

Critique of Orientalists' View on the Similarities between Quranic Stories and the Bible

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Abstract

One of the main pieces of evidence cited by Orientalists to question the authenticity of the Quran and the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to claim that the Quran borrowed from earlier scriptures is the similarity in the content of prophet stories within the Quran and the Bible. This research, using an analytical-comparative method and drawing on religious references (including the Quran, interpretations, dictionaries, etc.) as well as non-religious sources (the Bible, Orientalist opinions, and historical data), analyzes and evaluates Orientalist views around three main axes: "The origin and sources of the stories," "How the Prophet (PBUH) accessed the sources," and "Changes in the stories during transmission." According to the findings of the research, the predominance of a historical approach to religions and a lack of attention to the unity of the divine source of monotheistic religions, as well as the Orientalists' perspective on the concept of revelation as a personal experience, are the most significant factors influencing the claim that Quranic stories are adaptations from the Bible. The results of the study indicate that Orientalists' familiarity with the Arabic language is accompanied by shortcomings that, in turn, have impacted their research; their information is derived from Arabic sources that are often incomplete and partial.

Keywords: Orientalists, Content of Quranic Stories, Bible, Interpreters, Revelation.

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Introduction

The resemblance of certain Quranic verses to content from the Old and New Testaments has attracted the attention of scholars of the People of the Book since the early centuries.

Therefore, the claim of the Quran's influence from the earlier scriptures has become one of the recurring themes in the rebuttals that have been written about the Quran from then until now. "John of Damascus" (676-749 CE) in his famous work on heresies referred to a statement (101) as "The heresy of the Ismailis," claiming that the Prophet organized his sect by accessing the scriptures with the help of an Aryan monk. "Abdul Mas ih al-Kind i" also claimed in the third century AH that the content of the Quran was influenced by a Christian monk named "Sergius" to prove its invalidity. Later, this claim was repeated by "Peter the Venerable" (1092-1156 CE), "William," "Ricold," "Nicholas," and "Postel." Even after the onset of a scientific approach to the Quran and the establishment of Islamic studies departments in Western universities, this claim has not disappeared. In the nineteenth century, two main views regarding the origins of the teachings of the Quran emerged. Abraham Geiger, Theodor Nöldeke, and his student Tureh, are the most important representatives of the traditional Orientalist perspective relentlessly seeking to prove a Jewish origin for Islamic practices and beliefs. On the other hand, Wellhausen, Andreae, Richard Bell, and Arthur Jeffrey emphasized the fundamental role of Christianity (cf. Nilsaz, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 2-6).

In this context, the similarities between the verses concerning the stories of the Prophets and past nations with Jewish information, biblical narratives, and post-biblical materials stand out more than other cases. Therefore, multiple studies have been conducted on this topic.¹ Of course, examining all aspects of these studies in a single article is impossible, and in this inquiry, we will address three questions:

- According to Orientalists, what sources did the Quranic stories derive from?
- How did the Prophet (PBUH) access these sources?
- What changes occurred during the transmission of the content of the Quranic stories?
- To what extent are the similarities between the Quranic stories and the scriptures?

1. For more information, see Abbasi, M. (2010 AD/1389 SH). *Approaches to the Qur'an*. Editors: Gerald Howting, Abdul Qadir Sharif. Tehran: Hikmat; Maleklou, S; Mirzaei, P. (2022 AD/1401 SH). *Ibrahim (AS) in the pen of contemporary orientalist*. Tehran: Sarache Del.

Subsequently, we will analyze and critique the above points, emphasizing the perspectives of interpreters and Quranic researchers. So far, numerous and varied articles and books have been written concerning the stories of the Quran and their comparison with the stories in the scriptures;² however, an effective study specifically analyzing and critiquing the content of the stories from the perspective of Orientalists has not been produced.

1. Origins and Sources of the Stories

Various hypotheses have been proposed regarding the origins and sources of the Quranic stories. Among these, there is the greatest emphasis on biblical sources. However, other hypotheses, such as the influence from post-biblical sources, Jewish sects, and the literary tradition of pre-Islamic Arabs, can also be considered.

1.1. Biblical and Post-Biblical Sources

The opinions of Orientalists regarding the Quranic stories have often been expressed in general statements, without reference to specific points and merely indicating the influence of the Quran from the scriptures, or in case studies, they have provided evidence and references to prove the Quran's adaptation from the scriptures and other sources. These pieces of evidence are sometimes presented when analyzing the vocabulary of the Quran, and at other times, they are discussed while studying the personalities and lives of the prophets in the Quran.

1.2. Vocabulary

Research in "Lexicology" is the most fundamental method for understanding the sources of the Quran in conveying biblical narratives. Nöldeke's book, "History of the Quran," authored by one of the greatest Semitic linguists, is considered the most influential work in this field and laid the groundwork for subsequent Quranic studies concerning the dating of the Quranic text and identifying its sources in relating biblical content. The lexical aspects of the book are the most enduring value of

2. For more information, see Zain, Samīḥ 'Āṭif, *Majma' al-Bayān al-Hadith: Stories of Prophets in Al-Qur'an Al-Karim*, 1988, Lebanon, Al-Alamiya Book Company; Khaṭīb, 'Abdul Karim, *al-Qur'anic Stories in the Region and Meaning*, n.d., Beirut, Dar al-Marifat; Ḥātem, Ismail, *al-Qur'an and al-'Ahdhan*, 1430, Beirut, Amjad; Nīshābūrī, Abi Ishāq A. *Stories of the Prophets known as 'Arā'is al-Majālis*, n.d., Beirut: Daral-e-Maharte; Mohammad Bayyūmī, M. "Historical review of the stories of the Qur'an", translated by Sayyid Mohammad Rastgo, (2004 AD/1383 SH). Tehran, Scientific and Cultural Publishing Company; Noldeke, Theodor, *"The history of the Quran"*, London, Brill; Tisdall, Clair, 1905, *"The original sources of the Quran"*, London, society for promoting Christian knowledge, published under the direction of the Tract committee.

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this work. Emphasis on etymology, attention to grammatical rules, and the language of the Quran are among the features that have made it a valuable source for reference. The Study of foreign words in the Quran has also attracted the attention of Orientalists since the mid-nineteenth century, with Arthur Jeffery's "The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an" being the most important work in this area, which remains a primary source of information and various perspectives on the subject (cf. Nilsaz, *ibid*: 7-8).

Jeffery states at the beginning of his introduction that even a cursory look at the Quran reveals the extent of its borrowed content from other major religions prevalent in Arabia at the time, suggesting that understanding the foreign vocabulary in the Quran is vital for studying the origins and roots of Islam (Jeffery, 1938: Introduction, 2).

In his book, Jeffery compiled 323 non-Arabic words in alphabetical order (cf. Jeffery, 2007 AD/1386 SH: section on borrowed vocabulary, pp. 132 onwards).

Among the 27 prophets mentioned in the Quran, the names of 23 prophets and 13 proper names that are not prophets but are related to the stories of the prophets are listed, all of which are non-Arabic with roots in Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, Ethiopian, Persian, or even unknown languages. Additionally, discussions concerning the roots of the names of the prophets mentioned in the Quran can also be found in entries in the Encyclopedia of Islam and the Encyclopedia of the Quran, Leiden.³

The points that have been contentious among Orientalists regarding the Quranic stories mostly pertain to the names of the prophets and names related to the stories of the prophets. We will briefly mention some of these:

The name "Idris" is a Hebrew word meaning "Beginning." The root of the name "Idris" is derived from "Uzayr," which entered Islam from its Greek form, "Esdras." (cf. Erder, 2001: 2, 200-485)

Similarly, "Goliath," which is the Arabic translation of "Juliat," is likely influenced by the Hebrew word "Goliath," meaning "Exile" (cf. Lindsay, 2001: 2, 334).

The similarity of the name "Elias" with its Greek-Christian, Syriac, and Ethiopian forms is much more pronounced than with its Hebrew form (cf. Tottoli, 2001: 2, 12).

"Iblis," due to its morphological structure, is likely a distorted form of the Greek word "Diabolos." (cf. Rippin, 2001: 2,473).

1.3. Biblical Figures

3. cf. EI and EQ.

Most of the figures whose names appear throughout the Quran, such as Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Noah, and Jesus, are prominent biblical personalities. Therefore, besides emphasizing the discovery of non-Arabic roots for the proper names of prophets or individuals mentioned in the stories of the prophets who are not themselves prophets, Orientalists have also focused their attention on the narratives, the manner in which these stories are presented, and the narrative elements of each of the biblical prophets mentioned in the Quran. The following is a brief explanation in this regard:

Idris is considered to be the same as "Enoch son of Jared" mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 5: 24). The name Job, who is one of the prophets before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), is concurrently found in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions (cf. Johns, 2001: 3, 50). Noah, whose long lifespan of nine hundred fifty years is consistent with the entirety of his life as per the Book of Genesis (9:29), is another figure (cf. Rosenthal, 2001: 2, 431).

1.4. Other Texts and Sources

The content and themes of the Quran, from the perspective of Orientalists, show similarities with Hebrew-Jewish information, narratives from the Bible (both the Old and New Testaments), Haggadah, Midrash, and even Apocryphal and Gnostic texts, and, in summary, with both biblical and extra-biblical topics.

While some narrative elements of the Quran are not found even in the four Gospels or in Christian canonical texts (Gibb, 1962: 270-271; see also Bergnisi, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 98), this suggests the existence of other secondary sources that the Prophet utilized to advance his religious objectives:

- 1) Ancient Arab narratives regarding genealogies and past events of the Arabs and the Days of the Arabs (Rosenthal, *ibid*: 437).
- 2) Pre-Islamic Arab Poetry: The Prophet of Islam derived Islamic teachings, encompassing monotheism, eschatology, stories of the prophets, and the structure of the Quranic verses from the poetry of "*Umayya ibn Ab i al-Şalt*." However, to ensure that others would not notice this appropriation, Muslims erased and prohibited that poetry from history (quoted by al-Dasuq i, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 101).
- 3) Manichaean Texts: During the time of the Prophet, visionary and eschatological texts related to Enoch seemingly infiltrated Islam through the Manichaeans (cf. Erder, 2001: Idris, 2, 485).

2. How the Prophet (PBUH) Accessed Sources

The presence of foreign (loan) words and biblical figures in the Quran, especially in the narratives, has led to doubts among Orientalists

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regarding the issue of the Quran's borrowing from the biblical texts and other sources, which necessitates the posing of further questions around this topic:

- How did the Prophet access these sources?
- Did he have direct access to the books and sources, or did he become familiar with them through others and utilize them in compiling the Quran?

In the scattered and implicit statements of Orientalists, we usually encounter two views: 1) Access of the Prophet to written sources; 2) Appropriation from oral sources.

2.1. Written Sources

Regarding the existence of written Biblical sources and the Prophet's and the people of Arabia's familiarity with these materials, there is a theory based on the existence of the Scriptures in Arabic and their availability to the people through the Christians and Jews of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as some Arabs who had converted to Judaism or Christianity, and even other individuals who had interactions with the people of this land. This supports the view that the Quran drew from the Biblical texts and other sources, making it evident to Orientalists.

The first reason is the Quran's frequent reference to "The myths of the ancients (*Asaṭir al-Awwalīn*)," which means something akin to "The stories of the predecessors." "Myths" corresponds closely to the Greek word "Historia." The plural form "Myths" has no singular form and is likely related to the root "*Ṣaṭr*," meaning "To write" (Rosenthal, *ibid*: 2, 437), suggesting that historical events and stories may have reached the Prophet through the writings of the ancients.

The second reason is the immense respect for writing and all written things in the Quran, which may allude to prior familiarity with "Books." While it's difficult to prove the existence of the books of previous prophets, the mention of written papyrus (Qur'an 6: 91) likely indicates the existence of books, just as references to reading and writing in verse 48 of Surah al-*ʿAnkabut* imply (*ibid*.).

The third reason is Muhammad's (PBUH) presence in Medina and his acquaintance with Jewish written sources. Richard Bell states: "Since the Quran relies on the Old Testament in its narrative portions, some stories, like those of *ʿAd* and *Thamud*, were already available in earlier Arabic sources, but the majority of the narrative sources that the Prophet utilized are from the religious texts of Judaism and Christianity; the time Muhammad spent in Medina provided a better opportunity to become familiar with Jewish books than during his time in Mecca." (Bell, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 301)

The last reason, based on the textual analysis of the Quran, addresses the accusations from Muhammad's opponents regarding his alleged copying from Jewish and Christian teachers, which is strongly refuted in the Quran in verses 103 of Surah *al-Nahl* and 48 of Surah *al-Ankabut* (Adeng, 2001: 5, 300).

2.2. Oral Sources

Some other Orientalists believe that the way the Prophet borrowed or appropriated sources was through oral means. The Prophet's connection with individuals knowledgeable about the themes and stories of the Biblical texts—whether they were Christians, Jews, or otherwise—constitutes an important documentation for Orientalists regarding the Prophet's prior awareness of the Biblical contents and stories in the compilation of the Quran:

- The stories preserved in the memory of the Arabs, which were transmitted orally (Neuwirth, 2001: 3, 481).
- A historical theory suggests that Muhammad's knowledge of the traditions of the Torah and the Gospel was exclusively, or at least primarily in terms of its initial source, derived from oral sources. This oral awareness was strengthened and developed through interpretations and additions related to the Torah and the Gospel and were transmitted in Muhammad's native language. The most important evidence supporting this claim is the existence of non-Arabic vocabulary in the Quran, which had entered the Arabian milieu through the transmission of religious information among the people (Rippin, 2001: 2, 473).
- Muhammad's connection with *Waraqah ibn Nufil* and his continuous meetings with him and *Khad ijah* supported him in achieving his objectives (Gilliot, 2001: 2, 512).
- The inhabitants of the western Arabian Peninsula, who were familiar with the People of the Book before the emergence of Islam (Sharon, 2001: 4, 36).
- The inhabitants of southern Arabia, who had many memories of important and more recent events, and in addition, due to their connections with Abyssinia through the sea and their influence from them, were able to be effective on central Arabia alongside Judaism and Christianity (cf. Rosenthal, 2001: 2, 437).

3. Changes in Stories During Transmission

In addition to the hypothesis of the Quran's appropriation from various sources, as Hirschfeld puts it, the important question that has continuously arisen for Orientalists has been to determine the extent to which a belief or opinion presented by the Prophet is original, meaning it is spiritually owned by the Prophet, or whether it is borrowed from

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elsewhere, how the Prophet obtained it, and to what extent he modified it to align with his goals (Hirschfeld, 1902: 4). Since the stories in the Quran have differences from the claimed sources apart from similarities, Orientalists speculate that the individual background of the Prophet is a factor in altering the original content during the compilation of the Quran.

It is noteworthy that when fragments of quoted material or scattered information are merged, new knowledge emerges (Gilliot, 2001: 2, 512). Thus, the changes in content derived from the Bible and other sources were necessary for the Prophet to present his new sacred book, which signifies his prophethood. The alterations in the text occurred in five ways:

3.1. Elaboration and Amplification

Some stories that are brief and concise in the Bible are narrated in the Quran with considerable embellishment and detail. This includes the stories of Abraham (ibid. Fireston, 2001: 1, 7), Moses, and Jesus (cf. Rubin, 2001: 4, 301), and certain peripheral elements of the Bible are presented as very significant in the Quran (Neuwirth, 2001: 3, 481).

3.2. Summary and Omission of Details

Sometimes in the reports of stories and historical events, details are omitted, and they lack the overall narrative context found in the Bible. These stories have been condensed to such an extent that often it is essential to refer to the Bible to understand the narrative elements of the Quran (Rippin, 2009: 369)

3.3. Mixing Information

According to verses 73, 75, and 116 of Surah al-Ma'idah, the Prophet considered Mary to be a part of the Trinity, whereas this belief has never held a place in mainstream Christianity, and there is even no evidence of such a belief existing among any of the ancient Christian groups, including the Collyridians. Some have speculated that the Prophet mixed the beliefs of the Collyridians with the doctrines of orthodox Christians, and since there is no evidence of this sect's existence during the time of the Prophet, it may be that in Arabia, due to the heritage of the Collyridians, the belief in the divinity of Mary was conflated with Christian belief (Sirry, 2014: 47; cf. Hulmes, 1993).

3.4. Changes in Writing Style and Details

The writing style of the Quran, characterized by its eloquent and ornate form, has contributed to a stark distinction between the texts of the Bible and the Quran (Neuwirth, 2001: 481).

3.5. Distortion by Addition

In some stories within the Quran, there are events that exceed what is reported in the two Testaments, which have become the basis for

Orientalists' claims regarding the distortion of stories by the Prophet to advance his religious objectives.

4. Critique of Orientalist Approaches to the Content of Quranic Stories

After presenting the views and opinions of Orientalists regarding the content of the Quranic stories, this section critiques the content using both intra-religious and extra-religious references and evidence:

4.1. Loanwords in the Quran

One of the reasons given by Western researchers for the Quran's appropriation from the two Testaments is the presence of loanwords (Arabized) from other languages in the Quran. Various references critiquing this idea are provided as follows:

First Reason: The motivation for linguistic borrowing fundamentally involves two things: 1) Need and 2) Prestige or the status of the culture and society providing the loan (Badrei, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 4).

For example, most loanwords in the Arabic language relate to material and intellectual aspects in which these two peoples had superiority over the Arabs, and the Arabs inevitably adopted such words from them (cf. Waf i, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 230).

Another factor involves intrusive similarities or verbal overlaps; therefore, there is no language in the world that has not been influenced or has not imposed its influence due to trade, cultural, and social exchanges. Thus, the process of languages borrowing from one another is not a new phenomenon; it dates back to the birth of languages (Badrei, *ibid*: 10-14).

Second Reason: According to Gibb, the words used in the Quran were entirely consistent with the concepts of the Quran; they were not only understandable for the initial listeners of the Quran but were also widely recognized in Mecca (Gibb, 1962: 270). Therefore, if there were any foreign words in the Quran, the polytheists would have been the first to confront the Prophet and refuse to accept the divine nature of the Quranic verses.

Third Reason: Referencing Torrey's argument, he states that due to the long-standing relationship between Arabs and Ethiopians through the Red Sea, many foreign words had entered the Arabic language before the advent of Islam. He believes that Mecca was not simply a commercial and uncivilized city, and that Muhammad understood more than one spoken and written language there. The Quran includes foreign words and proper names that were known to the people of Mecca even before Muhammad's birth (cf. Torrey, 1933: 53-54).

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Fourth Reason: The existence of a few non-Arabic words in the Quran does not detract from its Arabic nature, just as the presence of an Arabic word in a Persian poem does not undermine its Persian authenticity (Suyut i, n.d.: 1, 148).

Fifth Reason: The presence of non-Arabic proper names in the Quran is completely obvious, as a significant portion of the Quran is dedicated to the stories of prophets and nations that lived in different regions and spoke various languages, which needed to be referred to by their own names in the Quran.

Sixth Reason: According to Ibn Salam, foreign words were reshaped when they confronted Arabs, turning into specific Arabic words that later found their place in poetry and daily conversations, acquiring a purely Arabic flavor to the extent that they were used in the Quran at the time of its revelation (Andulus i, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 51).

Seventh Reason: Some scholars consider the presence of these words in the Quran as a sign of the eloquence and rhetoric of the Quran (Suyut i, n.d.: 1, 147) since an equivalent word was not found in rhetoric to be employed in the Quran.

4.2. Presence of Biblical Figures and Themes in the Quran

The issue of the similarity of Quranic verses, especially the narratives, with the content of the two Testaments has never been deniable and will not be, because according to the explicit text of the Quranic verses, the Quran serves as a confirmation and affirmation of the previous heavenly books, all of which share a singular origin of revelation. Therefore, the presence of part of the content from the sacred books in the Quran cannot be taken as evidence for the human compilation of the Quran using the material from the Bible.

Upon careful examination of the narratives of the prophets, we see that in addition to similarities, there are also fundamental differences in these stories, such as the omission of narrative details, the inclusion of many untold truths, the selection of stories from certain messengers while overlooking others, and recounting the histories of messengers who are not mentioned in the Bible: "That is from the news of the cities, which We relate to you; of them, some are [still] standing and some are [as] a harvest [mowed down]" (Hud/100), which itself demonstrates the independence of the Quran from other divine books.

On the one hand, if it is claimed that the Prophet borrowed knowledge from Christian and Jewish teachings, then he must have attended the gatherings of Christian monks and the Jewish rabbis from the *Banu Qaynuqa'*, *Banu Nadir*, and *Banu Qurayza* to acquire knowledge. How could these individuals be the teachers of Muhammad while the Quran attacks them in multiple verses? In fact, there are many

rulings, beliefs, and narratives that contradict the views of the Jews and Christians: "And from those who say, "We are Christians" We took their covenant; but they forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded. So We caused among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection. And Allah is going to inform them about what they used to do" (al-Ma'idah/14); "Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture, purchasing error [in exchange for it] and wishing you would lose the way?" (al-Nisa'/44).

if the People of the Book were skeptical during the time of the Prophet about Muhammad being influenced by their thoughts and quoting from their scriptures, they would have rushed to Arab and non-Arab tribes to say that Muhammad had borrowed from our ideas and quoted from our Book, while no such event is recorded in history (cf. Fattah, 1999: 268-263).

In general, it can be said that the relationship between the Quran and the Torah and Gospel is one of general validation; it can even be described as one of narration and storytelling. In this sense, the Quran recounts the news of the prophets of the Children of Israel as presented in the Torah. The reality is that the originality and innovation of the Quran, particularly in the realm of narratives, lies in its specific method of presenting the stories found in the Torah, and this issue becomes clear when comparing the texts of the Quran and the Torah. For this reason, the Almighty God has said: [And it was not [possible] for this Qur'an to be produced by other than Allah, but [it is] a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of the [former] Scripture, about which there is no doubt from the Lord of the worlds.] (Yunus/37) The book that the Prophet brought is a confirmation of the Torah and Gospel and, moreover, is expressed in clear and inimitable Arabic (al-Jabir i, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 565).

4.3. The Prophet's Access to Written and Oral Sources

Gerhard Bowering writes about the Prophet's access to any resources: "There is no collection of works related to the Torah and Gospel that exists, whether legitimate or fabricated, serving as a direct basis and primary source for the Quran; however, the Quran, as the last sacred book, has a clear temporal relationship with the tradition of the sacred texts of Judaism and Christianity in a 'historical order' among the great world religions. Yet, there is no evidence that this tradition existed as a complete collection or in disparate forms translated into Arabic before the time of Muhammad." (cf. Bowering, 2001: 1, 316)

Rosenthal similarly denies any familiarity of the Prophet with foreign historical sources (Rosenthal: 2, 428-429).

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The lack of access to any written or oral sources by the Prophet and his unfamiliarity with these texts is also acknowledged (Armstrong, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 178), as Arab historians deny the existence of any Arabic translations of the sacred texts in Mecca and Medina, even during the time of the Prophet's mission, and there is no evidence of the existence of Arabic translations of the Bible or access to them by the people of the Arabian Peninsula. It is noteworthy that the history of the translation of the Bible into Arabic dates back to the mid-era of the Umayyad Caliphate (Mughn iyah, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 80).

Frants Buhl states that the term *Umm i* is derived from the *U M T*, corresponding to the Greek word "Laikos." The word *Umm i*, according to the emphasis of some Muslim scholars, means that Muhammad (PBUH) neither read nor wrote; however, it should be mentioned that as a Meccan merchant, he undoubtedly knew how to read and write well but, conversely, had no knowledge of the sacred books of the Jews and Christians.

This is a fact that the Quran has made clear several times. On the other hand, if Muhammad could read the Torah, he would never have made mistakes in conveying phrases or stories from the Torah.

Regarding the acquisition of content in the Quran from *Waraqa ibn Nufil*, it should also be stated that *Waraqa* did not witness the Prophet's mission and died after the revelation of the Quran, which means he did not understand the Islamic invitation and was not contemporary with the Prophet during his call. So how could all this knowledge have come together over 23 years in the book of God, knowing that *Waraqa ibn Nufil* had passed away after the revelation? Furthermore, it has never been recorded in history that *Waraqa* claimed prophethood or a new position appointed by the Prophet; if he were the source of Muhammad's teachings; would he merely remain as a follower and confirmer? (cf. Ban i 'Amir, 2004: 236-241).

4.4. Borrowing from Arabic Poetry

According to Alan Jones, in the pre-Islamic era, writing was not particularly significant culturally, as several sources indicate that cultural materials (such as the sayings of poets, priests, orators, and storytellers) were transmitted orally (cf. Jones, 2001: 589); they did not consider it permissible to narrate from a written manuscript. On the other hand, there are very few reports of written poetry before the era of the formal compilation of poems (cf. Zwettler, 1928: 13).

Thus, the borrowing of the Prophet from Arabic poetry remains shrouded in ambiguity, as there is no historical documents indicating influence and access to these writings. Some also regard the poetry of *Ab i Şalt* as an important source for the compilation of the Quran. The

debates among orientalists regarding the relationship between the Quran and the poetry of *Umayyah ibn Ab i Şalt* began with the remarks of Clément Huart, who translated "*al-Bad' wa al-Tar ikh Maqdis i*" into French. Many of *Umayyah's* poems, with religious-mythological themes, caught his attention, leading to the conclusion that the Quran borrows from these poems (cf. Azarnoush, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 297-299).

While André believes that these poems are nothing but the verses of storytellers based on the interpretations of Quranic stories attributed to *Ab i Şalt*, they could not have occurred any later than the first century of the Islamic era (Brockelmann, *ibid*: 1, 113).

The content of the poems by *Umayyah* includes the story of Noah, the tale of the flood, the crow and the dove, and other narratives about the flood, indicating that *Umayyah* was aware of the stories of Noah presented in the "Sixth Book of Genesis." Additionally, various concepts and narratives from the Torah can be observed in his poetry, which suggests that he either had access to translations of the Torah or had heard its themes and recorded them in his verses (Jawad Al i, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 412-414).

Some consider the poetry of *Ab i Şalt* structurally similar to pre-Islamic poetry, which is known for its strong and rhetorical structure; in their view, signs of weakness in this poetry are quite evident. Consequently, some have pointed out indications of rhetorical weakness in several poems of *Umayyah* (cf. Brog, 2001: 12) and regarding the characteristics of his poetry, it has been said: "Its phrases are mostly confused, poorly woven, and lacking in rhyme." (al-Zayyat, n.d.: 76) Therefore, undoubtedly, the Quran, with all its eloquence and rhetoric, cannot have originated from these poems.

4.5. Changes in Stories During Transmission

Since orientalists study religions in a historical context and perceive revelation as a personal experience of the prophet, it is evident that they hold the prophet himself responsible for the changes in the stories within the Quran.

The Quranic stories are presented based on the content and purpose of the surah and the thematic context, using different styles such as summarization, elaboration, selection, and repetition without considering a chronological sequence. Therefore, these narratives differ significantly from the biblical accounts, which are comprehensive, detailed, and follow a chronological order, leading orientalists to attribute responsibility for these changes to the prophet. There are multiple reasons for the differences in narration and storytelling styles in the Quran and the biblical texts:

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- Regarding the summarization and selective nature of the Quranic stories, it should be noted that the Quran's approach to past events and times is selective. This means that the Quran does not narrate all events and occurrences in detail concerning a prophet or a nation; rather, it highlights those aspects that can carry the message of faith and serve as a lesson, guidance, and call to action. In narrating an incident, only what most contributes to this purpose and has particular significance is mentioned (Muhaddith i, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 158).

Allamah Ṭabaṭaba' i also believes that the Quran is not a historical book that recounts the good and bad histories of people; rather, the Quran is a book of guidance that explains the means to happiness for humanity, and sometimes this brief mention reflects the tradition of God among people, who are recipients of divine grace to take admonition from it and serve as a conclusive evidence for others (Ṭabaṭaba' i, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 10, 204 and onwards).

- *Sayyid Quṭb* considers the succinctness of the Quranic narratives, aside from their rhetorical and lexical aspects, to be primarily related to the precision in selecting effective scenes in the narrative and omitting superfluous parts (Sayyid Quṭb, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 4, 1951).

- The artistic aspects of the Quranic stories, despite certain characteristics outlined below, are distinct from the narratives of the Bible:

- **Diversity of Style:** This means that the Quran does not express stories in a singular style. From the very outset, various images of an event, its conclusion, and the contextual setups for narrating the story allow the Quranic narratives to differentiate from one another, which indicate the Quran's attention towards the artistic presentation of the narrative (cf. Sayyid Quṭb, 2002: 17-22).

- **Different Narrative Perspectives:** In Quranic narratives, some scenes remain untold (the same ambiguity and omission of details), which actually provides opportunities for readers to visualize and draw parallels, leading to a deeper engagement with the narrative (ibid.).

- **Selection of Effective Scenes:** In Quranic stories, the choice of time and place is made with sufficient precision. The greatest aspect of rhetorical miracle pertains to this feature, which discards excess and ineffective scenes (Sayyid Quṭb, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 4, 1950). These factors result in the Quran's avoidance of detailed narratives and superfluous storytelling. The Quran employs various methods for recounting events: Briefly and without detail, disjointedly and non-continuously, focusing on the main points of the narratives, and conveying ethical, doctrinal, legal concepts, and natural traditions, all aimed at guiding humanity.

The style of the Quran is one of address, unlike the style of written texts, which does not require a systematic and coherent narration with all

details and specifics. Thus, chronological order and continuity in recounting events are not strictly adhered to; rather, it transitions from one event to another.

The specific style of the Quran in presenting stories involves mixing, blending, and combining certain topics and concepts, adhering to the context of the speech. For this reason, it does not follow the style of documented texts. Since it has a dialogical style, it intertwines existential truths with doctrinal knowledge, legal rulings, admonition, guidance, good tidings, and warnings, along with emotions, feelings, reason, and perception. Wherever necessary, to align with the context and achieve its goal, it repeats topics and presents concepts in various contexts with diverse styles, which may augment, diminish, summarize, or elaborate according to the situation. Therefore, it does not follow the established narrative styles typical of literary storytelling (Ma'rifat, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 420-421).

4.6. Fabrication of the Arab Prophets

Considering the absence of the names of certain prophets and specific names in the Holy Scriptures and the mention of these names in the Quran, Orientalists have perceived these Arab prophets as constructs of the Prophet's mind and as evidence of the human and non-revelatory origin of the Quran. Several reasons are presented to critique this claim: **First Reason:** Archaeological findings, notably a report by the Los Angeles Times in early 1990 about the "Discovery of the legendary lost Arabian city of Atlantis of the Sands" by Nicholas Clapp, confirmed the existence of the tribe of 'Ad mentioned in the Quran (cf. Maugh, 1992) and refuted the baseless theory that the Quran falsely fabricated information about ancient peoples not mentioned in the Torah.

Second Reason: We refer to the words of Rosenthal, who argues that since Orientalists, based on their subjective assumptions, attribute familiar origins relevant to the time of Muhammad to these narratives, they believe that if a name or story appears in the Quran without roots in biblical traditions or neighboring lands, it is a fabrication of Muhammad's mind. This includes the stories of *Hud*, *Salih*, or 'Ad and *Iram* (cf. Rosenthal, Frantz, *ibid*: 437).

Third Reason: The authors and compilers of the Torah recorded historical matters specific to their context. If they had ever heard of the tribe of 'Ad, they certainly would have related it to themselves, while the Torah does not focus on distant lands, concentrating instead on the land of Canaan or Palestine and its neighboring areas like Syria and Egypt. Additionally, the 'Ad and *Thamud* tribes, not being Hebrew and not linked to Jacob, had no place in the Torah (cf. al-Bash, *ibid*: 117-121).

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Conclusion

The primary emphasis of Orientalists regarding the "sources of narratives" is on the adaptation from the two Testaments and post-Testament sources, especially concerning the topic of Arabized vocabulary and biblical characters. The lack of attention to several factors has led to the formation of such doubts: one, the issue of linguistic borrowing due to long-lasting interactions with other countries and religions, and two, the divine origin of all heavenly books.

In discussing the "Means of accessing sources" in both written and oral domains, the absence of any Arabic translation of the Scriptures during the Prophet's time, the misinterpretation of the Prophet's relationship with *Waraqah ibn Nufil* due to a lack of historical studies about him, and the lack of historical documentation concerning the Prophet's access to Arabic poetry, especially that of *Umayyah ibn Abi al-Salt*, are among the important critiques. Regarding the "Changes in stories during transmission," it is crucial to attend to the differences in the narratives between the Quran and the two Testaments; only significant events in the history of the prophets and forsaken peoples are mentioned in the Quran, which align with the objectives of each Surah.

The absence of stories about Arab prophets in the Testaments also indicates the temporal gap between the revelation of these holy books and the fact that these events occurred later than the periods covered by the Testaments, justifying their omission due to their non-association with the Prophet Jacob.

It should also be noted that the research conducted by Orientalists is incomplete and based on limited sources, which has led to incorrect and unfair conclusions regarding the Quran. This is because, in addition to the Holy Quran, the Sunnah and the practices of some Orientalists insist on the invalidity of the beliefs held by this group of researchers. The Quran, in fact, contains the general principles of the previous scriptures and is in line with them, while also encompassing new rules that are suitable for the new society. Therefore, the differences between the Quran and certain sections of the Bible cannot be considered a sign of its non-revelatory nature.

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