fragrance' as well,¹⁶⁸ and which is the cognate of the quranic *rīḥ*. Drawing on the commentary of George, another Syriac author of the ninth century, Moses,

¹⁶⁵ Q 2:164; 3:117; 7:57; 8:46; 10:22; 14:18; 15:22; 17:69; 18:45; 21:81; 22:31; 25:48; 27:63; 30:46, 48, 51; 33:9; 34:12; 35:9; 38:36; 41:16; 42:33; 45:5; 46:24; 51:41; 54:19; 69:6.

¹⁶⁶ For a further reading about George and the Arab tribes of which he was bishop, see Brock, "Giwargi, bp. of the Arab tribes", *GEDSH*, 177–178; and Tannous, "Between Christology and Kalām?", 671–716.

¹⁶⁷ Connolly and Codrington, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy*, 16.

¹⁶⁸ Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 539. The difference between *rīḥtānūtā* and *rīḥā* is that the former is an abstract noun whereas the latter is a concrete noun.

bishop of Beth Raman (north of Tagrit on the Tigris),¹⁶⁹ writes the following about the incense in his commentary on the eucharistic liturgy:

The incense which goes forth from the altar, and goes about the whole nave, and then returns to the altar, signifies these things. First: the goodness of the Holy Trinity; for although it goes forth to all the saints by its care, yet it does not leave its own fixedness, and it is not changed or diminished. Secondly: it signifies God the Word, who came down from heaven, and was made a sweet savour (*rīḥā*) and an incense of reconciliation, and offered Himself for us to God the Father, and made an atonement for all the world and turned it back to His Father, without being changed or losing His Godhead. Thirdly: again, in that the thurible of incense goes forth from the altar, which represents Emmanuel, and goes about the whole nave among the faithful, it takes their assent and their good will towards Him, and returns and brings it in to Emmanuel, which is the altar.¹⁷⁰

The commentaries of George and Moses show not only that the incense spreads from the altar throughout the nave, reaching even those who stand at a distance from the altar, but also that the incense, which is called Jesus' *rīḥā*, denotes, among other things, Jesus salvific life that relieves and renews humanity. Similarly, in the quranic story, Joseph's *rīḥ* spreads from Egypt to Canaan, reaches Jacob, and makes him feel relieved and renewed (Q 12:94),¹⁷¹ and then, when the *bašīru* 'announcer of good news' places Joseph's shirt on Jacob's face,

¹⁶⁹ For a further reading about Moses, see Coakley, "Mushe bar Kipho", *GEDSH*, 300.

¹⁷⁰ Connolly and Codrington, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy*, 37.

¹⁷¹ It is interesting to note that, in Jacob's homiletic retelling, when Jacob reunites with Joseph, the former tells the latter, "Your sweet fragrance (*rīḥā*) reached my eyes and enlightened them, / for they had become darkened because of you, my light." (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:577.)

he recovers from his blindness (Q 12:96). This is reminiscent of the partaking of the body of Jesus in the eucharistic liturgy.

As noted above, in the breaking of the body of Jesus, the faith of believers is reassured, or to put it differently, the inner blindness of believers is extinguished. What is more, in the early Syriac tradition, having received the body of Jesus in their hands, the believers place it on their faces before partaking of it. This early practice is evidenced in the works of Aphrahat and Jacob. In his seventh demonstration, Aphrahat likens believers to dogs, saying that, just as dogs love their masters, so too believers love their Lord, and in this context, he writes that believers “love our Lord and lick his wounds when they receive his body, and they place it on their eyes and lick it with their tongues as a dog licks its master.”¹⁷² As for Jacob, in a homily on the eucharistic liturgy, he says:

The splendid host of angels do not approach his holy place, / but the children of dust carry him in their hands. / The mighty one, who would consume the world by looking at it, / is being carried in the hands of men formed from soil. / If the angels look at him, they would be consumed, / yet the children of dust place him on their faces.¹⁷³

Similarly, in the quranic story, Joseph’s healing shirt — linked typologically with Jesus in the Syriac tradition — is placed on Jacob’s face. Also, note that the person who comes to Jacob with Joseph’s shirt and places it on his face is called *bašīr* ‘announcer of good news’. In the Syriac tradition, the Gospel is called *səḫarīā* (singular of *sabbərāṭā* ‘good news’) and

¹⁷² Parisot, *Aphraatis*, 349. Translation mine.

¹⁷³ Bedjan, *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, 2:219.

the proclaimer of the Gospel is called *māsabbārānā*.¹⁷⁴ Interestingly, in Jacob's homiletic retelling, when the brothers return to Jacob, after their second journey to Egypt, they are eager to tell him the *sabbārāṭā* 'good news' that Joseph is alive:

They came to Jacob, and each one of them was eager / to tell him the good news
(*sabbārāṭā*). / As they were rejoicing, they came to Jacob / and told him that
Joseph was truly alive, / but he did not believe it, for it was too great, / and he
disregarded the report and kept silent, for it was too much for him. / When they
showed him the provisions, the garments, and everything that they had brought
with them, / he believed the report that he had heard.¹⁷⁵

Note that, according to Jacob's homiletic retelling, the brothers brought with them, among other things, garments from Egypt, and when Jacob saw all these things, including the garments, he believed the good news that Joseph was alive. In the biblical story, garments are not mentioned in this context (Gen 45:25–28).¹⁷⁶ In the quranic story, as I have argued, Joseph's healing shirt is reminiscent of the partaking of the life-giving body of Jesus in the eucharistic liturgy of the Syriac-Orthodox Church.

¹⁷⁴ The quranic noun *bašīr* is one of several derived forms of the root BŠR. The first-form verb *bašara* 'to remove the surface of a thing' is not found in the Quran, but the second-form verb *baššara* 'to announce good news', of which *bašīr* is derived, is frequently used in the Quran. The meaning of *baššara* is derived from biblical Hebrew. The Syriac cognate of *baššara* is *sabbar*, which has suffered metathesis (*bassar* › *sabbar*), and of which *māsabbārānā* is derived. As for *səḥarāṭā*, it is a noun derived from the first-form verb *səḥar*. Compare Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 79–80.

¹⁷⁵ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:573.

¹⁷⁶ For a further reading about the mention of garments in the Syriac tradition, see Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 231–237.

3.14. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I have looked at 13 quranic additions of extrabiblical details about Joseph. In doing so, my main focus has been neither to point out the Jewish and Syriac sources of the quranic story,¹⁷⁷ nor to argue that the quranic story is closer to the Syriac tradition than to the Jewish tradition,¹⁷⁸ but to explore the quranic story's participation in Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology, given that it reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition. My findings may be summarised as follows.

First, the quranic story participates in Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology because it finds them useful for its own construal of Joseph and relevant to Muhammad.

Second, when using Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology, the quranic story makes sure that they are in agreement with the Quran's message and its prophetology.

Third, Syriac extrabiblical details carrying christological meaning that are used in the quranic story are reminiscent of how Jesus is presented in the Quran.

Fourth, when using Syriac extrabiblical details carrying christological meaning, the quranic Joseph story sometimes reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology and counters certain christological conceptions that seem incompatible with the Quran's prophetology and its presentation of Jesus.

Fifth, the quranic scene of the healing of Jacob's blindness by Joseph's shirt is reminiscent of the use of incense and the partaking of the body of Jesus in the eucharistic liturgy of the

¹⁷⁷ As noted in 1.1, this was the main focus of the scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

¹⁷⁸ As noted in 1.2, this has been demonstrated by Witztum.

Syriac-Orthodox Church. The validity of this observation is reinforced by the fact that the context of the quranic story is liturgical, a fact that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Before moving on to the next chapter, I wish to remind the readers not only of the similarity between the concept of signs in the Quran and that in the Syriac tradition but also of the similar function that the signs have in the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac retellings of the Joseph story.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ See 3.8.

4. THE CHARACTER, STYLE, AND LEXICON OF THE QURANIC JOSEPH STORY

4.1. THE CHARACTER OF THE QURANIC JOSEPH STORY

In this section, I will inquire into the character of the quranic Joseph story based on the ideas of Neuwirth and Reynolds. According to its self-referentiality, the Quran is a prophetic proclamation of God's sacral message to humanity. Moreover, I will argue that the quranic Joseph story is a liturgical text that has homiletic features. If valid, my argument would show that, in terms of its character, the quranic Joseph story is remarkably similar to the Syriac homilies on Joseph.

4.1.1. The liturgical character of the quranic Joseph story

Sūrat Yūsuf opens by unfolding two self-designations, *kitāb* and *qur'ān*, which, properly understood, show that *Sūrat Yūsuf*, as well as the Quran itself, is a liturgical text. Here follows the Arabic transliterated text of *Sūrat Yūsuf* 1–3 with my translation:

Arabic transliteration

alif lām rā' tilka āyātu l-kitābi l-mubīn
innā anzalnāhu qur'ānan 'arabīyan
la'allakum ta'qulūn naḥnu naquṣṣu
'alāyka 'aḥsana l-qaṣaṣi bimā 'awḥaynā
'ilayka hadhā l-qur'āna wa-'in kunta min
qablihi la-mina l-ghafilīna.

English translation

Alif lam ra. Those are the signs of the
clear scripture. We have sent it down as
an Arabic reading so that you might
understand. We tell you the best of
stories in that we have revealed to you
this reading, and before it, you were
among the uninformed.

Sūrat Yūsuf designates itself as the *kitāb* ‘scripture’ that was revealed by God to Muhammad as an Arabic *qur’ān* ‘reading’ so that its Arabic-speaking addressees in Mecca would be able to understand the Joseph story soon to be read out to them by Muhammad.

The words *kitāb* and *qur’ān* denote two different concepts that, nevertheless, point to the liturgical character of the Quran. While *qur’ān* refers to a liturgical event that involves a reader reading out a received sacral message to a multitude of listeners in a liturgical setting, *kitāb* refers to the divine aspect of the received sacral message that is read out. This understanding of *qur’ān* and *kitāb* is gradually becoming clear in the later chapters of the early Meccan period. In the chapters of the middle and late Meccan periods, biblical stories, and particularly stories of Old Testament figures, such as the Joseph story, are explicitly presented as *qur’ān* excerpts from God’s heavenly *kitāb*. Consequently, the Joseph story in *Sūrat Yūsuf*, which belongs to the late Meccan period, has its origin in the heavenly *kitāb* and was revealed by God as an Arabic *qur’ān* to be presented orally in liturgical settings. In the Meccan period, less universal elements, such as ephemeral issues of the emergent quranic community, do not seem to be part of the heavenly *kitāb*. It is only in the Medinan period that the entire message, including less universal elements, is considered to constitute the heavenly *kitāb*, but this does not mean that the distinction of *kitāb* and *qur’ān* is lost.¹

The middle and late Meccan chapters betray a form that is different from that of the early Meccan chapters. While the early Meccan chapters are composed of texts marked by concise rhythmic verses with frequently changing patterns of end-rhymes, the middle and late Meccan chapters consist of texts marked by lengthy verses with both end-rhymes of the common *ūn/īn* pattern and concluding clausulas.² These form devices help the reading process of the Quran. In contrast to the long texts of the middle and late Meccan chapters,

¹ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 73–75.

² I will say more about the concluding clausulas in the next section.

the short texts of the early Meccan chapters were memorised without any written support. The complex structure and length of the middle and late Meccan chapters, which are no longer easy to memorise, indicate that quite early they must have assumed written form as a means of mnemotechnic support for the reading process. Neuwirth suggests that “already in the middle Meccan period the proclaimer took care to fix the individual communications in writing.”³ This means that *Sūrat Yūsuf* was fixed in writing quite early. As for the content of the early Meccan chapters, while the first ones amount to dialogues between God and an exemplary pious man, presumably Muhammad, who seeks and receives divine consolation in the face of tribulations at the hands of his opponents, the later ones address both the believing community and the disbelievers with a widened scope of themes: consolation, encouragement, eschatological discourse, oath cluster, lampoon, warning, polemics, and divine affirmation of the quranic message.⁴

Interestingly, many of the Meccan chapters, particularly the first ones, which may have been used in the liturgical life of the quranic community in Mecca close to the Ka‘ba, are evocative of the Psalms.⁵ Although mentioned by name in the Quran (Q 4:163; 17:55; 21:105), the book of Psalms was not present as a concrete text-form in Arabic by the time of the Quran. How then could the quranic community of the early Meccan period develop a liturgical life reflecting the Psalms? Neuwirth offers the following explanation:

This is not difficult to explain: a liturgical piety imprinted by the Psalms is to be presumed as present within the Syriac Church, which stretched into the region

³ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 142.

⁴ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 166–196.

⁵ Several passages from early Meccan chapters sound like distant echoes of the Psalms, and in some cases, the echo seems very close, such as in the case of Q 93:3 echoing Ps 22:24, and in the case of Q 73:2, 8, and 9 echoing Ps 119:62, 113:1, and 50:1. Also, in Q 21:105, which belongs to the middle Meccan period, we find not only a mention of the book of Psalms, but also a close quotation of Ps 37:29. For a further reading, see Neuwirth, “Quranic Readings of the Psalms”, *QC*, 733–778.

of the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly so in monastic circles, and it could have even had formative effects on members of the Quranic community. Since there is no evidence for Arabic translations of the Psalms in the pre-Islamic period, one must assume an oral, and ultimately also non-Arabic tradition for the communication of the Psalms to Arabic-speaking recipients.⁶

If the quranic community of the early Meccan period developed a liturgical life reflecting the use of the Psalms in the liturgical life of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, then we should not be surprised that the quranic community of the middle and late Meccan periods developed a liturgical life reflecting the use of the scriptures in the liturgical life of the Syriac-Orthodox Church.

As displayed in the early Meccan chapters, the quranic community participated not only in the psalmic tradition of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, but also in the already existing pre-Islamic polytheistic rite that took place close to the Ka'ba and consisted of verbal prayer, prostration, and animal sacrifice. However, the middle and late Meccan chapters demonstrate a liturgical movement of the quranic community away from the pre-Islamic polytheistic rite and toward the Judeo-Christian monotheistic worship that takes the event of scriptural reading of biblical stories of the past as a central part.⁷

Consequently, the middle and late Meccan chapters consist of a three-part structure: an opening part, a narrative middle part, and a closing part. This three-part structure is, to use Neuwirth's words, reminiscent of "the Christian prayer service, where prayer and prayer litany precede a scriptural reading standing in the center, to which dialogic parts, further prayer litanies and credo formulas follow."⁸ As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter,

⁶ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 253.

⁷ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 213–219.

⁸ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 285.

the Christian prayer service, also known as the liturgy of the word, is the first part of the three-part structure of the eucharistic liturgy.⁹ To be sure, the liturgy of the word, which is always performed as the first part of the three-part structure of the eucharistic liturgy,¹⁰ is also performed on other liturgical occasions. Structurally, then, the liturgy of the word consists of three parts: an opening part, a narrative middle part, and a closing part. The narrative middle part includes the event of scriptural reading and homiletic commentary, and it is introduced and concluded by other liturgical events, such as prayer, litany, and credo formula. This three-part structure is maintained in *Sūrat Yūsuf*, which accordingly consists of an opening part (Q 12:1–3), a narrative middle part (Q 12:4–101), and a closing part (Q 12:102–111).¹¹ In this, we perceive that the Joseph story (Q 12:4–101), which forms the narrative middle part of *Sūrat Yūsuf*, parallels the event of scriptural reading and homiletic commentary in the liturgy of the word of the Syriac-Orthodox Church.

With the aforementioned in mind, let us take another look at the term *qur'ān* as it occurs in the opening of *Sūrat Yūsuf*. Scholars have pointed out that the term *qur'ān* comes from the Syriac *qeryānā*, meaning ‘reading’ or, more precisely, ‘biblical reading’,¹² which takes place in the narrative middle part of the liturgy of the word and which is followed by a homily, but none has, to the best of my knowledge, recognised that *qeryānā* occurs in the opening of Jacob’s homilies on Joseph, referring to the biblical reading the Joseph story. This observation reinforces the main argument that, in terms of its character, the quranic

⁹ See 3.13.

¹⁰ The second part involves the breaking of the eucharistic bread and the partaking of it as the body of Jesus, and the third part has to do with thanksgiving.

¹¹ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 193, notes that the opening and closing parts of the three-part structure of the middle and late Meccan chapters, including *Sūrat Yūsuf*, may have “a hymnic, apologetic, polemical, or paraenetic” content, and they often contain “affirmation of the character of revelation of the Quran.”

¹² Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 234; Mingana, “Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kuran”, 88; Graham, “The Earliest Meaning of ‘Quran’”, 361–377; Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 142, 219; “Structural, linguistical and literary features”, *CCQ*, 101; Madigan, *The Quran’s Self-Image*, 127–130.

Joseph story is remarkably similar to the Syriac homilies on Joseph. Compare the opening of *Sūrat Yūsuf* with that of Jacob's ninth homily on Joseph:

Sūrat Yūsuf 12:1–3, 7

Alif lam ra. Those are the signs of the clear scripture. We have sent it down as an Arabic *qur'ānan* so that you might understand. We tell you the best of stories in that we have revealed to you this *qur'āna*, and before it, you were among the uninformed... Indeed, in [the story of] Joseph and his brothers there are signs (*āyāt*) for those inquiring [about the truth].¹³

Jacob's ninth homily on Joseph

Joseph the virtuous who triumphed in Egypt / has given me much to say about him in this homily. / He opened his *qeryānā* and placed it before me as an entrance into its mystical discoveries, / and behold, he has put me in labour so that I might disclose the mysteries (*rāzē*) hidden in it. / His story is indeed a treasure that he has opened before me abundantly, / and behold, he has prompted me to gain from it diligently.¹⁴

Comparing the opening of *Sūrat Yūsuf* with that of Jacob's ninth homily on Joseph, we recognise remarkable similarities between them pertaining not only to their nature of being liturgical texts on Joseph, but also to their intention of disclosing the deeper meaning, the *āyāt* 'signs' or *rāzē* 'mysteries', in the Joseph story.

In this context, it is important to note the significance of the Christian liturgy as a place for educating ordinary people in late antiquity. Harvey explains:

¹³ Translation mine.

¹⁴ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:552. See also the opening of Jacob's seventh homily on Joseph (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:542).

During this period, Christianity grew rapidly and dramatically in numbers, wealth, and importance. Church officials found it necessary to teach large numbers of converts in an era when books were rare and few people could afford their own Bible. In this historical context, the liturgy became the church's school. Liturgical services included multiple readings from Scripture — in Syriac, as many as fifteen different readings in a service! —, while homilies explicated and interpreted those readings. Hymns retold the stories, expressed their proper meanings, and portrayed the glories of Christian sacred history.¹⁵

More than simply learning the Church's interpretation of biblical readings, people were to understand "biblical stories typologically, as offering models for different forms of the life of faith," and to believe "that their lives, too, were an essential part of salvation history as God had planned it for the redemption of the human race."¹⁶ Similarly, in the quranic liturgy, ordinary people were not only to learn the Quran's interpretation of biblical stories, but also to understand them as models for their lives and to believe that they, too, were an essential part of salvation history as God had planned it.

4.1.2. The homiletic features of the quranic Joseph story

In the final chapter of his work, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, Reynolds argues that the Quran is a homily, which belongs to the tradition of biblical literature, reflects the Christian tradition, and shares a number of similarities with Syriac homilies.¹⁷

From the outset, I would like to express my hesitation in viewing the Quran as a homily. I do agree with Reynolds that the Quran belongs to the tradition of biblical literature, reflects

¹⁵ Harvey, "Singing Women's Stories in Syriac Tradition", 177.

¹⁶ Harvey, "Singing Women's Stories in Syriac Tradition", 178.

¹⁷ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 230–258.

the Christian tradition, and shares a number of similarities with Syriac homilies, but I do not agree with him that the Quran is a homily. Certainly, the Quran has homiletic features, but this does not mean that the Quran is a homily. In fact, the Quran has certain features that makes it more than a homily. According to its self-referentiality, the Quran is a scriptural manifestation of God's sacral message delivered to humanity by Muhammad as a prophetic proclamation. This claim goes beyond what any homily claims. For this reason, I disagree with Reynolds' statement that the Quran is a homily. However, I still think that the Quran has homiletic features, some of which Reynolds highlights in *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*:

- (1) Quite frequently and in different ways, the Quran alludes to biblical stories and figures, which shows that it expects its listeners to be aware of the biblical stories and figures. This is not unlike the expectations of a homilist.¹⁸ At times, the Quran evokes the biblical knowledge of its audience by remarking, "You know about those of you who broke the Sabbath, and so We said to them, 'Be like apes! Be outcasts!'"¹⁹ or by asking rhetorical questions, "Has the story of Moses come to you?"²⁰ which is what a homilist often does.²¹
- (2) Like a good homilist, the Quran uses a language that is less explicit but more evocative to create an effective discourse. For example, when the Quran describes Jonah crying out to God from the belly of a fish, it says that he "cried out in the

¹⁸ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 234.

¹⁹ Q 2:65.

²⁰ Q 20:9.

²¹ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 234–235.

deep darkness.”²² Saying that Jonah cried out in the deep darkness is less explicit but more evocative than saying that he cried out in the belly of a fish.²³

- (3) To add effect to its rhetorical style, the Quran uses rhyme, and this is something that would concern a homilist.²⁴
- (4) By means of its stories, the Quran often exhorts its listeners to believe in God and live accordingly, and thereby, it fulfils the paraenetic role of the homilist.²⁵

These homiletic features are to be found in the quranic Joseph story. For example, the quranic story refers to the main figures of the story without specifying their names — only Joseph and Jacob are mentioned by name — which shows that the listeners were expected to know such details. Using an evocative language, the quranic story says that Joseph was thrown into the *ḡayābati l-ḡubbi* ‘hidden parts of the pit’ (Q 12:15). The text of the quranic story is, to some extent and in some sense, marked by rhyme. The paraenetic nature of the quranic story is clearly expressed in the closing part (Q 12:102–111).

Furthermore, in view of Neuwirth’s idea that the Quran is a liturgical text, Reynolds considers such an idea to be reasonable, but he goes on to say something about her understanding of the homiletic character of the Quran that I fail to recognise:

Neuwirth emphatically rejects the notion of Quran as homily, noting that a sermon, “expresses a truth that has already been announced and attempts to urge that truth upon the listener.” And yet this, it seems to me, is a lovely description of Quranic discourse.²⁶

²² Q 21:87.

²³ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 234.

²⁴ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 241.

²⁵ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 235–236.

²⁶ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 244.

I would not agree that Neuwirth rejects the notion of Quran as homily insofar as such a notion does not imply that the Quran is nothing more than a homily. In fact, Neuwirth clearly states that the middle and late Meccan chapters, which contain many retellings of biblical stories, betray a growing homiletic character, and that, in the Medinan chapters, the quranic text is clearly developed into a sermon-like oration.²⁷ The quotation from Neuwirth, which Reynolds takes to be a statement of her rejection of the notion of Quran as homily, comes from a short paper in which she, offering some remarks on the linguistic and literary character of the Quran, emphasises that the Quran is a liturgical text.²⁸ However, this position does not entail a rejection of the homiletic character of the Quran. To the best of my understanding, Neuwirth does not disclaim that the Quran has homiletic features, but she emphasises that the Quran is a liturgical text. I agree with this. As for Reynolds, does he hold that the Quran is nothing more than a homily? This does not seem to be the case, for he acknowledges that the Quran is a diverse book that contains different sorts of text, but he seems to put his emphasis on the homiletic features of the Quran and its relationship to biblical literature.²⁹ Yet, he does not seem to acknowledge the Quran's own self-referentiality, according to which the Quran is a prophetic proclamation of God's sacral message to humanity. Finally, Reynolds is of the opinion that the Quran is remarkably similar to the Syriac homiletic tradition, and to demonstrate this, he points out five literary features that the Quran shares with the Syriac *mimrā* 'homily':

- (1) Form facilitating recitation: The Quran and the Syriac *mimrā* are marked by certain forms that facilitate their recitation.³⁰

²⁷ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 201–238 (chapter 6) and 277–345 (chapter 8 and 9).

²⁸ Neuwirth, "Some remarks on the special linguistic and literary character of the Quran".

²⁹ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 238.

³⁰ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 249.

- (2) Composition for repeated liturgical use: The Quran and the Syriac *mimrā* are compositions intended for repeated use in liturgical settings.³¹
- (3) Topical wandering: The sequence of argument in the Quran and in the Syriac *mimrā* lacks a strictly structured chronology, and therefore, certain topics may be revisited several times throughout the oral presentation.³²
- (4) Anti-Jewish rhetoric: The Quran and the Syriac *mimrā* contain anti-Jewish rhetoric.³³
- (5) Eschatology: The Quran and the Syriac *mimrā* have a similar eschatological imagery.³⁴

4.2. THE STYLE OF THE QURANIC JOSEPH STORY

The first two literary features in Reynolds' list are shared by the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac *mimrē* 'homilies' on Joseph. The second literary feature — that the Quran and the Syriac *mimrā* are compositions intended for repeated use in liturgical settings — has been discussed in relation to the Joseph story in the previous section. The first literary feature — that the Quran and the Syriac *mimrā* are marked by certain forms that facilitate their recitation — will be discussed in relation to the Joseph story in the following subsection, and thereafter, in the subsection following that, attention will be paid to the use of dialogue in the quranic Joseph story and in the Syriac *mimrē* on Joseph.

³¹ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 249.

³² Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 249–251.

³³ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 251.

³⁴ Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, 251–253.

4.2.1. The artistic orality of the quranic Joseph story

As argued in the previous section, the quranic Joseph story is a liturgical text that has homiletic features, and in this, it is remarkably similar to the Syriac *mimrē* on Joseph that, together with the biblical reading of the Joseph story, form the central part of the liturgy of the word. Another remarkable similarity between the Quran and the Syriac *mimrā* in general, and between the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac *mimrē* on Joseph in particular, has to do with their artistic orality.

In the first chapter of his book, *Discovering the Quran*, Robinson puts much emphasis on the orality of the Quran,³⁵ and rightly so, for it seems that this essential aspect of the Quran is more or less unknown to — let alone unexperienced by — the western mind. To many westerners, the Quran is simply a written text, a book, that is sacred for Muslims. However, to Muslims, and according to its self-referentiality and form, the Quran is primarily God's oral message to humanity, an oral message that is properly experienced as it is recited and heard, and consequently, in the words of Kristina Nelson, "the Quran is not the Quran unless it is heard."³⁶ Of course, Muslims perceive the Quran as the fixed canonical corpus, *al-muṣḥaf*, of their community, which it came to be soon after the death of Muhammad, but this does not mean that they forget the primacy of the orality of the Quran.³⁷ Hence, William Graham rightly notes:

Although the Quran has had a rich and central role in the history of Muslim piety and faith as "sacred book," it has always been preeminently an oral, not a written text... In the history of Islamic piety and practice, the role of the written

³⁵ Robinson, *Discovering the Quran*, 9–24.

³⁶ Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Quran*, xiv.

³⁷ For a further reading on these two aspects of the Quran, see Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 109–116; "Two Faces of the Quran", 141–156.

scriptural text has always been secondary to the dominant tradition of oral transmission and aural presence of the recited text. The quranic revelation recognized by Islamic tradition as the first given to Muhammad, Q 96, begins: “Recite (*iqra* ‘) in the name of your lord who created.” This signals clearly that the revelations were from the outset meant to be oral repetitions of the revealed word of God himself.³⁸

Similarly, Robinson notes, “The aural-oral nature of the revelation is apparent from the frequent occurrence of the singular imperative *qul*, ‘Say!’, which is found more than three hundred times in the Quran.”³⁹

Besides the imperatives *iqra* ‘recite’ and *qul* ‘say’, the Quran’s text betrays other markers of its orality. First, the term *qur’ān*, which I discussed in the previous section, shows that the Quran is meant to be recited and heard. Second, the form devices in the text of the Quran, particularly the end-rhyme and the clausula, which I mentioned in the previous section, point not only to the orality of the Quran but also to the artistic quality of its orality. Let us take a look at these two form devices.

The type of rhyme in the Quran is end-rhyme. In this, this quranic text, particularly the text of the early Meccan chapters, is reminiscent of *saj* ‘, rhymed prose, the literary style of pre-Islamic poetry.⁴⁰ Both the early Meccan verses, which are concise and rhythmic,⁴¹ and the middle and late Meccan verses, which are lengthy and complex, are marked by end-rhymes of many different types. Besides facilitating the recitation of the verses, the

³⁸ Graham, “Orality”, *EQ*, 3:584.

³⁹ Robinson, *Discovering the Quran*, 9–24.

⁴⁰ For a further reading on the relation between *saj* ‘ and the literary style of the quranic text, see Stewart, “Rhymed Prose”, *EQ*, 4:476–484.

⁴¹ It is important to note that the rhythm of the early Meccan chapters is due to not meter, as is the case with both the Arabic *qaṣīda* ‘ode’ and the Syriac *mimrā*, but parallel syntactical elements. For a further reading, see Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 166–190; Sells, *Approaching the Quran*.

end-rhymes help the audience to recognise the end of the verses. According to Neuwirth's study of the composition of the Meccan chapters, the early Meccan chapters have some eighty types of end-rhymes, the middle Meccan chapters have seventeen types of end-rhymes, and the late Meccan chapters have five types of end-rhymes.⁴² The most common type of end-rhyme in the middle and late Meccan chapters, including *Sūrat Yūsuf*, is $-2n/m$, where 2 denotes either one of the two long vowels $\bar{u}/\bar{i}$.⁴³ In addition to the end-rhymes of the common $\bar{u}n/\bar{i}n$ or $\bar{u}m/\bar{i}m$ pattern, the middle and late Meccan chapters, whose verses, unlike those of the early Meccan chapters, exceed two-sentence structures, contain a great number of concluding clausulas, which are crucial to both support the recitation of the longer verses of the middle and late Meccan chapters and to help the audience of the to recognise the end of the longer verses. The clausula, which features prominently in *Sūrat Yūsuf*, has been studied by Neuwirth,⁴⁴ who explains that the clausulas "are not simply end markers of a complex semantic-syntactic verbal unit; they are also, and above all, paraenetic pronouncements about what is presented in the main text, meta-textual reminders of the source of the discourse, God himself, or at least his admonitions and valuations,"⁴⁵ and she goes on to provide one example of a clausula from *Sūrat Yūsuf*:

Q 12:23 offers an example:

wa-rāwadathu llati huwa fī baytihā 'an nafsīhi wa-ghallaqati l-abwāba
wa-qālat hayta laka qāla ma 'ādha llāhi innahu rabbī aḥsana mathwāya
innahu lā yuflīhu l-ẓālimūn

⁴² Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*; "Form and Structure of the Quran", *EQ*, 2:251.

⁴³ Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 79–81.

⁴⁴ Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 157–170; *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 194–196, 221–222, 472–477; "Zur Struktur der Yusuf-Sure", 148–151.

⁴⁵ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 222.

She coveted him, the one in whose house he [Joseph] was, she locked the doors and called: “Come here.” He said: “God forbid, He is my Lord, who has made my stay beautiful.” Sinners do not prosper.

The clause “Sinners do not prosper,” a negative evocation of the benediction *qad aflaḥa man tazakkā*, “Blessed be he who purifies himself” (Q 97:14), introduces a new, transcendent, reference and turns the speech of Joseph from the inner-worldly connection — a trick of his Lord would be an act of ungratefulness — toward the transcendent. Not only Joseph’s speech but the entire report of the verse is commented upon: following the norms established by God, what awaits the violator is loss, despite any external gain.⁴⁶

To sum up, the quranic Joseph story is a text that is meant to be artistically recited in a liturgical setting, and therefore, it is marked by end-rhymes and clausulas that facilitate its artistic recitation.⁴⁷ It is important to note that reciting any text of the Quran is not simply reading it aloud but reciting it artistically in the presence of a liturgically gathered audience whose attention is more easily drawn by means of the artistic nature of the recitation. In this, the quranic Joseph story is remarkably similar to the Syriac *mimrē* on Joseph.

⁴⁶ Neuwirth, *The Quran and Late Antiquity*, 222. For a register of clausulas in *Sūrat Yūsuf*, see Neuwirth, “Zur Struktur der Yusuf-Sure”, 146, 148–151.

⁴⁷ In the opening of his article, “Joseph in the Quran”, 2–3, Johns emphasises the importance of seeing that the Joseph story in the Quran, unlike that in the Bible, has to be recited and heard to be properly understood. In his own words, “In order to see the *sūra* in its own terms, and without the inference of expectations brought about by the unconscious conditioning of the other versions, it is necessary to be aware of the rhetorical idiom in which the story is told. The character of this idiom is obscured by the assumption that its wealth of meaning is accessible from a silent reading. Essentially, the Quranic presentation of the story is to be heard, and just as the asseverative, argumentative and hortatory episodes of the Quran can only make their full impact when heard, so too the stories, narrative episodes and dialogues in the Quran, can only be grasped to best effect when heard, and their phrasing and emphases are informed by the intonation of the speaking or reciting voice. The Genesis version, on the other hand, is accessible to a silent reader — von Rad’s remark that it is ‘novel through and through’ being particularly apposite.”

It is not the orality but the form of late antique Syriac *mimrā* that distinguish it from late antique Greek and Latin homilies, for while the latter were composed in prose, the former was composed in verse.⁴⁸ Introducing the Syriac *mimrā* of late antiquity, Sebastian Brock explains:

The *memra* was suited for narrative or moralising verse, and was the vehicle for the distinctively Syriac genre of verse homily. *Memre* were probably recited, rather than sung, and they consist of isosyllabic couplets. In any particular *memra* the couplets may consist of 5+5, 6+6, 7+7, or 12+12 syllables (in the 12+12 syllable pattern there is always a caesura, after the fourth and eighth syllable). The 5+5 syllable pattern is traditionally associated with the name of Balai (fifth century), the 7+7 with that of Ephrem, and the 12+12 with that of Jacob of Serugh (died 521).⁴⁹

The Syriac *mimrā* of late antiquity was meant to be artistically recited, and its isosyllabic form, despite the different syllable patterns, facilitates its artistic recitation. In the 12+12 syllable pattern, there is a caesura — a rhythmical pause — after the fourth and eighth syllable, and this caesura enhances the artistic recitation.

The four Syriac homiletic retellings of the Joseph story used in this dissertation consist of different isosyllabic couplets. While the couplets in the homiletic retelling of Ps Ephrem

⁴⁸ There are some exceptions in this regard. Philip Forness, *Preaching and Religious Debate*, 177, fn 696, notes that three Greek authors of late antiquity — Basil of Seleucia, Ephrem Graecus, and Ps John Chrysostom — composed homilies in verse. With respect to late antique Syriac homilies, Forness, *Preaching and Religious Debate*, 176, fn 691, notes that six homilies were composed in prose by Jacob, which have been published and translated into French by Rilliet, *Jacques de Saroug: Six homelies festales*, and translated into English by Kollamparampil, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*.

⁴⁹ Brock, *An Introduction to Syriac Studies*, 9. For a broader introduction of Syriac poetry and an overview of the secondary literature, see Brock, “Poetry and Hymnography”, 657–671.

consist of 7+7 syllables, those of Ps Narsai, Narsai, and Jacob consist of 12+12 syllables, but in any case, the isosyllabic form that they all share facilitates their artistic recitation. The isosyllabic form of the Syriac *mimrā* demonstrates not only the orality of Syriac homiletic retellings of the Joseph story but also the artistic quality of their orality, and in this, the Syriac *mimrē* on Joseph are remarkably similar to the quranic Joseph story.

4.2.2. The use of dialogue in the quranic Joseph story

Dialogue is an important literary feature in the Quran that has several types and functions.⁵⁰ Mir identifies a number of different types of quranic dialogues, the most common of which are (1) dialogues between prophets and the peoples to which they are sent and (2) dialogues between God and his prophets.⁵¹ The functions of quranic dialogue are many, but at least three functions are noteworthy in this context. First, dialogues illustrate major themes of the Quran.⁵² Second, dialogues impart continuity in quranic discourses and stories,⁵³ and in some stories, dialogues act, to use Mir's words, "as an organizing principle," and he goes on to exemplify this by considering the dialogues in the Joseph story:

For example, Q 12 (*Sūrat Yūsuf*), which has 111 verses, is conceived in terms of a series of dialogues: Joseph and Jacob (Q 12:4–6); Joseph's brothers (Q 12:8–

⁵⁰ Mir, "Dialogues", *EQ* 1:531–535; "Dialogue in the Quran", 1–22.

⁵¹ Mir, "Dialogues", *EQ* 1:531; "Dialogue in the Quran", 9–11.

⁵² Mir, "Dialogues", *EQ* 1:533; "Dialogue in the Quran", 5, where he further explains, "Sometimes a thesis is stated, and then dialogue is used to illustrate it. For example, Q 2:256–57 says that truth has become distinct from falsehood, that it is up to the individual to choose one or the other, and that God guides those who believe; whereas the *taghut* misguide those who follow them. Three brief dialogues follow in verses 258–60 (between Abraham and the king; between a certain believer and God; and between Abraham and God), exemplifying the rule laid down in verses 256–57. Sometimes a dialogue is reported first and is followed by a statement of the thesis. For example, Q 5:32 speaks of the law of *qisas* ('vengeance, retaliation') that was given to the Israelites. Leading up to the statement of that law is the story of Cain and Abel, which is presented in the form of a dialogue (verses 27–31)."

⁵³ Mir, "Dialogues", *EQ* 1:532; "Dialogue in the Quran", 5–6.

10); the brothers and Jacob (Q 12:11–4, 16–8); Potiphar’s wife and Joseph (Q 12:23); Potiphar’s wife, Joseph, the wise observer and Potiphar (Q 12:25–9); Potiphar’s wife, the Egyptian ladies and Joseph (Q 12:31–3); Joseph and his two prisonmates (Q 12:36–42); the king and his courtiers (Q 12:43–4); the butler and Joseph (Q 12:46–9); the king, the Egyptian ladies and Potiphar’s wife (Q 12:51); the king and Joseph (Q 12:54–5); Joseph and his brothers (Q 12:58–61); the brothers, and Jacob (Q 12:63–7); the brothers, Joseph’s men and Joseph (Q 12:70–9); the brothers among themselves (Q 12:80–2); the brothers and Jacob (Q 12:83–7); the brothers and Joseph (Q 12:88–93); Jacob and his neighbors (Q 12:94–5); and the brothers and Jacob (Q 12:96–8). It is thus through dialogue that the plot of the story advances. Even in the narrative portions of the sūra, direct speech occurs in the form of a comment, exclamation or aside (e.g. Q 12:19, 30, 62, 77).⁵⁴

Third, quranic retellings of biblical stories including dialogues occur particularly in the middle and late Meccan chapters, and to explain why, Mir points to the historical situation in Mecca:

During the First Meccan period Muhammad was an active preacher, but the Quraysh, the ruling tribe of Mecca, ignored him in the very early stages and, a little later, resorted to ridicule of him. Only beginning with the Second Meccan period did the Quraysh realize that the challenge posed by Muhammad’s message was a serious one. They then began to criticize it in earnest: they raised

⁵⁴ Mir, “Dialogues”, *EQ* 1:532–533. For a closer study of the dialogues in the quranic Joseph story, see Johns, “The Quranic presentation of the Joseph story”, *AQ*, 37–70.

questions, expressed doubts, and made objections. Without trivializing the whole issue, one might say that the Quraysh now entered into a “dialogue” with Muhammad and his followers. The opposition begun in the Second Meccan period continued into the Third. The *surahs* of these two periods are thus an accurate reflection of the dialogical situation that prevailed during a certain phase of Muhammad’s prophethood. These *surahs* constitute, in other words, a literary record of an important element of a given historical situation.⁵⁵

Mir’s suggestion is convincing, but I would like to add that, as seen in the previous section, the centrality of quranic retellings of biblical stories including dialogues in the middle and late Meccan chapters has also to do with the liturgical movement of the quranic community away from the pre-Islamic polytheistic rite and toward the three-part structure of the Christian liturgy of the word. Of course, this liturgical movement of the quranic community in Mecca is not incompatible with, but part of, the historical situation in Mecca, which, as argued in the introduction, included not only Meccan polytheists but also Arabic-speaking Christians.⁵⁶

The three functions of dialogue in the quranic retellings of biblical stories, including the Joseph story, demonstrate again the similarity between the Quran and the Syriac homily in general and between the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac homilies on Joseph in particular. First, in the previous chapters, we saw examples of themes in the Syriac homilies on Joseph illustrated through dialogues. For example, our Syriac homilists use dialogues, in which Potiphar’s wife and Joseph’s brothers confess their wrongdoings and seek forgiveness, to illustrate repentance,⁵⁷ and similarly, they — particularly Jacob — use dialogues to illustrate

⁵⁵ Mir, “Dialogue in the Quran”, 8.

⁵⁶ See 1.1.2.

⁵⁷ See 3.11 and 3.12.

the Joseph-Jesus typology.⁵⁸ Second, it is clear that dialogues in many Syriac homilies, including those on Joseph, impart continuity in the narration, and in some Syriac homilies, the dialogues act as an organising principle.⁵⁹ Third, reciting their homilies on Joseph in liturgy, our Syriac homilists are certainly in dialogue with their listeners.

Interestingly, a closer look at the dialogues in the quranic Joseph story and in the Syriac homilies on Joseph discloses that many of them are extrabiblical. By extrabiblical dialogues, following Witztum, I mean that the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac homilies on Joseph expand simple biblical dialogues into more elaborate ones and add dialogues to episodes where the Bible has none.⁶⁰ In chapter 3 of this dissertation, considering quranic additions of Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph, a number of extrabiblical dialogues shared by the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac homilies on Joseph were provided, and even more such extrabiblical dialogues could be provided. These shared extrabiblical dialogues demonstrate a literary link between the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac homilies on Joseph.⁶¹

⁵⁸ See 2.7; 2.18; 3.5; and 3.9.

⁵⁹ In “Dramatic Dialogue Poems”, 136–147, Brock distinguishes between five somewhat different types of dialogue in Syriac poetry. Type 1 = dialogues involving two figures in alternating stanzas without narrative framework. Type 2 = dialogues involving two figures in uneven blocks of speeches without narrative framework. Type 3 = dialogues involving two or more figures in uneven blocks of speeches with simple narrative framework. Type 4 = dialogues involving two or more figures in uneven blocks of speeches with complex biblical narrative framework without paraenetic material outside the prologue and epilogue. Type 5 = dialogues involving two or more figures in uneven blocks of speeches with complex biblical narrative framework with paraenetic material. Syriac narrative homilies containing dramatised dialogue usually include dialogues of types 4 and 5. Hence, the dialogues in our Syriac homilies on Joseph are of types 4 and 5. Interestingly, Brock notes that there is one homily, whose couplets consist of 12+12 syllables, that includes a dialog of type 1, and that two homilies of Jacob include dialogues of type 2.

⁶⁰ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 240.

⁶¹ This has been argued by Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 239–245.

4.3. THE LEXICON OF THE QURANIC JOSEPH STORY

As noted in the introduction, the Quran contains Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Geez, and Greek loanwords,⁶² the largest number of which are Aramaic/Syriac. Writing in 1927, Alphonse Mingana estimated:

Taking the number 100 as a unit of the foreign influences on the style and terminology of the Kuran Ethiopic would represent about 5 percent of the total, Hebrew about 10 percent, the Graeco-Roman languages about 10 percent, Persian about 5 percent, and Syriac (including Aramaic and Palestinian Syriac) about 70 percent.⁶³

Similarly, in the introduction to his acclaimed study of the loanwords in the Quran, which was published 1938, Jeffery stated that Syriac — by which he meant Christian Aramaic and the Classical Syriac dialect of Edessa — “is undoubtedly the most copious source of Quranic borrowings.”⁶⁴ Martin Zammit has counted 322 loanwords, including 66 proper names, in Jeffery’s study, noting that “the Aramaic-Syriac group contributed the biggest number of loans, with about 160 loans (ca. 61.3%), excluding proper names,”⁶⁵ and some of them occur not only in *Sūrat Yūsuf* but also in the Syriac homilies on Joseph. Aramaic/Syriac words that occur in both *Sūrat Yūsuf* and the Syriac homilies on Joseph, particularly if they occur in similar contexts, serve as a reinforcing argument for the literary link between *Sūrat Yūsuf*

⁶² See 1.1.2.

⁶³ Mingana, “Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kuran”, 80.

⁶⁴ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 19. Interestingly, on pages 20–21, Jeffery states that the form of Christianity “known among the Arabs in pre-Islamic times was largely of the Syrian type, whether Jacobite or Nestorian.”

⁶⁵ Zammit, *A Comparative Lexical Study*, 58. As noted in 1.1.4, most proper names in the Quran follow the Syriac form.

and the Syriac homilies on Joseph. In his study of the quranic Joseph story, Witztum has pointed out that three Aramaic/Syriac words — *gubbā* ‘pit’, *bə ʿīrā* ‘beasts of burden’, and *kaylā* ‘measure’ — occur in *Sūrat Yūsuf* — as *ḡubb* (10, 15), *ba ʿīr* (65, 72), and *kayl* (59, 60, 63, 65, 88) — and in the Syriac homilies on Joseph.⁶⁶ In what follows, I will point out some other Aramaic/Syriac words that occur in *Sūrat Yūsuf* and in the Syriac homilies on Joseph. Before I do that, let me briefly remind the readers of the Syriac words *āṭā* and *qeryānā* which occur in the Syriac homilies on Joseph and in *Sūrat Yūsuf* as *āya* and *qur ʿān*. To be more accurate, *āṭā/āya* and *qeryānā/qur ʿān* are essential concepts in the Syriac tradition and in the Quran that pertain to theophany and liturgy. Both have been discussed in previous sections.⁶⁷

4.3.1. *Ḥaṣada* ‘to reap’ and *ḵazānat* ‘treasury, storehouse’

The quranic verb *ḥaṣada* ‘to reap’ is a denominative from *ḥaṣād* ‘harvest’, and this *ḥaṣād* is a borrowing from the Syriac noun *ḥaṣādā* ‘harvest’,⁶⁸ which is derived from *ḥaṣad* ‘to reap’.⁶⁹ *Ḥaṣada* occurs only once in the Quran and that is in *Sūrat Yūsuf* in the context where the cupbearer goes to Joseph, while he is in prison, to ask him explain Pharaoh’s dream:

“Truthful Joseph! Tell us the meaning of seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, seven green ears of corn and [seven] others withered, then I can return to the people to inform them.” Joseph said, “You will sow (*tazra ʿūna*) for seven consecutive years as usual. Store all that you reap (*ḥaṣadtum*), left in the ear, apart from the little you eat. After that will come seven years of hardship which

⁶⁶ Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 247–249. It is important to note that *gubbā/ḡubb*, *bə ʿīrā/ba ʿīr*, and *kaylā/kayl* occur in similar contexts.

⁶⁷ For *āṭā/āya*, see 3.9. For *qeryānā/qur ʿān*, see 4.1.

⁶⁸ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 109.

⁶⁹ Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 154.

will consume all but a little of what you stored up for them; after that will come a year when the people will have abundant rain and will press grapes.”⁷⁰

After this, we read the Joseph was brought to Pharaoh who put him in charge of Egypt’s *kazā’in* ‘storehouses’:

The king said, “Bring him to me: I will have him serve me personally,” and then, once he had spoken with him, “From now on you will have our trust and favour.” Joseph said, “Put me in charge of the nation’s storehouses (*kazā’in*): I shall manage them prudently and carefully.”⁷¹

The quranic noun *kazānat* (singular of *kazā’in*) comes from the Aramaic/Syriac *ganzā* ‘treasury, storehouse’,⁷² the contraction of which is *gazā*.⁷³

In his eighth homily on Joseph, Jacob recounts the biblical counterpart of Q 12:46–49, 54–55, and provides a lengthy paraenetic reading of it, focusing on the eucharist, a part of which reads:

If you are wise, pay attention to the time of plenty, like Joseph did, / and go out and gather provision for yourself, so that you can live by it. / The grain that Joseph gathered was consumed and eaten, and it came to an end, / but the life-giving body of Christ gives everlasting fullness to everyone who is worthy of it. / Keep this great provision within yourself to the last day, / so that you can

⁷⁰ Q 12:46–49

⁷¹ Q 12:54–55.

⁷² Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 122–123.

⁷³ Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 67.

live by it for eternity. / There will be a great famine after the time of plenty, / just as Pharaoh saw clearly in his dream. / In Gehenna, a drop of water is something great, / and anyone who does not have it here will be wanting there. / In such a torment, one crumb of the life-giving body of Christ gives fullness, / and he in whom it is preserved will be nourished by it, and he will not be tormented. / ... / The one who is wise will think about the future, like Joseph did, / and he will prepare himself as long as he is still able to do so. / In the next world, there is no ingathering, / but in this life, one can easily obtain virtues. / In the end of times, no one will sow (*zāra*), for there will be no time. / The final harvest (*ḥaṣādā*), at which everyone can reap (*neḥṣūd*) produce, is now.⁷⁴

As we can see in the final verse, Jacob uses the verb *zāra* ‘to sow’, the verb *ḥaṣad* ‘to reap’, and the noun *ḥaṣādā* ‘harvest’. Furthermore, in his tenth homily, recounting Gen 45:4–14, Jacob has Joseph say the following to his brothers:

“The Lord sent me for your sake, so that I could provide for you. / Go and inform the old Jacob about all this, so that he can come and see me. / Go and say to him, ‘Your sorrow, righteous Jacob, has come to an end, / for your son is truly alive, and he is looking forward to see you.’ / Hurry up, bring the news full of peace to him, / for they will drive away the long sorrow from the honourable one. / Quickly, bring the good news / to the righteous one who deserves to be greatly comforted. / There are five more years of famine to come over the entire land, / and no one will neither sow (*zāra*) nor reap (*ḥaṣad*), as it has been decreed.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:550.

⁷⁵ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:572. Having Joseph say that no one will neither *zāra* ‘sow’ nor *ḥaṣad* ‘reap’, Jacob follows the Peshitta of Gen 45:6.

Similarly, in Q 12:46, the verb *ḥaṣada* ‘to reap’, which ultimately comes from the Syriac verb *ḥaṣad*, and *zara* ‘a ‘to sow’, which is the cognate of the Syriac *zara*’, are put in the mouth of Joseph, who goes on to tell Pharaoh to make him in charge of Egypt’s *ḡazā’in* ‘storehouses’ (Q 12:55). The closest occurrence of the Syriac *ganzā* or *gazā* ‘treasury, storehouse’ in the Syriac homilies on Joseph to the use of *ḡazā’in* in Q 12:55 that I could find is in the opening of Jacob’s eighth homily, which reads:

Joseph has opened the great door of discoveries for me. / Through you, my Lord,
I will enter to behold the virtues set in him. / He has revealed news thing to me,
which are not his, / and he has filled me with amazement, so that I would keep
talking about his victories. / Yours, my Lord, are all the *gazē* that were hidden
in him, / and from them, he brought forth riches to Egypt to which he was sent.⁷⁶

Taking into account that Jacob goes on to recount, and paraenetically comment on, the biblical counterpart of Q 12:46–49, 54–55, a part of which we read above, we are not mistaken in taking the *gazē*, which were hidden in him and from which he brought forth riches to Egypt, to mean Egypt’s storehouses, from which Joseph provided grain to all those who came to him, and which typologically, according to Jacob’s construal, refer to the liturgical storehouses that provide the eucharist to all those who come to Jesus in the liturgy.

4.3.2. *Ḳamr* ‘wine’

According to Jeffery, the quranic noun *ḡamr* ‘wine’ “is doubtless an early borrowing from the Syriac *ḥamrā*.”⁷⁷ In *Sūrat Yūsuf*, *ḡamr* occurs twice in the following context:

⁷⁶ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:549.

⁷⁷ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 109.

Two young men went into prison alongside him. One of them said, “I dreamed that I was pressing grapes (*kamran*)”; the other said, “I dreamed that I was carrying bread on my head and that the birds were eating it.” [They said], “Tell us what this means — we can see that you are a knowledgeable man.” ... “Fellow prisoners, one of you will serve his master with wine (*kamran*); the other will be crucified and the birds will peck at his head. That is the end of the matter on which you asked my opinion.”⁷⁸

In the Peshitta of Gen 40:9–19, we find no mention of *hamrā*:

The chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and he said to him, “In my dream, there was a vine before me, and on the vine, there were three branches. When it budded, its blossoms came out, and its clusters ripened into grapes (*‘enbē*). Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes (*‘enbē*) and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and I gave the cup to Pharaoh.” Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of your dream: the three branches are three days. After three days, Pharaoh will remember you, and he will restore you to your office, and you will place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, as you used to when you were his cupbearer...” When the chief baker saw that he explained good, he said to Joseph, “In my dream, I had three baskets of white bread on my head, and in the uppermost basket, there were all sorts of food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.” Joseph answered him, “This is the explanation of your dream: the three baskets are three days, and after three days,

⁷⁸ Q 12:36, 41.

Pharaoh will have you beheaded and hang you on a pole, and the birds will eat the flesh from you.”⁷⁹

The Peshitta simply says that ‘*enbē* ‘grapes’ were pressed into Pharaoh’s cup, and in this, it follows the Hebrew text of Gen 40:9–19, which says that, in his dream, the cupbearer took the ‘*ēnābhim* ‘grapes’ and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup. The same is said in the Targums of Gen 40:9–19.⁸⁰ However, Narsai and Jacob, recounting Gen 40:9–19, mention *ḥamrā*. In his homily, Narsai says, “In the juice of vine, in the wine (*ḥamrā*) from it, the cupbearer saw his salvation, / and Joseph gladdened him by his explanation of the wine (*ḥamrā*).”⁸¹ As for Jacob, in his sixth homily, he says:

Night’s sleep gave Pharaoh’s servants visions, / and Joseph had the power to explain their dreams. / Also, at the time of their death, the two thieves saw Christ, / and he explained to them who would die and who would live. / By bread and wine (*ḥamrā*), life and death were given to Pharaoh’s servants. / The bread is the type of the body of the Son of God. / The dream was one, and in it, two explanations were hidden. / The dream made one enter the king’s residence and had the other hanged. / By bread and wine (*ḥamrā*), the explanation gave life and death, / and it was able to do this, so that it would depict the image of the Son of God.⁸²

⁷⁹ Jansma (ed), *The Old Testament in Syriac*, 87–88. Translation mine.

⁸⁰ Targum Onkelos (Drazin, *Onkelos on the Torah*, 267); Targum Neofiti (McNamara, *Targum Neofiti*, 182–183).

⁸¹ Mingana, *Narsai*, 279.

⁸² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:535.

Interestingly, in several verses, many of which predate *Sūrat Yūsuf*, the Quran mentions ‘*inab* ‘grapes’,⁸³ a cognate of ‘*enbē* (Syriac) and ‘*ēnābhim* (Hebrew and Aramaic). Yet in *Sūrat Yūsuf*, the Quran choses to use *kamr*, not ‘*inab*, following the Syriac homilies of Narsai and Jacob instead of the Peshitta, the Hebrew text of Genesis, or the Targums of Genesis.

4.3.3. *Sunbul* ‘ear of corn’

The quranic noun *sunbul* (singular of *sunbulāt*) is a borrowing from the Aramaic/Syriac *šebbeltā* ‘ear of corn’ which is related to the Hebrew *šibboleṭ*.⁸⁴ *Sunbul* is rare in the Quran. It occurs twice in Q 2:261 as a metaphor of those “who spend their wealth in God’s cause” and three times in *Sūrat Yūsuf*:

The king said, “I dreamed about seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones; seven green ears of corn (*sunbulāt*) and [seven] others withered. Counsellors, if you can interpret dreams, tell me the meaning of my dream.” They said, “These are confusing dreams and we are not skilled at dream-interpretation,” but the prisoner who had been freed at last remembered [Joseph] and said, “I shall tell you what this means. Give me leave to go.”

“Truthful Joseph! Tell us the meaning of seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, seven green ears of corn (*sunbulāt*) and [seven] others withered, then I can return to the people to inform them.” Joseph said, “You will sow for seven consecutive years as usual. Store all that you reap, left in the ear (*fa-ḍarūhu fī sunbulihī*), apart from the little you eat. After that will come seven years of hardship which will consume all but a little of what you stored up for them; after

⁸³ Q 2:266; 6:99; 13:4; 16:11, 67; 17:91; 18:32; 23:19; 36:34; 78:32; 80:28.

⁸⁴ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 178–179.

that will come a year when the people will have abundant rain and will press grapes.”⁸⁵

The plural forms of *šebbeltā*, namely, *šebbālē* and *šebbālīn*, which we find in the Peshitta of Gen 41:5–7 and 22–27,⁸⁶ occur in all of our Syriac homilies on Joseph in the same context in which *sunbul* and *sunbulāt* occur in *Sūrat Yūsuf*.⁸⁷ To give but one example from Jacob’s seventh homily on Joseph:

The king said, “I saw myself standing on the banks of the river, / and behold, seven fat cows were grazing. / Then, after them, I saw seven thin cows, / and I saw that these ugly ones ate up the good ones. / I fell asleep again, and I saw seven good ears of corn (*šebbālē*), / and then, after them, seven thin ones sprouted up. / The full ears were swallowed up by the withered ones, / and that which was good ended up in misfortune.” / Joseph heard the dream of Pharaoh and understood it, / and readily, he began to explain it. / “God has declared to Pharaoh what he is about to do. / Both dreams have one and the same meaning and explanation. / The seven fat cows are seven good years, / and the seven ears of corn (*šebbālē*) are seven good years. / The seven ugly cows are seven difficult years, / and the thin ears of corn (*šebbālē*) have the same meaning. / The Lord is about to bring forth a great plenty throughout the land, / but after that, famine and poverty will come.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Q 12:43–49.

⁸⁶ Jansma (ed), *The Old Testament in Syriac*, 89–91.

⁸⁷ Ps Ephrem (Bedjan, *Histoire complete de Joseph*, 125–127); Ps Narsai (Bedjan, *Liber Superiorum*, 546, 549); Narsai (Mingana, *Narsai*, 280–281); Jacob (Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:543).

⁸⁸ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:543.

4.3.4. *Ṣalaba* ‘to crucify’

Jeffery notes that the quranic *ṣalaba* ‘to crucify’ “cannot be explained from Arabic as the verb is denominative from *ṣalīb*,” which is the Arabic for ‘cross’, and he goes on to note that this *ṣalīb* “is doubtless derived from” the Aramaic/Syriac *šlībā* ‘cross’.⁸⁹ Mingana, to whom Jeffery refers, argues that *ṣalaba* came into Arabic not from Jewish Aramaic but from the Syriac *ṣalab* ‘to crucify’.⁹⁰ Moreover, it is important to note that, in Syriac, as seen already in the Peshitta of the New Testament, the nouns *šlībā* and *zəqīpā* are synonyms, meaning ‘cross’.⁹¹

The quranic *ṣalaba* ‘to crucify’ occurs six times in the Quran. Four times, it occurs as the second form verb: three times in the Moses story as Pharaoh’s punishment on his servants who believed in the God of Moses (Q 7:124; 20:71; 26:49), and one time as God’s punishment on those who waged “war against God and His Messenger” and strove “to spread corruption in the land” unless they repent (Q 5:33). Two times, it occurs as the first form verb: one time in relation to Jesus’ crucifixion (Q 4:157), and one time in relation to the baker’s crucifixion in *Sūrat Yūsuf*:

Two young men went into prison alongside him. One of them said, “I dreamed that I was pressing grapes”; the other said, “I dreamed that I was carrying bread on my head and that the birds were eating it.” [They said], “Tell us what this means — we can see that you are a knowledgeable man.” ... “Fellow prisoners, one of you will serve his master with wine; the other will be crucified (*yūṣlabu*)

⁸⁹ Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 197.

⁹⁰ Mingana, “Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kuran”, 86.

⁹¹ Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 119, 479.

and the birds will peck at his head. That is the end of the matter on which you asked my opinion.”⁹²

As mentioned in the previous chapter,⁹³ recounting Gen 40:16–19, according to which Joseph tells the baker that he will be beheaded and then impaled on a pole, Jacob says that “Joseph gave a cross (*zəqīpā*) to the chief baker,”⁹⁴ meaning, in quranic language, that the baker would be crucified (*yuslabu*), since, as noted above, *šlībā* and *zəqīpā* are synonyms, meaning ‘cross’. Furthermore, recounting Gen 40:5–19, Narsai makes mention of the verb *šalab* ‘to crucify’ in relation to Jesus’ crucifixion:

Joseph did not deserve all this, / yet he was imprisoned by blind envy want of judgement. / The chaste one was imprisoned among despised men, / like our pure and holy saviour was among thieves. / Two wicked men, the king’s servants, together with a righteous man, / like the two thieves on the right side and on the left side. / ... / Joseph was imprisoned there, although he was blameless, / typifying the life-giver whom envy crucified (*šalab*), although he was innocent.⁹⁵

To sum up, in this section, ten Aramaic/Syriac words — *gubbā*, *bə’irā*, *kaylā*, *āṭā*, *qeryānā*, *ḥaṣad*, *gazā*, *ḥamrā*, *šebbeltā*, and *šalab* — have been identified in *Sūrat Yūsuf* — as *ḡubb*, *ba’ir*, *kayl*, *āya*, *qur’ān*, *ḥaṣada*, *kazānat*, *kamr*, *sunbul*, and *šalaba* — and in the Syriac homilies on Joseph in similar contexts. This lexical similarity suggests a literary link between *Sūrat Yūsuf* and the Syriac homilies on Joseph.

⁹² Q 12:36, 41.

⁹³ See 3.9.

⁹⁴ Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:535.

⁹⁵ Mingana, *Narsai*, 279.

4.4. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I have argued that, in terms of its character, style, and lexicon, the quranic Joseph story is remarkably similar to the Syriac homilies on Joseph. That is to say, both the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac homilies on Joseph are liturgical texts that have homiletic features, that are meant to be artistically recited, that use the literary feature of dialogue, that develop similar extrabiblical dialogues, and that contain a number of Syriac/Aramaic words in similar contexts. With all this, I do not want to give the readers the impression that, in terms of its character, style, and lexicon, the quranic Joseph story is more or less a copy or a version of the Syriac homilies on Joseph. Clearly, it is not. My argument is that the character, style, and lexicon of the quranic Joseph story demonstrate that it emerged in a world that was not at all distant from the Syriac world. To put it differently, the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac homilies on Joseph share a common world, and this common world is not to be forgotten despite the differences between the quranic Joseph story and the Syriac homilies on Joseph in particular and between the Quran and the Syriac tradition in general.

5. CONCLUSION

The quranic retellings of the stories of biblical and non-biblical figures seem to be determined by the Quran's prophetology. Since the Quran's prophetology has to do with typology and christology, we should expect the possibility that the quranic retellings of the stories of biblical and non-biblical figures are related to typology and christology. This seems to be the case with the quranic retelling of the Joseph story.

The typology of the Quran's prophetology is essentially different from that of the Syriac tradition. While the latter depicts Old Testament figures as types of Jesus, prefiguring his salvific life, the former takes them as models for Muhammad, supporting his mission. This is the case with Joseph, for in the Syriac tradition, he is the type of Jesus, but in the Quran, he is the model for Muhammad. To be sure, the quranic retellings of Old Testament figures are also meant to benefit people in general and Muslims in particular, and this comes out in the closing part of *Sūrat Yūsuf*:

This account is part of what was beyond your knowledge [Muhammad]. We revealed it to you: you were not present with Joseph's brothers when they made their treacherous plans. However eagerly you may want them to, most men will not believe. You ask no reward from them for this: it is a reminder for all people and there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to — most of them will only believe in God while also joining others with Him. Are they so sure that an overwhelming punishment from God will not fall on them, or that the Last Hour will not come upon them suddenly when they least expect it? Say, "This is my way: based on clear evidence, I, and all who

follow me, call [people] to God — glory be to God! — I do not join others with Him.”

All the messengers We sent before you [Muhammad] were men to whom We made revelations, men chosen from the people of their towns. Have the [disbelievers] not travelled through the land and seen the end of those who went before them? For those who are mindful of God, the Home in the Hereafter is better. Do you [people] not use your reason? When the messengers lost all hope and realized that they had been dismissed as liars, Our help came to them: We saved whoever We pleased, but Our punishment will not be turned away from guilty people. There is a lesson in the stories of such people for those who understand. This revelation is no fabrication: it is a confirmation of the truth of what was sent before it; an explanation of everything; a guide and a blessing for those who believe.¹

Although my study has focused on the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition, there are other readings of the Joseph story in the Syriac tradition, readings that may be more directly relevant to the everyday lived experiences of people in general and Christians in particular. To give but one example. Recounting Joseph’s tribulations in life, Jacob turns to his addressees, many of whom may have been wronged in life, and provides the following spiritual reading of Joseph’s tribulations in life:

Let anyone who has been wronged look at Joseph and be comforted. / If he is wise, let him endure injustice without quarrelling against it. / If anyone has wronged you, look at God who does not wrong anyone, / and do not try to

¹ Q 12:102–111.

demonstrate that you have been wronged. / O you who are wise, if you who seek to please God, / take the injustice of men as an opportunity to grow in virtues. / Do not try to defend your innocence when you are troubled, / lest you lose your virtues. / If you believe that God is aware of everything, / why then are you trying hard to defend your innocence? / Let Joseph be an example for all those who have been wronged, / and in him, they will find comfort when they are mistreated by their oppressors. / He was unjustly imprisoned, and then justly restored, / so that he would become the ruler of Egypt that had wronged him. / He came before the king as a caretaker to take care of his pain / and to give him a remedy for his wound.²

Many similar examples can be provided from the Syriac retellings of the Joseph story. Therefore, the view that the typological reading of Old Testament figures is the only reading in the Syriac tradition is simply not true. Yet, it is true that the typological reading of Old Testament figures is a central reading in the Syriac tradition, and it is this kind of reading of the Joseph story to which the Quran reacts.

Throughout its retelling of the Joseph story, the Quran omits biblical details about Joseph that Syriac authors use to establish a typological link between Joseph and Jesus, and this suggests that the Quran reacts to the typological construal of Joseph in the Syriac tradition. Why would the quranic Joseph story react to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition? I offered four possible answers:

- (1) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because the Quran rejects orthodox christology.

² Akhrass, *160 Unpublished Homilies*, 1:539–540.

- (2) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because the Quran rejects Christian claims of salvific exclusivism.
- (3) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because the Quran takes issues with the imperial policy of the Byzantine empire.
- (4) The quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology in the Syriac tradition because it is incompatible with the Quran's prophetology.

Discussing these possible answers in chapter 2, I noted that there could be more possible answers as to why the quranic Joseph story would react to the Joseph-Jesus typology, and I left it to the readers to consider my suggested answers and to judge for themselves if any of them seems reasonable.³ However, that the quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology is clear.

Moreover, it is equally clear that the quranic Joseph story participates in Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology, which strikes me as remarkable, given that the quranic Joseph story reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology. Exploring this in chapter 3, I observed that the quranic Joseph story participates in Syriac extrabiblical details about Joseph that are related to the Joseph-Jesus typology because it finds them useful for its own construal of Joseph and relevant to Muhammad, and when using them, it makes sure that they are in agreement with the Quran's message and its prophetology. I also observed that Syriac extrabiblical details carrying christological meaning that are used in the quranic Joseph story are reminiscent of how Jesus is presented in the Quran, and when using them, the quranic Joseph story sometimes reacts to the Joseph-Jesus typology and counters certain christological conceptions that seem incompatible with the Quran's prophetology and its presentation of Jesus. Finally, I observed

³ See 2.20.

that the scene in the quranic Joseph story where Jacob's blindness is healed by Joseph's shirt is reminiscent of the use of incense and the partaking of the body of Jesus in the eucharistic liturgy of the Syriac-Orthodox Church. I do not think that this observation is far-fetched because, as argued in chapter 4, the quranic Joseph story is a liturgical text that has homiletic features, and in this, it is remarkably close to the Syriac homilies on Joseph. In this context, the finding that the Syriac *qeryānā*, meaning 'biblical reading' that takes place in liturgy, occurs in the opening of Jacob's seventh and ninth homilies on Joseph and in the opening of *Sūrat Yūsuf* as *qur'ān* is remarkable. Another remarkable similarity between the Syriac homilies on Joseph and the quranic Joseph story pertains to their style, namely, their artistic orality and their use of dialogue. Both the Syriac homilies on Joseph and the quranic Joseph story are meant to be artistically recited in liturgical settings, and both of them include many dialogues for similar reasons. Interestingly, many of the dialogues in the Syriac homilies on Joseph and in the quranic Joseph story are extrabiblical, meaning that the Syriac homilies on Joseph and the quranic Joseph story expand simple biblical dialogues into more elaborate ones and add dialogues to episodes where the Bible has none. These shared extrabiblical dialogues demonstrate a literary link between the Syriac homilies on Joseph and the quranic Joseph story. Similarly, the ten Aramaic/Syriac words that were identified in the Syriac homilies on Joseph and the quranic Joseph story in similar contexts suggest a literary link between them. In a word, in terms of its character, style, and lexicon, the quranic Joseph story is remarkably similar to the Syriac homilies on Joseph.

When all is said and done, it becomes clear that the Syriac homilies on Joseph and the quranic Joseph story, despite their differences, have much in common. In fact, there are many commonalities shared by the Syriac tradition and the Quran that await further studies. One example of such a commonality is the concept of signs which is an essential concept in both the Syriac tradition and the Quran that pertains to God's self-revelation. I discussed this

shared concept in relation to the Joseph story somewhat briefly in chapter 3.⁴ Another interesting commonality shared by the Syriac tradition and the Quran has to do with a certain form of religious life. Before Egyptian monasticism spread northwards to Syria and Mesopotamia during the fourth and fifth centuries, a native Syriac form of religious life, termed *bānāy/bānāṭ qəyāmā* ‘sons/daughters of the covenant’, had flourished in Syria and Mesopotamia. This *bānāy/bānāṭ qəyāmā* was later largely fused with Egyptian monasticism and almost forgotten due to the enormous prestige that Egyptian monasticism acquired. However, we have evidence that the *bānāy/bānāṭ qəyāmā* existed in the sixth century not only in Syria and Mesopotamia but also in Najran. Clare Wilde has suggested that Q 33:35 is perhaps describing a form of religious life that is reminiscent of the *bānāy/bānāṭ qəyāmā*.⁵ This suggestion is highly interesting and deserves to be further studied.

The commonalities shared by the Syriac tradition and the Quran need to be discovered, studied, and discussed primarily but not only by Christians of the Syriac tradition and Muslims, for such discussions may help us to find and hold on to the common world that we share. It seems to me that being rooted in our common world and valuing our commonalities will help us to have genuinely constructive discussions of our differences.

⁴ See 3.8.

⁵ Wilde, “Q 33:35”, 419–431. For a further reading about *bānāy/bānāṭ qəyāmā* besides Wilde’s article, see Brock, *The Luminous Eyes*, 131–141; Aydin, *The Syriac Order of Monastic Profession and the Order of Baptism*; Griffith, “‘Singles’ in God’s Service”, 145–159; “Monks, ‘Singles’, and the ‘Sons of the Covenant’”, 141–160; Bumazhnov, “Qyāmā before Aphrahat”, 65–81. In this context, it is interesting to note that Jacob composed a homily honouring a deceased female member of the *bānāy/bānāṭ qəyāmā*. This homily is found in Bedjan, *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, 5:821–836.

6. COMPARATIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Since the growing field of comparative theology is diverse in terms of approaches,¹ I find it important to briefly state my own comparative theological approach before I share my comparative theological reflection on my study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition. To begin with, I am a Christian, and to be more specific, I am a member of the Syriac-Orthodox Church. My comparative theological approach is confessional. Rooted in the tradition of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, I believe that my engagement with the religious other is meaningful in many ways. To me, the Muslim-Christian dialogue is of a central interest for a number of reasons, one of which has to do with the past and present relationship between the Muslim community and the Syriac-Orthodox Church. As discussed in the introduction, and demonstrated by the historical and literary study of this dissertation, not only was the Syriac-Orthodox Church prevalently present in South-Arabia, particularly in Najran, and in the North-West Arabia by the time of the Quran, but also the Muslim community in Arabia emerged in dialogue with the Syriac-Orthodox Church. The relationship between the Muslim community and the Syriac-Orthodox Church in Arabia continued throughout the centuries in various places in the Middle East and Asia, and since the middle of the twentieth century, this relationship has found a new home in the West. Evaluating the relationship between the Muslim community and the Syriac-Orthodox Church in the past, one would certainly find both atrocious events and fruitful experiences. My hopes are that the Muslim community and the Syriac-Orthodox Church continue their relationship in the present and make their best to create new fruitful experiences. To this end,

¹ The diversity among comparative theologians is clearly exemplified in their various articles published in a number of recent volumes: Clooney, *How to Do Comparative Theology*; Voss Roberts, *Comparing Faithfully*; Berthrong and Clooney, *European Perspectives on the New Comparative Theology*; Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology*. For a systematic overview of the field of comparative theology, see Cornille, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology*.

I am convinced that the confessional approach of comparative theology is helpful because it provides us with the opportunity to learn from each other while allowing us to be faithful to our respective traditions. In what follows, I would like to share some insights that I, as a Syriac-Orthodox Christian, have gained from my study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition.

I do appreciate the typological reading of the Joseph story because such a reading reminds me of Jesus and his salvific life and consequently enhances my faith. At the same time, my study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition has made me realise the potential danger of the Joseph-Jesus typology insofar as such a typology is used to argue for or defend the view of salvific exclusivism, a view that the Quran is perhaps countering in its retelling of the Joseph story. By that as it may, by providing an alternative reading of the Joseph story, construing him as a model for Muhammad and believers, the Quran brings to my attention the importance of appreciating other readings of the Joseph story as well. Indeed, other readings of the Joseph story are to be found in the Syriac retellings of the Joseph story, but these other readings seem not to have been as prominent in the Syriac tradition as the typological one, and in fact, they were neither clearly seen nor fully appreciated by me. My study of the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition, which happily compelled me to read both the quranic retelling and the Syriac retellings closely, has taught me to perceive and appreciate other readings of the Joseph story. For example, the reading of Joseph as a man of God who suffered many tribulations in life but came out of them stronger thanks to his faith, a reading that I can perceive both in the quranic retelling and in the Syriac retellings, seems to me to be more directly relevant to the everyday lived experiences of many people. This existential reading, of course, does not preclude the typological reading, and both of them are important to me, though in different ways.

I am struck by the discovery that the quranic Joseph story, like the Quran in general, emerged as a liturgical text. The liturgical character of the Quran reminds me of the liturgical character of the Bible. To be sure, the Bible should be read individually and studied academically, but this should not make us forget that the Bible is, perhaps first and foremost, a liturgical text, a text that belongs to a community of believers, the Church, who come together in the liturgy, and particularly in the eucharistic liturgy, to experience the coming kingdom of God. In such sacral gatherings, biblical readings take on deeper meaning and acquire transformative power. It seems to me that this liturgical understanding of the Bible is more or less overlooked by many Christians today. I am therefore deeply delighted to have discovered that the quranic Joseph story, and the Quran in general, emerged as a liturgical text, for this discovery reassures me of the importance of understanding the Bible as a liturgical text.

Closely related to the liturgical character of the quranic Joseph story, and of the Quran in general, is the notion of community. It is clear that the quranic Joseph story, like the Quran in general, addresses a community of believers, and therefore, approaching the Quran means approaching a community of believers. This can also be said about the Bible. However, the communal aspect of the Christian faith, which I think is crucial for the meaningfulness of the Christian faith, seems to be fading away in today's world, particularly, it seems to me, in the western world. I do not intend to reflect on why this is the case, but I do wish to express my appreciation of the strong communal aspect of faith in the quranic discourse, and I hope that both Christians and Muslims, particularly in the western world, keep their faith communal, for it seems to me that community is crucial for experiencing the deeper meaning of faith.

The way in which the quranic Joseph story, and the Quran in general, is experienced by the community of believers in liturgical gatherings strikes me as remarkable. Quranic texts

are artistically recited in the liturgy, and this artistic recitation, it seems to me, invites the community of believers to be moved not only by the recited message but also by the artistic quality of the recitation. This reminds me of the affective dimension of the liturgical life. Artistic recitations of the Gospel and theological hymns are essential in the liturgical life of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, and in late antiquity, the liturgical homilies were also artistically recited. I think that the artistic orality of the liturgical life in both the Muslim community and the Syriac-Orthodox Church is a valuable shared heritage.

Finally, learning how to study the Joseph story in the Quran in light of the Syriac tradition based on critical scholarship and comparative theology has opened an exciting way of doing confessional theology scholarly in the context of religious plurality.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AQ</i>	Approaches to the Quran, edited by Gerald Hawting and Abdul-Kader Shareef, Routledge, 1993.
<i>BCQ</i>	The Blackwell Companion to the Quran, edited by Andrew Rippin, Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
<i>BCEC</i>	The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity, edited by Ken Parry, Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
<i>CCQ</i>	The Cambridge Companion to the Quran, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
<i>EQ</i>	The Encyclopaedia of the Quran, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Brill, 2001–2006.
<i>GEDSH</i>	Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage, edited by Sebastian Brock, et al, Gorgias Press, 2011.
<i>NPQ</i>	New Perspectives on the Quran, edited by Gabriel Reynolds, Routledge, 2011.
<i>NTQS</i>	New Trends in Quranic Studies: Text, Context, and Interpretation, edited by Munim Sirry, Lockwood Press, 2019.
<i>QC</i>	The Quran in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Quranic Milieu, edited by Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, Brill, 2010.
<i>QHC</i>	The Quran in Its Historical Context, edited by Gabriel Reynolds, Routledge, 2008.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abdel Haleem, Muhammad, *The Quran*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

Abdel Haleem, Muhammad, *Understanding the Quran: Themes and Style*, I.B. Tauris, 1999.

Abrahamov, Binyamin, “Signs”, *EQ*, 2006, 5:2–14.

Afsar, Ayaz, “Plot Motifs in Joseph/Yusuf Story: A Comparative Study of Biblical and Quranic Narrative”, *Islamic Studies* 45/2, 2006, 167–189.

Akhrass, Roger; Syryany, Imad, *160 Unpublished Homilies of Jacob of Serugh 1–2*, Damascus, 2017.

Anthony, Sean, “Further Notes on the Word Şibgha in Quran 2:138”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 59/1, 2014, 117–129.

Andrae, Tor, *Mohammed: The Man and his Faith*, George Allen & Unwin, 1936.

Andrae, Tor, *Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932.

Appleyard, David, “Ethiopian Christianity”, *BCEC*, 2007, 117–136.

Bamyeh, Muhammed, “Review of Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State by Yehuda Nevo and Judith Koren”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38/2, 2006, 303–304.

Bar-Ilan, Meir, “Surat Yusuf (XII) and Some of Its Possible Jewish Sources”, *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception*, edited by Alberdina Houtman, et al, Brill, 2016, 189–210.

Barton, John; Muddiman, John, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

Baumer, Christoph, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*, I.B Tauris, 2016.

Bedjan, Paul, *Liber superiorum*, Harrassowitz, 1901.

Bedjan, Paul, *Histoire complete de Joseph par Saint Ephrem: Poeme en douze livres*, Harrassowitz, 1891.

Bell, Richard, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, Frank Cass, 1926.

Berthrong, John; Clooney, Francis (eds), *European Perspectives on the New Comparative Theology*, MDPI, 2014.

Blum, Richard; Weingart, Kristin, “The Joseph Story: Diaspora Novella or North Israelite Narrative?” *Zeitschrift für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 129/4, 2017, 501–521.

Bobzin, Hartmut, “‘The Seal of the Prophets’: Towards an Understanding of Muhammad’s Prophethood”, *QC*, 2010, 565–583.

Bowman, John, “The Debt of Islam to Monophysite Syrian Christianity”, *Nederlands Teologisch Tijdschrift* 19, 1964–1965), 177–201.

Boullata, Issa (ed), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Quran*, Routledge, 2000.

Boullata, Issa, “Literary structures of the Quran”, *EQ*, 2003, 3:192–205.

Breck, John, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church*, SVS Press, 2001.

Brock, Sebastian, “Giwargi, bp. of the Arab tribes”, *GEDSH*, 2011, 177–178.

Brock, Sebastian, “Ya‘qub of Serugh”, *GEDSH*, 2011, 433–435.

Brock, Sebastian, “Poetry and Hymnography (3): Syriac”, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, edited by Susan Harvey and David Hunter, Oxford University Press, 2008, 657–671.

Brock, Sebastian, *An Introduction to Syriac Studies*, Gorgias Press, 2006.

Brock, Sebastian, *The Luminous Eye: The spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem*, Cistercian Publications, 1992.

Brock, Sebastian, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, SVS Press, 1990.

Brock, Sebastian, “Dramatic Dialogue Poems”, *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature*, edited by H. J. W. Drijvers, et al, Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987, 136–147.

Brock, Sebastian, “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition”, *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, edited by Margot Schmidt, Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1982, 11–38.

Brown, Jonathan, *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

Brown, Francis; Diver, Samuel; Briggs, Charles, *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Clarendon Press, 1906.

Bukharin, Mikhail, “Mecca on the Caravan Routes in Pre-Islamic Antiquity”, *QC*, 2010, 116–134.

Burkitt, Crawford, *The Early Syriac Lectionary System*, Oxford University Press, 1923.

Burton, John, “Collection of the Quran”, *EQ*, 2001, 1:351–361.

Böwering, Gerhard, “Recent Research on the Construction of the Quran”, *QHC*, 2008, 70–87.

Böwering, Gerhard, “Chronology and the Quran”, *EQ*, 2001, 1:316–335.

Carter, Michael, “Foreign Vocabulary”, *BCQ*, 2006, 120–139.

Clooney, Francis; von Stosch, Klaus (eds), *How to Do Comparative Theology*, Fordham University Press, 2017.

Clooney, Francis (ed) *The New Comparative Theology: Thinking Interreligiously in the 21st Century*, T & T Clark International, 2010.

Coakley, James, “Mushe bar Kipho”, *GEDSH*, 2011, 300.

Coats, George, “Joseph”, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Freedman, et al, Yale University Press, 1992, 3:976–981.

Colson, Francis, *Philo*, Harvard University Press, 1935.

Connolly, Richard Hugh; Codrington, Humphrey William, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy*, Williams and Norgate, 1913.

Cornille, Catherine, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology*, Wiley Blackwell, 2019.

Crone, Patricia “Jewish Christianity and the Quran (Part Two)”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75/1, 2016, 1–21.

Crone, Patricia; Cook, Michael, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Crone, Patricia, “Jewish Christianity and the Quran (Part One)”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74/2, 2015, 225–253.

de Blois, Francois, “Nasrani (Nazoraioi) and hanif (ethnikos): Studies on the religious vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65/1, 2002, 1–30.

de Halleux, Andre, “La deuxieme Lettre de Philoxene aux Monasteres du Beit Gaugai”, *Le Museon* 96, 1983, 5–79.

Donner, Fred, “The Quran in Recent Scholarship: Challenges and Desiderata”, *QHC*, 2008, 29–50.

Donner, Fred, “The historical context”, *CCQ*, 2006, 23–49.

Donner, Fred, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Harvard University Press, 2010.

Donner, Fred, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, The Darwin Press, 1998.

Drazin, Israel; Wagner, Stanley, *Onkelos on the Torah: Genesis*, Gefen, 2006.

El-Badawi, Emram, *The Quran and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, Routledge, 2014.

El-Badawi, Emram, “Condemnation in the Quran and the Syriac Gospel of Matthew”, *NPQ*, 2011, 449–466.

El-Badawi, Emram, “Divine Kingdom in Syriac Matthew and the Quran”, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 61/1–2, 2009, 1–42.

Finster, Barbara, “Arabia In Late Antiquity: An Outline of the Cultural Situation in the Peninsula at the Time of Muhammad”, *QC*, 2010, 61–114.

Fisher, Greg (ed), *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

Fisher, Greg; Wood, Philip; et al, “Arabs and Christianity”, *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, edited by Greg Fisher, Oxford University Press, 2015, 246–372.

Fisher, Greg, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

Forness, Philip, *Preaching and Religious Debate: Jacob of Serugh and the Promotion of His Christology in the Roman Near East*, Princeton Theological Seminary (Dissertation), 2016.

Freedman, Harry, *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*, Soncino Press, 1939.

Geiger, Abraham, *Judaism and Islam*, translated from the German by F. M. Young, M.D.C.S.P.C.K. Press, 1896.

Geiger, Abraham, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*, F. Baaden, 1833.

Ghaffar, Zishan, “Kontrafaktische Intertextualität im Koran und die exegetische Tradition des syrischen Christentums”, *Der Islam* 98/2, 2021, 313–358.

Ghaffar, Zishan, *Der Koran in seinem religions- und weltgeschichtlichen Kontext: Eschatologie und Apokalyptik in den mittelmekkanischen Suren*, Brill, 2020.

Ghaffar, Zishan, “Jesus’s Position in Quranic Prophetology”, *The Other Prophet: Jesus in the Quran*, written by Mouhanad Khorchide and Klaus von Stosch, translated from the German by Simon Pare, Gingko, 2019, 119–156.

Gilliot, Claude, “Creation of a fixed text”, *CCQ*, 2006, 41–58.

Ginzberg, Louis, *Legends of the Jews*, translated from the German by Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, The Jewish Publication Society, 2003.

Goddard, Hugh, “Baptism”, *EQ*, 2001, 1:200.

Graham, William, “The Quran as a Discourse of Signs”, *No Tapping around Philology: A Festschrift in Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.*, edited by Alireza Korangy and Daniel J. Scheffield, Harrassowitz, 2014, 263–275.

Graham, William, “Orality”, *EQ*, 2003, 3:584–587.

Graham, William, “The Earliest Meaning of ‘Quran’”, *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 23, 1984, 361–377.

Griffith, Sidney, “The Sunna of Our Messengers: The Quran’s Paradigm for Messengers and Prophets; a Reading of Surat ash-Shu‘ara (26)”, *Quranic Studies Today*, edited by Angelika Neuwirth and Michael Sells, Routledge, 2016, 207–227.

Griffith, Sidney, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the ‘People of the Book’ in the Language of Islam*, Princeton University Press, 2013.

Griffith, Sidney, “Al-Nasara in the Quran: a hermeneutical reflection”, *NPQ*, 2011, 301–322.

Griffith, Sidney, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, Princeton University Press, 2010.

Griffith, Sidney, “Christian Lore and the Arabic Quran: ‘Companions of the Cave’ in *Surat al- Kahf* and in Syriac Christian tradition”, *QHC*, 2008, 109–137.

Griffith, Sidney, “Syriacisms in the Arabic Quran: Who Were Those Who Said ‘Allah is Third of Three’ according to al-Maida 73?” *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Quran and Bible Exegesis, Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, edited by Meir Bar Asher, et al, Ben Zvi Institute, 2007, 83–110.

Griffith, Sidney, “Christians and Christianity”, *EQ*, 2001, 1:307–316.

Griffith, Sidney, “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria”, *Syrian Christians Under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, edited by David Thomas, Brill, 2001, 9–55.

Griffith, Sidney, *Faith Adoring the Mystery: Reading the Bible with St. Ephraem the Syrian*, Marquette University Press, 1997.

Grypeou, Emmanouela; Spurling, Helen, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, Brill, 2013.

Gräf, Erwin, “Zu den christlichen Einflüssen im Koran,” *Al-Bahit: Festschrift Joseph Henninger*, Verlag des Anthropos-Instituts, 1976, 111–144.

Guillaume, Alfred, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, Oxford University Press, 1955.

Gwynne, Rosalind Ward, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Quran: God's Arguments*, Routledge, 2004.

Harvey, Susan, "Singing Women's Stories in Syriac Tradition", *Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift* 100/3, 2010, 171–189.

Harvey, Susan, "Holy Impudence, Sacred Desire: the Women of Matthew 1:1–16 in Syriac Tradition", *If These Stones Could Speak: Texts and Contexts*, edited by George Kalantzis and Thomas Martin, Edwin Mellen Press, 2009, 27–48.

Hayes, Andrew, "The Treasury of Prophecy: The Role of Knowledge in Salvation History for the Quran in the light of Syriac Tradition", *Syriac Theology in Past and Present*, edited by Klaus von Stosch, Martina Aras, and Charbel Rizk, Bill, forthcoming.

Heal, Kristian, "The Syriac History of Joseph: A New Translation and Introduction", *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, edited by Bauckham, Richard; Davila, James; Panayotov, Alexander, Eerdmans, 2013, 85–120.

Heal, Kristian, *Tradition and Transformation: Genesis 37 and 39 in Early Syriac Sources*, University of Birmingham (Dissertation), 2008.

Heal, Kristian, "Joseph as a Type of Christ in Syriac Literature", *Brigham Young University Studies Quarterly* 41/1, 2002, 29–49.

Horovitz, Joseph, "Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2/1, 1925, 145–227.

Hoyland, Robert, "The Jews of the Hijaz in the Quran and in their inscriptions", *NPQ*, 2011, 91–116.

Hoyland, Robert, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*, Routledge, 2001.

Hämeen-Anttila, Jaakko, “‘We Will Tell You the Best of Stories’: A Study on Surah XII”, *Studia Orientalia* 67, 1991, 7–32.

Jansma, Taeke; Koester, Marinus (eds), *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version. Part 1, fasc. 1: Preface; Genesis–Exodus*, Brill, 1977.

Jeffery, Arthur, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, Brill, 2007.

Johns, Anthony, “The Quranic presentation of the Joseph story: Naturalistic or formulaic language?”, *AQ*, 1993, 37–70.

Johns, Anthony, “Joseph in the Quran: Dramatic dialogue, human emotion and prophetic wisdom”, *Islamochristiana* 7, 1981, 29–55.

Kadi, Wadad; Mir, Mustansir, “Literature and the Quran”, *EQ*, 2003, 3:205–227.

Kannengiesser, Charles, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, Brill, 2004.

Khorchide, Mouhanad; von Stosch, Klaus, *Der andere Prophet: Jesus im Koran*, 2018, Herder.

King, Daniel, “A Christian Quran? A Study in the Syriac background to the language of the Quran as presented in the work of Christoph Luxenberg”, *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 3, 2009, 44–71

Klijn, Albertus; Reinink, Gerrit, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*, Brill, 1973.

Kollamparampil, Thomas, *Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh: An exegetico-theological study on the homilies of Jacob of Serugh on the feasts of our Lord*, Gorgias Press, 2010.

Kollamparampil, Thomas, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies and Dharmaram Publications, 1997.

Koren, Judith; Nevo, Yehuda, *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State*, Prometheus, 2003.

Kronholm, Tryggve, "Dependence and Prophetic Originality of the Koran", *Orientalia Suecana* 31–32, 1982/1983, 47–70.

Kugel, James, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*, Harvard University Press, 1990.

Kugel, James, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era*, Harvard University Press, 2009.

Lane, Edward William, *Arabic-English Lexicon* 1–8, Williams and Norgate, 1863–1893.

Madigan, Daniel, *The Quran's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture*, Princeton University Press, 2001.

Lecker, Michael, *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia*, Routledge, 1998.

Lee, Samuel, *Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammedanism*, Cambridge University Press, 1824.

Lehto, Adam, *The Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage*, Gorgias Press, 2010.

Link, Samuel Wolf, *Die Geschichte Josefs angeblich verfasst von Basilius dem Grossen aus Casarea*, Itzkowski, 1895.

Luxenberg, Christoph, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran: A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran*, Schiler, 2007.

Luxenberg, Christoph, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, Schiler, 2000.

Lüling, Günter, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation: The Rediscovery and Reliable Reconstruction of a Comprehensive Pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal Hidden in the Koran Under Earliest Islamic Reinterpretations*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003.

Lüling, Günter, *Über den Ur-Quran. Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Quran*, Lüling, 1974.

Macdonald, John, “Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary” (Part One), *The Muslim World* 46/2, 1956, 113–131.

Macdonald, John, “Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary” (Part Two), *The Muslim World* 46/3, 1956, 207–224.

Madigan, Daniel, “Themes and topics”, *CCQ*, 2006, 79–96.

Marshall, David, “Punishment Stories”, *EQ*, 2004, 4:318–322.

Marx, Michael, “Glimpses of a Mariology in the Quran: From Hagiography to Theology via Religious Political Debate”, *QC*, 2010, 533–564.

Mathews, Edward; Amar, Joseph, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, The Catholic University of America Press, 1994.

McNamara, Martin, *Targum Neofiti: Genesis*, The Liturgical Press, 1992.

Menze, Volker, “The Establishment of the Syriac Churches”, *The Syriac World*, edited by Daniel King, Routledge, 2019 105–118.

Menze, Volker, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Mehr, Vahid Mahdavi, “Can there be an Islamic Comparative Theology?”, *Handbook of Comparative Theology*, edited by Pim Valkenberg, Brill, forthcoming.

Mingana, Alphonse, "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kuran", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 11, 1927, 77–98.

Mingana, Alphonse, *Narsai Doctoris syri Homiliae et Carmina*, Fratrum Praedicatorum 1905.

Mir, Mustansir, "Unity of the Text of the Quran", *EQ*, 2006, 5:405–406.

Mir, Mustansir, "Language", *BCQ*, 2006, 88–106.

Mir, Mustansir, "Dialogues", *EQ*, 2001, 1:531–535

Mir, Mustansir, "Irony in the Quran: A Study of the Story of Joseph", *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Quran*, edited Issa Boullata, Routledge, 2000, 173–187.

Mir, Mustansir, "The Sura as a Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Quran Exegesis", *AQ*, 1993, 211–224.

Mir, Mustansir, "Dialogue in the Quran", *Religion & Literature* 24/1, 1992, 1–22.

Mir, Mustansir, "The Quran as Literature", *Religion & Literature* 20/1, 1988, 49–64.

Mir, Mustansir, *Coherence in the Quran: A Study of Islahi's Concept of Nazm in Tadabur-i Quran*, American Trust Publications, 1986.

Mir, Mustansir, "The quranic story of Joseph: Plot, Themes, and Characters", *The Muslim World* 76:1, 1986, 1–15.

Motzki, Harald, "Alternative accounts of the Quran's formation", *CCQ*, 2006, 59–76.

Murray, Robert, "The Theory of Symbolism in St Ephrem's Theology", *Parole de l'Orient* 6, 1975, 1–20.

Murray, Robert, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Murre-van den Berg, Heleen, “Syriac Christianity”, *BCEC*, 2007, 249–268.

Nebes, Norbert, “The Martyrs of Najran and the End of the Ḥimyar: On the Political History of South Arabia in the Early Sixth Century”, *QC*, 2010, 27–59.

Nelson, Kristina, *The Art of Reciting the Quran*, The American University of Cairo Press, 2001.

Netton, Ian Richard, “Nature as Signs”, *EQ*, 2003, 3:528–535.

Neuwirth, Angelika, *The Quran and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage*, translated from the German by Samuel Wilder, Oxford University Press, 2019.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Locating the Quran in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity”, *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World: Studies Presented to Claude Gilliot on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday*, edited by Andrew Rippin and Roberto Tottoli, Brill, 2015, 159–179.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Quranic Readings of the Psalms”, *QC*, 2010, 733–778.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Two Faces of the Quran: *Quran* and *Mushaf*”, *Oral Tradition* 25, 2010, 141–156.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Imagining Mary – Disputing Jesus. Reading *Surat Maryam* and Related Meccan Texts within the Quranic Communication Process”, *Fremde, Feinde und Kurioses*, edited by Benjamin Jokisch, Ulrich Rebstock, and Lawrence Conrad, De Gruyter, 2009, 383–417.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Structural, linguistical and literary features”, *CCQ*, 2006, 97–114.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Structure and the Emergence of Community”, *BCQ*, 2006, 140–158.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Sura(s)”, *EQ*, 2006, 5:166–177.

Neuwirth, Angelika, “Form and Structure of the Quran”, *EQ*, 2002, 2:245–266.

Neuwirth, Angelika, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*, De Gruyter, 1981.

Newby, Gordon, *A History of the Jews of Arabia: From Ancient Times to Their Eclipse under Islam*, University of South Carolina Press, 2009.

Niehoff, Maren, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*, Brill, 1992.

Näf, Heinrich, *Syrische Josef-Gedichte: Mit Uebersetzung des Gedichts von Narsai und Proben aus Balai und Jaqob von Sarug*, Schwarzenbach, 1923.

Nöldeke, Theodor, et al, *The History of the Quran*, translated from the German by Wolfgang Behn, Brill, 2013.

Olinder, Gunnar, *Iacobi Sarugensis epistulae quotquot supersunt*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 100, Peeters, 1937.

Osman, Ghada, “Pre-Islamic Arab Converts to Christianity in Mecca and Medina: An Investigation into the Arabic Sources”, *The Muslim World* 95:1, 2005, 67–80.

Paret, Rudi, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, Kohlhammer, 2005.

Parisot, Jean, *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes*, Firmin-Didot, 1894.

Pentiuc, Eugen, *The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Price, Richard, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553* (volumes 1–2), Liverpool University Press, 2009.

Price, Richard; Whitby, Mary, *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils, 400–700*, Liverpool University Press, 2009.

Price, Richard; Gaddis, Michael, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (volumes 1–3), Liverpool University Press, 2007.

Radscheit, Matthias, “Table”, *EQ*, 2006, 5:188–191.

Rahman, Fazlur, *Major Themes of the Quran*, Bibliotheca Islamica, 1989.

Reynolds, Gabriel, *The Quran and the Bible: Text and Commentary*, Yale University Press, 2018.

Reynolds, Gabriel, *The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective*, Fortress Press, 2012.

Reynolds, Gabriel, “Introduction”, *QHC*, 2008, 1–25.

Reynolds, Gabriel, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, Routledge, 2010.

Reynolds, Gabriel, “Review of Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State by Yehuda Nevo and Judith Koren”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125/3, 2005, 453–457.

Roberson, Ronald, *The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey*, University Press of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1999.

Robin, Christian Julien, “Himyar, Aksum, and *Arabia Deserta* in Late Antiquity: The Epigraphic Evidence”, *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, edited by Greg Fisher, Oxford University Press, 2015, 127–171.

Robinson, Neal, *Discovering the Quran: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, SCM Press, 1996.

Robinson, Neal, *Christ in Islam and Christianity: Representation of Jesus in the Quran and the Classical Muslim Commentaries*, State University of New York Press, 1991.

Rilliet, Frederic, *Jacques de Saroug: Six homelies festales en prose*, Brepols, 1986.

Rompay, Lucas Van, “Beth Qatraye”, *GEDSH*, 2011, 72–73.

Rottzoll, Dirk, *Rabbinischer Kommentar zum Buch Genesis: Darstellung der Rezeption des Buches Genesis in Mischna und Talmud unter Angabe targumischer und midraschischer Paralleltex-te*, De Gruyter, 1994.

Rubin, Uri, “Prophets and Prophethood”, *BCQ*, 2006, 234–247.

Rubin, Uri, “Repentance and Penance”, *EQ*, 2004, 4:426–430.

Rubin, Uri, “Jews and Judaism”, *EQ*, 2003, 3:21–34.

Sanchez, Francisco del Rio (ed), *Jewish Christianity and the Origins of Islam*, Brepols, 2018.
Dye, Guillaume, “Jewish Christianity, the Quran, and Early Islam: Some methodological caveats”, *Jewish Christianity and the Origins of Islam*, edited by Francisco del Rio Sanchez, Brepols, 2018, 11–29.

Schoeler, Gregor, “The Codification of the Quran: A Comment on the Hypotheses of Burton and Wansbrough”, *QC*, 2010, 779–794.

Segovia, Carlos, *The Quranic Jesus: A New Interpretation*, De Gruyter, 2018.

Sells, Michael, *Approaching the Quran: The Early Revelations*, White Cloud Press, 2007.

Shahid, Irfan, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (volume 2, parts 1–2), Dumbarton Oaks, 2002 (part 1), 2009 (part 2).

Shahid, Irfan, “Islam and Oriens Christianus: Makka 610–622 AD”, *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, edited by Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson, and David Thomas, Brill, 2006, 9–31.

Shahid, Irfan, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (volume 1, parts 1–2), Dumbarton Oaks, 1995.

Shahid, Irfan, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Dumbarton Oaks, 1989.

Shahid, Irfan, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Dumbarton Oaks, 1984.

Shahid, Irfan, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs*, Dumbarton Oaks, 1984.

Shahid, Irfan, “Byzantium in South Arabia”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33, 1979, 23–94.

Smith, J. Payne, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary: Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith*, Oxford University Press, 1903.

Sirry, Munim, “Introduction”, *NTQS*, 2019, 1–18.

Speiser, Ephraim Avigdor, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, Doubleday, 1964.

Speyer, Heinrich, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Olms, Georg, 1988.

Stern, M. S., “Muhammad and Joseph: A Study of Koranic Narrative”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44/3, 1985, 193–204.

Tannous, Jack, “Between Christology and Kalam? The Life and Letters of George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes”, *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone. Studies in Honor of Sebastian Brock*, edited by George Kiraz, Gorgias Press, 2008, 671–716.

Thackeray, Henry John, *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities* (volume 1, books 1–3), Harvard University Press, 1930.

Theodor, Julius; Albeck, Chanoch, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, Wahrmann Books, 1965.

Thomas, David, “Arab Christianity”, *BCEC*, 2007, 1–22.

Tisdall, William St. Clair, *The Original Sources of the Quran*, Society for promoting Christian knowledge, 1911.

Tonneau, Raymond, *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim Et in Exodum Commentarii*, Peeters, 1955.

Torrey, Charles, *The Jewish foundation of Islam*, Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1933.

Tottoli, Roberto, *Biblical Prophets in the Quran and Muslim Literature*, Routledge, 2002.

Toral-Niehoff, Isabel, “The Ibad of Al-Hira”, *QC*, 2010, 324–347.

Trimingham, Spencer, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, Stacey Publishing, 1990.

van Bladel, Kevin, “The Alexander Legend in the Quran 18:83–102”, *QHC*, 2008, 175–203.

Vanderkam, James, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 510, Peeters, 1989.

Vanderkam, James, *The Book of Jubilees*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 511, Peeters, 1989.

Voss Roberts, Michelle (ed), *Comparing Faithfully: Insights for Systematic Theological Reflection*, Fordham University Press, 2016.

Wansbrough, John, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Prometheus, 2004.

Wansbrough, John, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Prometheus, 2006.

Welch, A.T.; Paret, R.; Pearson, J.D., “al-Kuran”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (volume 5), edited by C. E. Bosworth, et al, Brill, 1986, 400–432.

Weinberg, Magnus, *Die Geschichte Josefs angeblich verfasst von Basilius dem Grossen aus Casarea*, Itzkowski, 1893.

Wheeler, Brannon, “Moses”, *BCQ*, 2006, 248–265.

Wilde, Clare, “Q 33:35: *Echoes of the Bnat Qyama's jihad fi sabil Allah?*”, *Graeco-Latina et Orientalia Studia in honorem Angeli Urbani heptagenarii*, edited by Samir Khalil Samir and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, CNERU – CEDRAC, 2013, 419–431.

Witztum, Joseph, “Joseph among the Ishmaelites: Q 12 in light of Syriac sources”, *NPQ*, 2011, 425–448.

Witztum, Joseph, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran: The Recasting of Biblical Narratives*, Princeton University (Dissertation), 2011.

Zammit, Martin, *A Comparative Lexical Study of the Quranic Arabic*, Brill, 2002.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Charbel Rizk