CHAPTER IV

THE INJUNCTION TO FULFILL THE COVENANT AND CHILDREN OF ISRAEL’S RESPONSES TO THE COVENANT

A. Breaking and Keeping Covenant in the Qur’ān

1. The Injunction to Fulfill the Covenant in the Qur’ān

Muslim exegetes identify a number of Qur’ānic verses which require that covenants not be broken, the Qur’ān warn against breaking covenants in the Qur’ān sūrah an-Nāḥl 16/070:91

This verse is interpreted by many exegetes as referring to particular events in the life of the Prophet. According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), Q., s. an-Nāḥl 16/070:91 is related to Q., s. al-Mā'idah 5/112:7¹ and the covenant made between the Prophet and the ansār at ‘Aqaba.² Another verse is Q., s. al-Mu’mīnūn 23/074:8

In his exegesis of Q., s. al-Mu’mīnūn 23/074:8, al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) repeats this comprehensive understanding when he remarks that keeping trusts

¹⁰ O ye who believe fulfill (all) obligations. Lawful unto you (for food) are all four-footed animals, with the exceptions named: But animals of the chase are forbidden while ye are in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb: for Allah doth command according to His will and plan”. See. Q., s. Al-Mā’idah 112/5:1. 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali, The Holy Qur’ān, Text Translation and Commentary, (Beirut: Dār al-'Arabiyyah, 1968), p. 238.

and covenants includes all that for which people are responsible in the matters of religion and in matters of this world, in both speech and deed.³

God concluded an ‘ahd with Moses⁴ and voided his ‘ahd for Abraham’s progeny when they betrayed it⁵ and summoned the Children of Israel to fulfill the covenant so that he, God, might fulfill it (wa-awfū bi-’ahdī ūfī bi-‘ahdikum) Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:40. Ibn Kathîr (d.774/1377) interprets in this verse, Allah commands the Children of Israel to embrace Islam and to follow Muḥammad.⁶

Moving on to other Qur’ānic references, Q., s. al-Ra’d 13/096:20; it seems to contain a slight variation on the Qur’ānic understanding of keeping covenant. In this verse fulfilling the covenant and not breaking the pact are listed along with other attributes of the people who will enter the gardens of paradise, thus providing a positive obverse to the judgment scenarios already mentioned.

---


⁴See e.g. Q., s. al-A’râf 039/7:134; and., s. al-Zûkhruf 063/43:49.

⁵See e.g. Q., s. al-Baqarah 087/2:124.

Keeping covenants and trusts is also listed in the context of the attributes given in Q., s. al-Mu’mīnūn 23/074:1-11 and Q., s. al-Ma‘ārij 70/079:22-35 of those who will enter paradise. Note also that there are structural parallels among the three lists in Q., s. ar-Ra‘d 13/096:19-23, s. al-Mu’mīnūn 23/074:1-11, and s. al-Ma‘ārij 70/079:22-35.

Each list includes a ritual obligation or contract with God such as the requirement to pray or give alms. At least two of the lists have reference to giving upright testimony (Q., s. al-Ma‘ārij 70/079:33) and not engaging in idle talk (Q., s. al-Mu’mīnūn 23/074:3). Q., s. ar-Ra‘d 13/096:22 mentions repelling evil with good in this context.

In commenting upon these lists, Ibn Kathîr (d.774/1377) reports that the connection between these social and religious contracts and the requirement of keeping such obligations reflects the obligation arising from the “trust” (amânah) accepted by Adam from God in Q., s. al-Ahzâb 33/090:72.

---


This trust, rejected by the heavens, earth and mountains, signifies the obligation to serve God when given the freedom to choose between good and evil.9

Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687) also says this verse refers to an ignorant Adam of the consequence.10 The Consequence of covenant is the term of rights and obligations, the right is something must be accepted by one side from another side, and obligation is something that should be given or done by one side to the other sides.11

Concerning another verse about breaking and keeping covenant, there is exegetical disagreement in Q., s. al-Mā‘īdah 5/112:1

Some exegetes disagree concerning the scope of Q., s. al-Mā‘īdah 5/112:1. Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148) mentions a number of different interpretations, each associated with the name of a particular early commentator:

Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/686-8) says the injunction to fulfill all contracts is coterminous with that of fulfilling all covenants; Qatāda (d. 117/735) says it refers only to keeping alliances (ahlāf, sing. hilf) made in the period before Islam.

---

According to Zayd b. Aslam, (Q., s. al-Māʾidah 5/112:1) includes keeping all contracts of marriage, partnership, sales, oaths, covenants and treaties. al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) says Q., s. al-Māʾidah/5:1 commands keeping all contracts made between God and humanity.¹²

The most general opinion is that of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), who reports that the order to fulfill all contracts entails fulfilling all obligations (farāʾid) incumbent on Muslims.¹³ The Qurʾān also warns against breaking covenant in sūrah al-Tawbah 9/113 verse 4.

According to al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), Q., s. al-Tawbah 9/113:4 refers to an incident in which the Quraysh broke their pact with the Prophet by backing their clients, the Banū Bakr, against the clients of the Prophet, the Banū Khuzāʾa.¹⁴ Qurʾānic exegetes ordinarily claim that the Prophet’s breaking of his contract in this case is a justifiable exception because the unbelievers with whom he had contracted did not uphold their end of the contract.

2. Fulfilling Covenant and the Pious

---


The order to fulfill the covenant is associated with “the pious” (muttaqūn).\textsuperscript{15} taqwā is a means by which a believer performs righteous deeds and taqwā causes the righteous deed to be accepted by Allah. In the Qur’ān, those who have taqwā, the muttaqūn, or alladzīnā ittaqū, are mentioned among the future dwellers of paradise Q., s. al-Qalam 68/002:34.

Ibn Rajab says the essence of taqwā is to make shield which guards against Allah’s anger and punishment, that shield is to obey his commandments and abstain from his punishment.\textsuperscript{16} Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), glosses the Qur’ānic expression, “they practiced taqwā (ittaqaw),” in the following way:

“khāfū ‘iqābahu fa-atā ‘āhu bi-adā ‘i farā ‘i-dīhi wa-tajannabu ma‘āsīhi”

“They feared the punishment [of God] and thus obeyed him by fulfilling the obligatory duties [he imposes], and they eschewed acts of disobedience against him”.\textsuperscript{17}

The ending of (Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:177) mentions the muttaqūn, refers to them as those who fulfill all the duties presented in the first part of the verse, is even clearer about the similitude between fulfill some righteous duties and taqwā.

\textsuperscript{15}See e.g. Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 089/3:76.


\textsuperscript{17}Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wil āy al-Qur’ān, vol. 2, p. 399.
Izutsu describes *taqwā* as “the very heart and pivot” of Qur’ānic teaching, and even goes so far as to equate *taqwā* with *īmān* itself.\(^\text{18}\)

Al-Bayḍāwī (d. 716/1316-7) further articulates the link between “fear” and devotion in his enumeration of three different “degrees” (*marātib*) of *taqwā*, each degree presumably indicating the relative moral and spiritual state of the individual. He also locates the scriptural support for the existence of each of these three degrees in three specific Qur’ānic proof-texts.

Al-Bayḍāwī’s (d. 716/1316-7) first degree of *taqwā* consists of “guarding against eternal punishment by ridding oneself of ascribing partners to God (*shirk*),” supported by Q., s. al-Fath 48/111:26. The second degree of *taqwā* entails “avoiding everything sinful, in deed or omission, even what would generally be considered minor offenses,” supported by Q., s. al-A’rāf 7/039:96. Finally, the third degree of *taqwā* involves “being far removed from whatever would distract the innermost self from the real (i.e. God), and renouncing the world, devoting one’s entire life to him,” supported by Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:102.\(^\text{19}\) We see therefore, that covenant fulfilling also in close association with other righteous deeds.

### 3. Breaking Covenant and the Hypocrites


In the hadīth literature breaking covenant is associated with the hypocrites (munāfiqūn), Abū Hurayrah reported that the prophet (P.B.U.H.),\textsuperscript{20} said:


The concepts of hypocrites (munāfiqūn), as well as various verbal forms of \textit{n-f-q}, are mentioned in thirty verses,\textsuperscript{21} moreover, the insincere believers are frequently discussed without explicit use of this terminology. Thus Q., s al-Baqarah 2/087:8-20 is considered by most commentators classical and medieval, al-Ṭabarî (d. 310/923), al-Ṭūṣî (d. 460/1067), al-Ṭabarî (d. 518/1153), al-Zamakhsharî (d. 583/1144), al-Rāzî (d. 606/1210), al-Qurṭubî (d. 671/1272), Ibn Kathîr (d. 774/1373), al-Suyūṭî (d. 911/1505), Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966), al-Ṭabarî (d. 1982) to be a description of the hypocrites, though some such Muḥammad ‘Abduh take it to refer to the Jews of Medina, who were their allies. Since this is apparently the first reference to the hypocrites, many exegetes use this opportunity to expound their views on the issue and to define the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{22}

Other apparent references to the hypocrites are Q., s al-Anfāl 8/088:49-55; s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:118-20, 152-8, 176-9; and Q., s al-Tawbah 9/113:107-10.


\textsuperscript{22}See e.g. for the lengthy exposé in Fakhruddīn ar-Razī, \textit{Tafsīr al-Kabīr}, vol. 1, p. 65-85. Others reserve this for their discussion of Q., s al-Munāfiqūn 104/63. See also Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, \textit{Al-Mīzān fi Tafsīr al-Qur’ān}, (np.: Ismā’īlîyâni, 1973/1393), 3\textsuperscript{rd} Ed., vol. 19, p. 287-290
Traditionally, all passages referring to the hypocrites have been considered Medinan, both by Muslim commentators and by modern scholars. Accordingly both groups identify them as the Muslim opponents of Muḥammad in Medina, those who only half-heartedly accepted him and his message, and did so for worldly gain and in order to safeguard their position in the community, which they would otherwise have lost. When their expectations were not met, they turned against Muḥammad.

According to Fazlur Rahman, however, hypocrisy was a feature already present among Muḥammad’s adherents in Mecca: contrary to the commonly held view, he believes that Q., s. al-Muddaththir 74/004:31; s. al-‘Ankabūt 085/29:1-10; and s. al-Ḥajj 22/103:53-4 date from the period before the emigration (hijrah) from Mecca to Medina. In Rahman’s view, the hypocrites of Mecca were weak and fickle minded people who succumbed to the pressure exerted by their pagan relatives and townsmen to abandon Islam.23

The accepted opinion, however, is that the term hypocrites did not include Muslims from Mecca, since they were all sincere and had no wealth or power to gain from joining Muḥammad.24 The Qurʾān does not mention any names, but a long list of Muslim hypocrites and their Jewish patrons and allies may be found in the biography of the Prophet.25

---


Here, the undisputed leader of the Medinan dissenters is identified as ‘Abd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl whose political ambitions were thwarted by the arrival of Muḥammad. Ibn Ubayy was not only thought to have been involved in the slanderous accusations (apparently alluded to in Q., s. an-Nūr 24/102:23-6) that almost ruined the reputation of the Prophet’s wife. He also sided with the Jews of Medina and the Meccan opponents of Muḥammad. According to the history (sīrah) literature, Ibn Ubayy promised to come to the aid of the Jews of Naḍīr if Muḥammad were to confront them, but he subsequently abandoned them in their hour of need. Q., s. al-Ḥashr 59/101:11-2 is taken as a reference.

The hypocrites are described in the Qur’ān as follows: they pretend to believe in God’s revelations but turn to the false deities they were ordered to abjure. When invited by Muḥammad to accept God and his messenger they turn away from him with aversion. But God knows what is in their hearts. They should be opposed and admonished (Q., s. an-Nisā’ 4/092:60-3). For them will be a painful doom. They seek to lead the believers astray. They attempt to beguile God, but it is he who will beguile them. They perform their prayer languidly and more in order to be seen by others than to worship God. They will go to hell, along with the unbelievers, and will be in the deepest fire (Q., s. an-Nisā’ 4/092:145).

---

28 A. Guillame, The life of Muḥammad, p. 437
An inclusive understanding finds additional confirmation in the hadith literature. It is reported in several of the standard collections of prophetic hadith that all people who act treacherously, i.e. not keeping their covenants, will be held accountable for this on the Day of Judgment.\(^\text{29}\)

\[
\text{إِذَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْأُولِيَاءَ وَالآخرينَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَفْعَلُ لَكُلِّ غَادِرٍ لِبَناةٍ فَقُولُنَّ هَذَا عَدْرَةُ فَلَانِ بْنَ فَلَانَ (رُوِاهُ مُسْلِمُ عِنْبِنِ عُمَرْ)}
\]

The hypocrites are sometimes called “those in whose hearts is a disease”. At times these terms appear together (as in Q., s. al-Ĥzāb 33/090:12, 60), though often only the second epithet is mentioned; in such cases, many take the verse in question as an additional reference to the hypocrites.\(^\text{30}\) The hypocrites do not believe, yet they are afraid that Muḥammad will receive a revelation concerning them, in which their true feelings will be uncovered (Q., s. al-Tawbah 9/113:64).

### B. Children of Israel’s Responses to the Covenant

#### 1. Children of Israel as Believers

The image of the Qur’ānic Children of Israel is far from uniform which, as an aside, is true concerning almost any other Qur’ānic theme, and the attitude towards them is ambivalent. On the one hand, they are described as true believers,

\(\text{30}\)See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahalli, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, \textit{Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Ĥzīm}, p. 5 see also in the Qur’ān sūrah s. al-Mā’idah 112/5:52, p. 91, s. al-Tawbah 113/9:125, 150 s. al-Ĥzāb 090/33/32, p. 304 and s. Muḥammad 095/47:20, p. 365.}
while on the other, they are presented as infidels. Nurcholish Madjid says, actually all adherents of Allah’s religion is monovalent. But in history process the doctrine of truth comes to deviation. Nevertheless, the Qur’ān recognized that some of Children of Israel still practice and firm handhold to their religious doctrine.

Children of Israel are described as an “upright community, reciting the signs of God (i.e. the Qur’ān) at the drawing on of night, prostrating themselves, believing in God and the last day. And strive with one another in hastening to good deeds.” Elsewhere it is asserted that these believers will be rewarded twice over, thanks to their belief in their own revealed scriptures as well as in (Q., s. al-Qaṣaṣ 28/049:52-54).

The skeptic listeners of the Qur’ānic Prophet are invited to consult them and learn that God indeed may send a mortal messenger as he did in the past.

Even the Qur’ānic Prophet himself is requested in Q., s. Yūnus 10/051:94

---


As potential partners in a common system of monotheistic faith, the dietary laws of the People of the Book were proclaimed acceptable; al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) says in his tafsīr, though these words were addressed to the Holy Prophet, they were meant for those who expressed doubts about his Message. As regards the reference to the people of the Book, it is because they possessed the knowledge of the scriptures.³³

The People of the Book are referred to in Q., s. an-Naḥl 16/070:43 as the people of the “reminder” (dzikr, another term for a revealed scripture) as explained by Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687) term “dzikr” is the followers of the Torah and the Gospel,³⁴ and in this case, they are treated as authoritative experts on prophetic matters.

The above verse was revealed about the idolaters of Mecca who denied the prophet hood of Muḥammad (P.B.U.H)³⁵

Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:62:


This verse was revealed about the monks with whom Salman al-Fārisī kept company. When Salman went to see the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), he informed him about their worship and striving. He said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! They used to pray and fast; they believed in you and bore witness that you will be sent as a prophet’. When Salman finished his praise of them, Allah’s Messenger (P.B.U.H), said: ‘O Salman! They are of the dwellers of hell fire. Allah then revealed this verse.36

The divine reward is promised here to the Children of Israel as well as to the other monotheistic communities, provided they remain monotheists believing in God and his Messenger. Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/ 687) says the reward that is they shall have no fear will come upon them concerning torment in the future life nor will they grieve about anything they have left behind. And he also says that this means: they shall have no fear when death is slain and hell is closed.37

Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) reports the context in which this verse shows that the Qur'an is not laying down here the details of the creed and righteous deeds, which one should believe and practice in order to earn salvation. These things have been described in their proper places. Here, the object is to refute the self-delusion of the Jews that salvation was their sole monopoly. They were suffering from the delusion that they had some special relationship with God; therefore whoever belonged to their race would go straight to Heaven, irrespective

---

of his creed and deeds, and all other people were born to become fuel of Hell. To remove this misunderstanding of theirs Allah declares that salvation does not depend upon one's connection with any group but on one's right beliefs and good deeds. Whoever goes before Allah with these provisions will find his reward with Him, for Allah's judgment will be based on one's real worth and not on the census registers.\(^\text{38}\)

According to al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1889-1970), the context of this verse shows that the latter phrase refers to the real belief, the true īmān.\(^\text{39}\) In some verses, the People of the Book are recognized as believers on the mere basis of their monotheism. Most explicit is Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:64:

\[
64:3 \text{ (سورة آل عمران/3)}
\]

The verse states that God has protected them from being pulled down. But other Qur'ānic passages using the label “People of the Book” distinguish between the believers and non-believers among them, the believers being those accepting the Qur'ānic message. For example, in Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:199 it is stated that


\[^{39}\text{Al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, vol. 1, p. 193.}\]
This verse was revealed about the Negus. When the latter died, Gabriel, peace be upon him, informed the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), about his death on the same day he died. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), ask his Companions to perform the prayer of the dead on one of the Negus who died in a different land. Allah then revealed this verse. Mujāhīd, Ibn Jurayj and Ibn Zayd stated that this was revealed about all the believers of the people of the Book.⁴⁰

Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) says in this verse, “Allah states that some of the People of the Book truly believe in Him and in what was sent down to Muḥammad, along with believing in the previously revealed Books, and they are obedient to Him and humble themselves before Allah.⁴¹ These believers are again an exceptional minority. This is indicated in Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:110, which says that some of the People of the Book are believers, “but most of them are ungodly” (al-Fāsiqūn).

This verse was revealed about ‘Abd Allah Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, Mu‘ādz ibn Jabal and Sālīm, the client of Abū Ḥudzayfah. Mālik ibn al-Ḍayf and

---

⁴⁰Al-Waḥidī, Jāmi’ Ashbāb Nuzūl, p. 93-94.

Wahb ibn Yahudha, both of them Jews, had said to them: Our religion is better than that to which you call us; and we are also more virtuous and better than you. And Allah revealed this verse as a response to them.42

Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687) says the term al-Fāsiqūn here is unbelievers who break their pledges.43 The believers among the People of the Book are described in Q., s al-Mā’idah 5/112:66 as a “just nation” (ummah muqaṭṣidah) among a majority of evil-doers. Other passages provide vivid descriptions of the piety of the believers among the People of the Book and of their admiration for the Qur’ānic revelation. In Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:

One of narration (riwāyah) reported this verse revealed about the Jews who embraced Islam. Other opinion is that of Saʿīd Ibn Masʿūd: “This was revealed regarding the nightfall prayer which is performed by the Muslims but not by the people of the Book.” Ibn Masʿūd said: “The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), delayed the time of the nightfall prayer. When he came out to lead the prayer, he found people waiting for the prayer. When he came out to lead the prayer, he found people waiting for the prayer. He said: ‘There is no one among the

---

42 Al-Wahīdī, Jāmiʿ Asbāb Nuzūl, p. 108.
43 Ibnu ‘Abbās, Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās, p. 70.
adherents of other religions who is remembering Allah at this hour except you’.
And Allah revealed these verses.\footnote{Al-Waḥīdī, \textit{Jāmi` \textquoteleft Ashbāb Nuzūl}, p. 78-79.}

Children of Israel who did accept the Islamic message are mentioned in several Qur’ānic passages, in which, however, they are always an exceptional minority among a majority of sinful Children of Israel. For instance, Q., s. al-Nisā’ 4/092:162

This verse refers to those (of the Jews) who are firmly rooted in knowledge, and identifies them as those who believe in the Qur’ān as well as in the scriptures revealed to previous prophets. They are mentioned in contrast to the evil-doing Jews who take usury, whom the Qur’ān denounces in the previous verse. The same statement is repeated almost verbatim in, Q., s. al-Ḥajj 22/103:17 but in Q., s. al-Mā`īdah 5/112:69 a significant change is noticeable.
No automatic reward is mentioned here, which renders the message to the non-Muslim monotheists more reserved in comparison with the former passages. Other passages, however, recognize Children of Israel as believers only on the condition that they believe in the concrete Islamic message as represented in the Qur’ān.

Ibn Hishām (d. 762 A.H.) explains, in the first two verses, there is nothing difficult about the grammar, because the word al-Ṣābi‘īn follows the conjunction waw (and) is in agreement with the word alladzīna (those who); it is the noun of the particle inna (translated here as “verily”) and as such appears in the accusative form of the sound masculine plural, in accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar. Where the confusion arises is in the third verse quoted, from Sūrah al-Mā‘īdah, where the word appears in the same position with regard to word order, but appears in the nominative form. The grammarians and mufassirīn explained this in several ways, and they mentioned several well-known similar usages in Arabic. It is sufficient here to quote just three of them, which are among the most well known.

The word order in the verse differs from everyday usage. Based on that, the meaning is that those who believe and those who are the Jews and the Christians, whosoever believed in Allah, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they
grieve, and the same applies to the Sabians. So the subject appears in the
nominative, as is indicated by the *waw* of the sound masculine plural.

The word *al-Ṣābiʿūn* is the subject and the word *al-Naṣāra* (Christians) is
in agreement with it. The phrase man *āmana bi-illaah* (whoever believed in Allah)
is the predicate of *al-Ṣābiʿūn*. The predicate of *inna* is omitted here, as is indicated
by the predicate of the subject *al-Ṣābiʿūn*. A similar usage in Arabic appears in the
line of verse:

The word *al-Ṣābiʿūn* appears in conjunction with the word that takes the
place of the noun of *inna*. If any of these particles *inna* and its “sisters” comes at
the beginning of a nominal sentence that is composed of a subject and predicate,
the noun of *inna* was originally nominative because it is the subject, before the
word *inna* was introduced.45

### 2. Children of Israel as Sinners

Israel’s deliverance from Pharaoh provides the clearest manifestation of
God’s *ni’mah*.46 This event, as well as the journey of the Israelites to the holy land,
is recounted in the Qurʾān in several parallel passages of varying length. A
detailed version is provided in the Qurʾān surah al-ʾAʿrāf (7/039) verses 103-171.
Here the story begins with Moses and Aaron and their encounters with Pharaoh,
including the signs, i.e. the miracles they perform and the calamities they bring

---

45See Ibn Hishām, *Awḍah al-Masālik*, with a commentary by Muḥy al-Dīn and the *Tafsīr*
al-Shawkānī wa al-ʿAlūsī, on this verse, (Egypt: Maṭba“ah Iḥlāmiyyah, 1304) p. 352-366

46See e.g., Q., s. Ibrāhīm 072/14:6.
down upon Pharaoh. This is followed by the departure of Israel from Egypt and the drowning of the troops of Pharaoh in the sea. Then a short reference comes to Israelite settlement in the Promised Land. This version of Pharaoh’s story is one of a series of well-known Qur’ānic punishment stories that deal with nations which have been destroyed because of their disobedience. Sometimes Pharaoh’s punishment story appears independently of the story of the Israelites.

In the Qur’an, s. al-A’rāf (7/039), the story about Pharaoh’s punishment is followed by an account of the events that take place after the Children of Israel cross the sea. The plot now focuses on their sins, mainly on their fashioning the calf of gold which results in the breaking of the Tablets. Other sins mentioned in this sūra are the refusal to say ḥiṭṭa (a word, or profession, of repentance), for which they are destroyed in a disaster (rijz) sent from heaven and the violation of the sabat, for which they are turned into apes. Elsewhere the Qur’an recounts the sin of the Israelites when refusing to wage war on the mighty inhabitants of the Promised Land. As punishment they must wander in the wilderness for 40 years (till they perish).

---

47See e.g., Qur’an, s. al-A’rāf 039/7:103-133.
48See e.g., Qur’an, s. al-A’rāf 039 7:134-6.
49See e.g., Qur’an, s. al-A’rāf 039 7:137.
50See e.g., Qur’an, s. as-Syu’arā 047/26:10-68; s. an-Naml 048/27:7-14; s. al-Qasāṣ 049/28:3-47; s. al-Zukhruf 063/43:46-56; s. al-Dzāriyāt 067/51:38-40; s. an-Nāziʿāt 081/79:15-29.
51See e.g., Qur’an, s. al-A’rāf 039/7:138-51.
52See e.g., Qur’an, s. al-A’rāf 039/7:161-2; see also Qur’an, s. 2:58-9.
53See Qur’an, s. al-Baqqarah 087/2:65; cf. Qur’an, s. al-A’rāf 039/7:163-7.
54See Qur’an, s. al-Mā’idah 112/5:20-6.
The Qur’ān imputes to them the blame of persecuting and killing their own prophets, a sin that is usually mentioned with allusion to the Children of Israel. The Christians, too, share some of the blame because they have rejected the prophets sent to the Jews. This is implied in Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:113 where the Jews and the Christians reject each other’s religion as a false one.

In one of narration (riwāyah) this verse was revealed about the Jews of Medina and the Christians of Najrān. When the delegation of Najrān came to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), the Jewish rabbis came to see them. They had a debate with each other and the debate got so heated up that they shouted at each other. The Jews said: “You are not following the true religion”, and declared their disbelief in Jesus and the Gospel. In response, the Christians said: “You are not following the true religion”, and declared their disbelief in Moses and the Torah. Allah therefore revealed this verse.

Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1372) says, Allah made the confusion of the Jews and the Christians clear, since they claim that no one will enter Paradise, unless he is a

---

55See Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 089/3:181, 183.

56See Q., s. al-Baqarah 087/2:61, 87, 91; s. an-Nisā 092/4:155; s. al-Mā’idah 112/5:70.

57Al-Waḥīdī, Jāmi’ Asbāb Nuzūl, p. 22.
Jew or a Christian. While al-Ṭabātabā‘ī says Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:113 shows the true belief entails submitting one's self entirely to Allah; and "al-İḥsān" (to do good) is synonymous to the good deeds.

Nurcholish Madjid states, the verse above shows an exclusive statement, they each other claim as the only one who will be welfare or accessibly enter the paradise, and the other sides are misfortune. However, the Qur‘ān declares that salvation does not depend on any but surrendering (aslama) on Allah and doing a kindness.

The Qur‘ān condemns unbelievers (kāfirūn) who have only believed in some prophets while rejecting others. It seems that the rift between Jews and Christians is also referred to in Q., s. al-Muinūn 23/074:53, which condemns those who divide their religion into sects (zubur). Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687) explains, they split among themselves with regard to religion into different groups: groups of Jews, Christians, idolaters and Magians, the adherents of each religion and sect being impressed with what they have.

The Torah, it is said elsewhere, contains guidance and light by which the prophets and the rabbis judged the Jews, but those who do not judge by what God has revealed are unbelievers. Elsewhere they are said to have believed only in

60Nurcholish Madjid, Islam Agama Peradaban, p.74.
61See in Q., s. an-Nisā’ 092/4:151.
63See e.g. Q., s. al-Mā’īdah 112/5:44.
parts of the book and to have disbelieved in its other parts (Q., s. al-Baqarah
2/87:85).

Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) says, as a concrete example of this may be
cited the strange conduct of the different clans of the Jews, who lived in the
neighborhood of Medina. Before the migration of the Holy Prophet, they had
entered into alliances with the neighboring Arab clans, Aws and Khazraj. When
one Arab clan went to war with the other clan, their respective Jewish allies also
went to war against each other.  

The Christians, too, are suspected of ignoring their own law as is implied
in the Qur'ān, in which the People of the Book are warned against failing to
observe the Torah and the Gospel. In fact, a party of the People of the Book is
accused of deliberate rejection of the scriptures given to them by their Prophets.
They have cast them behind their backs, yet they expect to be praised for their

---

2011.

65 See Q., s. al-Mā‘īdah 112/5:68.
assumed devotion to the Torah. But the Jews, or rather the People of the Book, were also offered a chance to be forgiven, on condition that they started observing the Torah and the Gospel and all of God’s revealed scriptures. If they had, God would have blessed them with an Abundance of food.

The state of internal friction and discord, which divided the Jews into sects, was also seen as a sign of God’s vengeance. The key term conveying the idea of God’s anger with the Jews is ghadaḍab, “wrath”. It occurs in a passage (Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:90) dealing with the Children of Israel, in which it is stated that they “were laden with wrath upon wrath” for their disbelief.

Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) say that the meaning of, bāʿū is that they deserved and acquired multiplied anger, also Abū al-ʿĀliyah said, Allah became angry with children of Israel, because of their disbelief in the Injīl and ʿIsa and He became angry with them again, because they disbelieved in Muḥammad and the Qur’an. Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) reports, children of Israel wished that the Prophet should have been one of their own races; therefore, they refused to accept

---


68 See Q., s. al-Mā‘īdah 112/5:66.

him when he was raised among a race which they considered to be inferior to theirs.\textsuperscript{70}

According to Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1889-1970) the verse says that they were partisans of the Prophet long before he was born; they prayed to Allah for victory by his name and his Book. When the Prophet was sent and the Qur’ān was revealed, they very well recognized that he was the Prophet in whose name they used to pray for victory, and whose coming they awaited. But they were overwhelmed by envy and arrogance. No sooner did the Prophet begin his call then they denied his truth, and forgot all that they used to tell about the awaited prophet. It was not surprising as they had earlier disbelieved in Torah too. Thus they committed disbelief after disbelief, and invited the wrath of Allah upon themselves, not once but twice.\textsuperscript{71}

In another verse, which is addressed to the People of the Book, allusion is made to those whom God has cursed and with whom he has been angry and turned into apes. Transformation into apes recurs elsewhere in the Qur’ān as a punishment inflicted on the Children of Israel for violating the Sabbath Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:65.

\begin{quote}
(سورة البقرة/2:65) 
\end{quote}

This incident has been described in detail in Q., s. al-A’rāf 7/039:166; there is a difference of opinion as to what actually happened. Some are of the


opinion that they were physically transformed into apes, while others hold the view that from that time onward they began to behave like apes. The words of the Qur'ān, however, indicate that it was not a moral but a physical metamorphosis.

According to al-Mawdūdī, their bodies were transformed into those of apes, but their human minds were left intact in order to subject them to extreme torture. The similar opinion is that of Ibn Kathīr, Allah changed their bodies into those of monkeys and swines. According to Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966) Thus, deviously and flagrantly, they violated the Sabbath by trapping the fish when they came to the shore and waiting until the next day, when the Sabbath was over, to collect them. As a consequence, they were severely reprimanded and rated as no more than ‘despicable apes’, since their mentality and behavior had sunk to utterly revolting depths.

Apart from transformation into apes, the Jews are blamed for failing to keep the laws of their own Torah. In Q., s. al-Jumu‘ah 110/62:5, those who have been given the Torah but do not act upon its stipulations are likened to an ass carrying books.

---


Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) reports in this verse That is, they are even worse than a donkey, who is without sense and therefore excusable. But these people have intelligence they read and teach the Torah and are fully aware of its meaning yet they are turning away from its guidance and refusing willfully to acknowledge and believe in the Prophet who even according to the Torah teaches the truth. They are guilty not because of ignorance but because of denying Allah's Revelation deliberately.75

In other occasion Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) says this is the example of those who were entrusted with the Torah; they read its letter but did not understand its meanings nor abided by them. Rather, they even corrupted and changed the Torah. Therefore, they are worse than the donkey, because the donkey cannot understand. They, on the other hand, could have understood using their minds, but their minds were of no benefit.76