

# JEWS IN THE QUR'ĀN

*Muzaffar Iqbal*

The Qur'ān uses five terms to refer to Jews, but regardless of the appellation used, it is ultimately concerned with the beliefs and deeds of the Jewish people, both during their pre-Qur'ānic history as well as their response to its own invitation to believe in One God and all the Prophets and Books He has sent, including the last of them and the Book sent to him, that is, the Qur'ān, which confirms the Torah and all earlier Scriptures and is their guardian and protector (*muhaymin*). Since the Qur'ān came from the same source as Torah, belief in this final Revelation is a *sine qua non* for the true believers who recognize it *as they recognize their own children*. Most of the Jewish Madinan contemporaries of the Prophet, however, rejected his prophethood and this framed the parameters of Jewish Muslim relationship; the same frame exists today and continues to influence events in the Middle east and beyond.

Recognizing their status as People of the Book, Islamic Law permits Muslims to eat their food and marry their women. Yet, this recognition has not been instrumental in the emergence of a positive relationship.

Keywords: Jews in the Qur'ān; Qur'ānic Studies; the Qur'ān and other faith communities; Early Jewish Reception of the Qur'ān; Jewish-Muslim relations.

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## Introduction

The Qur'ān uses five terms to refer to Jews:

- i. **Banū/Banī Isrā'īl**: It most frequently uses the possessive constructs *banū* and *banī Isrā'īl* (lit. sons, but more generally, children of Isrā'īl). The phrase appears 40 times in the oblique (*banī Isrā'īl*) and once (Q 10:90) in the nominative case (*banū Isrā'īl*) in twelve Makkan (Q 7, 10, 17, 20, 26, 27, 32, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46) and four (Q 2, 3, 5, 61) Madinan suras<sup>1</sup>. One sura of the Qur'ān (Q 17) is called Sūrat Banī Isrā'īl (also called

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1. 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Mu'jam*.

Sūrat Isrā' and Sūrat Subḥān, Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, Type 17, 1:193).

“Isrāʾīl”<sup>2</sup> is a compound word consisting of two parts: “isrā” (“slave”) and “īl” (“God”); thus the phrase means “slave of Allah” (*ʿabd Allah*; Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Samʿanī; Samarqandī; Māwardī; Ibn ʿĀdil; al-Qinnawjī, *Fath al-bayān*, sub Q 2:40; Abī Bakr al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāh*, sub s-r-ā). It is also said that it was his agnomen (*laqab*), and means *ṣafwatul-Llāh* (“the chosen one of Allah”) in Hebrew (Zamakhsharī; Bayḍāwī; Khāzin, sub Q 2:40).<sup>3</sup> It is a non-Arabic (*aʿjamī*) word for which there is no Arabic etymology (Wāḥidī, *Basīṭ*, sub Q 2:40). Abū Maṣṣūr Mawḥūb b. Aḥmad al-Jawālīqī (460-540/1067-1145) mentions two other vocalizations for *Isrāʾīl*: (a) “*Isrāl*” on the pattern of *Mikāl*; and (b) “*Isrāʾīm*” with a final nūn. This is so because “when Arabs encounter a foreign word that does not belong to their language, they express it in different vocalizations, such as *Baghdādh* and *Baghdād* and also *Baghdān*” (*Muʿarrab*, entry No. 4, sub *wa ammā Isrāʾīl*; also see al-Khafājī, *Shifāʾ al-ghalīl*, sub *Isrāʾī*; Ibn al-Jawzī; sub Q 2:40). Other readings include: *Isrāil* (*yāʾ* suppressed) read by Warsh from Nāfiʿ; *Isrāyīl* (with the transposition of the *hamza* into *yāʾ*), read by Abū Jaʿfar, al-Aʿmash, ʿIsā b. ʿUmar, al-Ḥasan, al-Zuhri, Ibn Abī Ishāq, ʿIsā, Nāfiʿ, al-Azraqī, and al-Muṭawwaʿī. Other variants include *Isrāʾal*, *Isrāʾill*, and *Isrāʾal* (al-Khaṭīb, *Muʿajam al-Qirʾāt*, sub Q 2:40).

- ii. **Yahūd:** While the terms *banū* and *banī Isrāʾīl* imply all the branches of children of Prophet Yaʿqūb, including those who believed in Prophet ʿIsā (that is, Christians), *Yahūd* is exclusively used in the Qurʾān for those who believed in Prophet Mūsā, who are also called *Qawm Mūsā* (see below).

Lexicographers and exegetes offer two explanations for the etymology

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2. *Isrāʾīl* is one of the two Qurʾānic names of Prophet Yaʿqūb—the eponymous ancestor of the Children of *Isrāʾīl*—who was the son of Ishāq, the son of Ibrāhīm, upon them all peace (Ṭabarī; Māturīdī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Zamakhsharī, sub Q 3:93; Rāzī; Thaʿalibī, *Jawāhir*, sub Q 2:40). Yaʿqūb, upon him peace, is mentioned twice (Q 3:93; 19:58) as *Isrāʾīl* and is one of the five Prophets with two Qurʾānic names: Aḥmad—Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace; ʿIsā—al-Masīḥ; Dhū-l-Kifl—Ilyās; *Isrāʾīl*—Yaʿqūb; Yūnus—Dhū-l-Nūn, upon them all peace (Farāhidī, sub *ḥ-d-m*; Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil*, *Dhikr asmāʾ Rasūl Allāh ṣallā Allāh ʿalayh wa sallam*; cf. Rāzī, sub Q 21:86; Qurṭubī, sub Q 2:136; Ibn ʿĀdil, sub Q 2:40). This usage is also found in Prophetic Hadiths (Aḥmad, 4:277 §2471; Abū Dāwūd, 4:450 §2854; Ṭabarānī, *Muʿajam al-kabīr*, 12:246 §13012; also quoted by Ṭabarī; Makkī, sub Q 3:93; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Ibn Kathīr, sub Q 2:40).
  3. For bibliographical details, see Bibliography at the end of the article. All references are to the verse being discussed unless otherwise noted.

of the noun *yahūd* (sing. *yahūdī*): (a) it comes from Yahūdha, the eldest son of Ya‘qūb, upon him peace, whose name was Arabicized and the letter “*dhāl*” was changed to “*dāl*” (Farāhidī, *sub* bāb al-hā’ wal-dāl; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, *sub* bāb al-dāl, faṣl al-hā’; Māwardī; Jurjānī, *Darj al-Durar*, *sub* Q 2:62); (b) it is derived from the verb *hāda* (“he repented”) (Jawharī, *Ṣiḥāḥ*; Fayrūzābādī, *Qāmūs*; Rāghib, *sub* h-w-d), because they returned to Allah and abandoned the worship of the Calf; or because of their saying *innā hudnā ilayka*—indeed we have returned to You (Q 7:156), as per Ibn Jurayj (d. ca.150/767) (Ṭabarī; Māwardī).

The verb *hāda* is used for a person who adopts the ways of the Jews (*ṭarīqat al-yahūd*) in his religion (Azharī, 6:206, *sub* bāb al-hā’ wal-dāl); Rāghib, *sub* h-w-d), thus, the phrase *alladhīna hādū* denotes the Jews (*al-yahūd*) and “those who became Jews (*ṣārū yahūdan*)” (Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 2:62); *hādū* means “they repented” (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:62; cf. Baghawī; Sam‘ānī, *sub* Q 2:62). The Form I verb occurs eleven times (Q 2:62; 4:46, 160; 5:41, 44, 69; 6:146; 7:156; 16:118, 22:17; 62:6). The singular noun *yahūdī* is used once (Q 3:67) as *yahūdīyyan*: *Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian* and the nominal *hūdan* (Jews) appears three times (Q 2:111, 135, 140).

- iii. ***qawm /aṣḥāb Mūsā (People of Mūsā)***: Those children of Isrā’īl, who were contemporaneous to Prophets Mūsā and Hārūn, upon them peace, are the obvious referent in verses where the expression “People of Mūsā” (*qawm Mūsā*; Q 7:148, 159; 28:76) is used as well as where they are ascribed to him as “his people” (*qawmihī/qawmahu*, e.g. Q 2:54, 60, 67; 5:20; 7:128, 150, 155, 160; 14:6); where he refers to them as “my people” (*qawmī*; Q 2:54, 5:20, 21; 7:142; 10:84; 20:86; 43:51; 61:5); once (Q 26:61) they are called *aṣḥābu Mūsā* (lit. Companions of Mūsā). In two verses (Q 23:47; 37:115), they are ascribed to both Mūsā and Hārūn as *their people* (*qawmahumā*). In Q 20:90, Hārūn, upon him peace, calls them *my people* and in four verses (Q 40:29, 30, 38, 39), *a believing man from the House of Fir‘awn, who was concealing his belief* calls them *O my people*. Mūsā, upon him peace, the most-mentioned Prophet of the Children of Isrā’īl in the Qur’ān, was the son of ‘Imrān, the son of Yaṣḥar, the son of Qāhith (or Fāhit), the son of Lāwī, the son of Ya‘qūb (Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; *Tafsīr*; Māwardī; Tha‘labī, *Kashf sub* Q 2:5; Baghawī, *sub* Q 6:84; for more on his name, see MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE).
- iv. ***Asbāt (Descendants)***: They are the referent of the noun *asbāt* (root s-b-ṭ; sing. *sibṭ*), which occurs five times (Q 2:136, 140; 3:84; 4:163; 7:160). Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhidī (100-175/718-791) says “*al-sibṭ* is for the Children of Isrā’īl what *qabila* (“tribe”) is for the Arabs.” Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. al-Sirrī al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) says:

“Some say the noun *al-sibt* means one generation succeeding the other; but the true meaning is... all those who were born from the lineage of Ya‘qūb are called *sibt*. The descendants of Ismā‘il are called *qabā’il* (tribes); this different usage is for differentiation between the offspring of Ismā‘il and Ishāq... The noun *al-asbāt* is derived from *al-sabaṭ* and *al-subaṭ*, referring to a tree that is fed to camels, it is as if Ishāq is likened to one tree and Ismā‘il to another” (*sub* Q 7:160). Jār Allāh Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/ca.1074-1143) defines *al-sibt* as “grandson (*al-ḥāfid*)”. Thus, “*al-asbāt* means the grandsons of Ya‘qūb, or in general the offspring of his twelve sons” (*sub* Q 2:136; for similar views, see: Samarqandī, *sub* Q 7:160, and Rāzī, *sub* 2:136).

v. ***Ahl al-kitāb (People of the Book)/ “those who have been given the Book”:***

Jews are the exclusive or inclusive referent of the three Qur’ānic terms referring to the “People of the Book” (*q.v.*):

- a. *ahl al-kitāb*, used thirty-one times in eight Madinan (Q 2:105, 109; 3:64, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 98, 99, 110, 113, 199; 4:123, 153, 159, 171; 5:15, 19, 59, 65, 68, 77; 33:26; 57:29 59:2, 11; 98:1, 6) and one Makkan (Q 29:46) sura. The technical usage of the term is reserved for the Jews (*al-yahūd*) and Christians (*al-naṣārā*), to the exclusion of the Majūs (Māturidī, *sub* Q 4: 47, Q 6:156; Jaṣṣās; al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī, *sub* 9:29), based on Q 6:156, where the dual noun *ṭā’ifatān* (“two groups”) is explained as such by Ibn ‘Abbās (3BH-68/620-688), Mujaḥhid b. Jabr (d. ca.99/718), Qatāda (d. 117/735), and al-Suddī (d. 127/744) (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Baghawī; Rāzī; Ibn ‘Ashūr, *sub* Q 6:156);
- b. The phrase “*alladhīna ūtū-l-kitāb—those who have been given the Book*” appears fifteen times (Q 2:101, 144, 145; 3:19, 100, 186, 187; 4:47, 131; 5:5, 57; 9:29; 57:16; 74:31; 98:4); and
- c. a slightly different wording “*alladhīna ūtū naṣīban min al-kitāb—those who were given a portion of the Book*” is used thrice (Q 3:23; 4:44, 51).

The exegetes identify—sometimes with difference of opinion—verses where Jews are the exclusive referent (e.g., Muqātil, *sub* Q 2:101; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *sub* Q 3:23; Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 4:44), and where Jews and Christians are both included in the phrase. Examples of the latter include Q 4:131, where the phrase is glossed as “People of Torah and Injīl” by Ṭabarī and Samarqandī; Q 5:5, which makes lawful *the food of those who were given the Book* (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Baghawī); Q 9:29, which imposes *jizya* on them (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Tha‘labī); Q 57:16, which mentions those whose hearts have hardened (Ṭabarī); Q 74:31, which refers to the number of

keepers of the gates of Hell, which the “People of Torah and Injil” also find in their Books (Ṭabarī), and Q 98:4, as those who became divided *after clear evidence had come to them* (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Samarqandī).

### Synopsis

The lineage of the Children of Isrāʾīl traces back to Prophet Ibrāhīm through his son Ishāq and grandson Yaʿqūb, who were also Prophets, upon them all peace. They arrived in Egypt after Yaʿqūb joined his son Yūsuf—upon them both peace—whose ascent to a position of power in Egypt is chronicled in Sūra Yūsuf (Q 12). After they settled in Egypt, the Children of Isrāʾīl initially flourished, but by the time Mūsā b. ʿImrān b. Qāhath b. Lāwī b. Yaʿqūb was born, their affluence had dwindled and Children of Isrāʾīl suffered under the tyranny of the ruling Pharaohs (Q 2:49-57; for the lineage of Mūsā, upon him peace, see Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:385), although some of them—such as Mūsā’s cousin Qārūn—were extremely wealthy (Q 28:76-79). Through Mūsā, upon him peace, they were rescued from the great oppression, granted a passage through the sea, and made inheritors of the land and wealth of Pharaoh and his people (Q 28:5), and they were granted *that which He gave unto no other in all the worlds* (Q 5:20).

Shortly after their freedom from the tyranny of Pharaoh, they came upon some idol worshippers and said, “*O Mūsā, make for us a god, as they have gods.*” Mūsā, upon him peace, rebuked them, “*surely you are an ignorant people*” (Q 7:138). When Mūsā, upon him peace, went to the Mountain for his meeting with Allah Most High, they started to worship the Calf (Q 2:51, 92, 93; 4:153; 7:148-154; 20:88-98; see CALF OF CHILDREN OF ISRĀʾĪL). When they were commanded *to enter the Holy Land which Allah has prescribed for you, and do not turn back, or you shall become losers*, they refused, saying *O Mūsā, in this land are domineering people; we shall not enter it until they depart*. Prophet Mūsā then supplicated for a separation for him and his brother (Prophet Hārūn) *from the iniquitous people* (Q 5:20-25). The Children of Isrāʾīl were thus forbidden to enter the Holy Land for forty years (Q 5:26), although they continued to receive other Divine favors, including *salwa* (quails) and *al-mann* which descended for them (Q 2:57; 7:160; 20:80; see BLESSINGS, BOUNTIES AND FAVORS OF ALLAH; FOOD AND DRINK).

During the forty years of wandering, Mūsā and Hārūn, upon them peace, died. Afterward, the prescribed land was granted to them under the leadership of Yūshaʿ ibn al-Nūn (*cf.* Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 5:26), who is not mentioned in the Qurʾān by name, but is recognized as a companion and disciple of Mūsā and a prophet of the Children of Isrāʾīl in hadith and commentary literature (Bukhārī, *farḍ al-khumus*, *qawl al-nabī ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam: uḥillat lakum al-ghanāʾim*; Muslim, *al-Jihād wal-siyar, taḥlīl al-ghanāʾim li-hadha al-*

umma khāṣa and Nawawī's *sharh* on this hadith; Aḥmad, *Musnad* 14/65 8315; Ibn Abi 'Āṣim, *al-Āḥād wa'l-mathānī* 1:150; Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār* 3:96. Selective subsequent history of the Children of Isrā'īl is chronicled through their interactions with some of their prophets (see below section "Prophets and Messengers") and one king, Ṭālūt.

The righteous among the Children of Isrā'īl are praised and assured of their reward: *Those who believe, and those who are Jewish, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans—any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and act righteously—will have their reward with their Lord; they have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve* (Q 2:62) and, more generally, *they are not all alike; among the People of the Book is a community who are upright and recite the verses of Allah during the night, prostrating. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous.* (Q 3:113-114; also see Q 3:199; 7:159; 7:168). According to most commentators, *those who believe* after the revelation of the Qur'ān only refers to those Children of Isrā'īl who believed in all the Prophets, including the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abi Ḥātim; Māturīdī; Māwardī; Baghawī, *sub* Q 2:62).

A number of false beliefs held by the Children of Isrā'īl are refuted (Q 2:79-80; 3:23-24; Q 4:49; see below). As a guardian (*muhaymin*) of all previous Divine revelations (Q 5:48), the Qur'ān *recounts unto the Children of Isrā'īl most of that concerning which they differ* (Q 27:76). They believed in some parts of the Book and disbelieved in other parts (Q 2:85); they altered their Book (Q 4:46; 5:13, 41-43) and distorted the Divine Word given to them (Q 2:58-59). As a result, some of them incurred Divine curse (Q 5:60), *wrath upon wrath* (*ghaḍābin 'alā ghaḍābin*) (Q 2:90) and *a terrible punishment* (*sū'a-l-'adhāb*) (Q 7:167). Those who went astray were cursed by their Prophets—Dāwūd and 'Īsā, upon them both peace (Q 5:78). A painful punishment awaits those who take usury and unjustly consume the wealth of others (Q 4:161). For their disbelief in the signs of Allah and for the killing of the Prophets, *humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them and they earned Divine wrath* (Q 2:61; 3:112). For their saying, *Allah is poor and we are rich* and for their *slaying of the prophets without right*, they will be told on the Day of Resurrection, *'Taste you the punishment of burning'* (Q 3:181). Their hearts have been hardened for breaking the Covenant (Q 5:13); and those who violated the Sabbath were turned into apes (Q 2:65; 7:166); certain types of food were prohibited to them for their wrongdoings (Q 4:160; 6:146).

Regardless of the appellation used for them, the Qur'ān is ultimately concerned with the beliefs and deeds of the Children of Isrā'īl, both during their pre-Qur'ānic history—chronicled primarily through their interactions

with Prophets Mūsā, Hārūn, and ʿĪsā, upon them peace—as well as their response to its own invitation to believe in One God and all the Prophets and Books He has sent, including the last of them and the Book sent to him, a Book that confirms all earlier Scriptures (Q 2:41, 89, 91, 97, 101; 3:3, 81; 6:92; 35:31; 46:30) and is their guardian and protector (*muḥaymin*) (Q 5:48). Since the Qurʾān came from the same source as their own Books, belief in this final Revelation is a *sine qua non* for the true believers who recognize it *as they recognize their own children* (Q 2:146; 6:20; 19:58; 28:52-53); they are *those who were given knowledge before it, and when it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration and say, 'Glory be to our Lord! Truly, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled. And they fall down on their faces, weeping, and it increases their humility* (Q 17:107-9).

Most of the Jewish Madinan contemporaries of the Prophet Muḥammad refused to accept his prophethood, even though they knew his description in the Torah (Q 7:157). Some of them were jealous and hostile, wishing the believers would forsake their faith (Q 2:109; 3:69, 99-100; 4:54; 5:59). The three Jewish tribes of Madina are indirectly mentioned in the Qurʾān (see below, the section, “The Jews of Madina and their interactions with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and with the Muslims”). Recognizing their status as People of the Book, Islamic Law permits Muslims to eat their food and marry their women (Q 5:5).

### Covenant

Certain aspects of what was enjoined upon the Children of Isrāʾīl in their Covenant are mentioned in Q 2:83-85: Worship of none other than Allah Most High, virtuous conduct, especially with parents, kinsfolk, orphans, and the needy, to speak kindly with people, observance of prayer, giving of alms (*zakāt*), not to shed blood, and not to expel their own from their homes. Another aspect of the Covenant is their recognition of Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace (Q 2:40; 3:81; 5:12). With regard to Q 2:40 (*O Children of Isrāʾīl, Remember My blessings which I bestowed upon you, and fulfill your Covenant with Me and I shall fulfill Me Covenant with you and be in awe only of Me*), al-Ṭabarī says: “This is the Covenant of Allah (*ʿahdu-llāhi*) and His testament (*wa waṣīyyatuhu*) that He made with the Children of Isrāʾīl in the Torah, that they will explain to people the status of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, that he is a Messenger, whose mention is found in their own Book, that he is the Prophet of Allah, and that they would believe in him and in all that he brought from Allah; and for this, *I will fulfill My Covenant with you*—and His promise with them is that if they did this, He will grant them Paradise” (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:40; similarly explained by Rāghib, Rāzī, and Bayḍāwī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*;



Ibn al-Jawzī).

### Chosen People

The Children of Isrāʾīl were given preference over all others (*ʿalā al-ʿālamīn*), Q 2:47, 122; 45:16) *And We certainly chose (ikhtarnāhum) them over the people of the worlds (ʿalā al-ʿālamīn; Q 44:32).* Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923) explains that “the noun *ʿālamūn* is the plural of *ʿālam*, which is itself a plural noun—like ‘cattle’, ‘group’, and ‘army’ (*al-anʿām*, *al-raḥṭ*, and *al-jaysh*)—for which there is no singular. The noun *ʿālam* denotes different kinds of communities—each kind is an *ʿālam*. The members of each generation of each kind are the *ʿālam* of that generation and that time. Thus, humankind is an *ʿālam*, and all the people of an era are *ʿālam* of that era. The jinn are an *alam* and so on with the other species of creation; each species is the *ʿālam* of its time. This is our opinion and that of Ibn ʿAbbās and Saʿīd b. Jubayr and most of the commentators” (*sub* Q 1:1).

Thus the divine preference and selection of Children of Isrāʾīl was temporally restricted, “indicating their selection above other nations of their era (*ʿalā ʿālamī zamānihim*),” as per Qatāda (d. 117/735), and they were “chosen for the world of that era (*ʿālam dhālika l-zamān*),” and “preferred to everyone else who lived at that time,” as per Mujaḥid (d. ca.104/722) (Ṭabarī; Samʿanī, *sub* Q 44:32). Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480) says, “they were chosen for the Books and the Messengers sent to them, and they were preferred over all others who lived amongst them at that time” (*sub* Q 2:47). The Baṣran Successor, jurist, and Qurʾān expert, Abū al-ʿĀliya Rufayʿ b. Mihrān al-Riyāḥī (d. ca. 93/712) (see Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Juzʾ 4, No. 85), said, “this preference refers to the fact that they were given kingdom (*mulk*), Messengers (*rusul*), and Scriptures (*kutub*), to the exclusion of those who lived in the world (*ʿālam*) of that era, and for every era (*li-kulli zamānin*) is its own world” (in Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥatīm; Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:47).

### Blessings

*My blessing* in Q 2:40, *O Children of Isrāʾīl, remember My blessing which I bestowed upon you...*, means not just one, but all the blessings because the singular *niʿma* in this verse “is a noun of genus (*ism al-jins*)—a singular used in the meaning of a plural, as in Q 14:34, *...if you were to count the blessing (niʿma) of Allah, you would not be able to number them*” (Qurṭubī). These blessings included the mention and description (*ṣifa*) of the Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace, as per Ibn ʿAbbās; as well as numerous blessings bestowed upon their forefathers (*ajdādihim*), as per al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21-110/642-728) and al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923); and all the other blessings distributed over time and granted according to their changing circumstances (Ibn al-Jawzī; Qurṭubī, *sub*



Q 2:40). ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr (700-774/1300-1373) cites all the above-mentioned blessings and adds that the blessing mentioned here is similar to what is mentioned in Q 5:20 in the words of Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace: *And when Mūsā said to his people, ‘O my people! Remember the blessing of Allah upon you, when He appointed prophets among you, and appointed for you kings, and gave you that which He gave unto no other in all the worlds.*

Elsewhere, specific blessings are mentioned: *And indeed, We gave the Children of Isrā’īl the Book and judgment, and prophethood, and We provided them with good things, and We favored them above the worlds* (Q 45:16). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209) says, “blessings can be divided into two categories: blessings of religion (*ni‘am al-dīn*) and blessings of the worldly kind (*ni‘am al-dunyā*); blessings of religion are far better than those of the worldly life, and for this reason, Allah Most High began by mentioning “*the Scripture, judgment, and prophethood*”; these three are distinct from that which follows” (*Tafsīr*).

### Clear Signs

In Q 2:211, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, is commanded to *Ask the Children of Isrā’īl how many a clear sign We have granted to them! And whoever alters the blessing of Allah after it has come to him—then indeed, Allah is severe in punishment.* “This was not by way of inquiry (*‘alā wajh al-istikhbār*), but rather, as a rebuke (*ta‘wīkh*)” (Māwardī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). The *clear signs* are the miracles brought by their Prophets, or proofs in their Books of the authenticity of Islam (*ṣiḥa dīn al-Islām*); they are blessings of Allah (*ni‘matu-llāhi*) because [the clear signs] are means to Guidance (*al-hudā*) and deliverance from misguidance (*al-najātu min al-ḍalāla*) (Zamakhsharī). The signs are called *clear* as they were a decisive proof (*ḥujja qāṭi‘a*) of truthfulness of Prophet Mūsā (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:211). Signs mentioned elsewhere include Mūsā’s hand (Q 27:12; 28:32), his staff (Q 7:117; 26:45; 27:10; 28:31), the splitting of the sea (Q 26:63), Mūsā’s striking of the rock which yielded twelve springs (Q 2:60; 7:160), shadowing of the Children of Isrā’īl by clouds (Q 2:57; 7:160), and sending down of the *manna* and *salwa* (Q 2:57; 7:160; 20:80).

### Prophets and Messengers

No number is specified in the Qur’ān for the Prophets and Messengers sent to the Children of Isrā’īl. There are, however, implicit Qur’ānic references to three unnamed prophets of the Children of Isrā’īl, who are identified in the exegetical sources as:

Hizqīl (in commentary on Q 2:243, as per Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Samarqandī; Tha‘labī, *Kashf*; Makkī, *Hidāya*);

the prophet mentioned in Q 2:246 in the phrase, “*when they said to a*

*prophet of theirs*”, is variously identified as Yūsha‘ b. Nūn b. Afrāyim b. Yūsuf b. Ya‘qūb as per Qatāda (d. 118) (in Tha‘labī, also by Ṭabarī as one of the names); Sham‘ūn as per al-Suddī (d. 127/744) (in Ṭabarī, Māwardī; *Nukat*; Zamakhsharī, *sub* Q 2:246); and Shamwīl [also known as Ishmawīl / Ashmawīl; cf. Baghawī, Waḥidī, *Wajīz*, *sub* Q 2:246] b. Bālā b. ‘Alqama b. Yarkhām (Ṭabarī; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, *sub* qīṣṣat Shamwīl ‘alayhi-l-salām); Shi‘yā b. Amṣiyā [variants: Sha‘yā, Ash‘iyā’ and Ish‘iyā’], who foretold the coming of ‘Īsā, upon him peace, referring to him as “the rider of the donkey (*rāḳib al-ḥimār*)” and that of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, referring to him as “the owner of the camel (*ṣāḥib al-ba‘īr*)”; Baghawī, *sub* Q 17:4), whom the Jews killed (Ṭabarī; Bayḍawī; Ibn ‘Ashūr; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya; Ibn ‘Ajība, *sub* Q 17:4-5); he was a contemporary of Prophet Yūnus, upon him peace (Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 10:98).

The Prophet, upon him blessing and peace, said, “The affairs of the Children of Isrā’īl were governed and ruled by Prophets, whenever one Prophet died, another took his place, but there is no Prophet after me; there will be Caliphs, who will increase in number” (Bukhārī, Aḥādīth al-Anbiyā’, Mā dhukira ‘an Banī Isrā’īl; Muslim, al-Imāra, bāb al-amr bil-wafā’ bi-bay‘at al-khulafā’ al-awwal fa-l-awwal). A report (*athar*) from Ibn ‘Abbās, cited by the hadith master Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Bayyī‘ al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/ca.1014) as well as Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī (384-458/994-1066)—and quoted by many exegetes and classified as sound—states, “all but ten Prophets [mentioned in the Qur’ān by name] were sent to the Children of Isrā’īl; [the ten exceptions are:] Nūḥ, Ṣāliḥ, Hūd, Lūṭ, Shu‘ayb, Ibrāhīm, Ismā’īl, Ishāq, Ya‘qūb and Muḥammad, upon them blessings and peace” (Ḥākim, qawlihi ta‘ālā “*wa-dhkur fī-l-kitāb...*” [Q 19:41], 2:373-374; Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-imān*, al-imān bi-l-rusul ṣalawātu-Llāhi ‘alayhim ‘āmmatan; 1:279§132; Haythamī, *Majma‘*, kitāb fihi dhikr al-anbiyā’, 8:210§13806; Sam‘ānī; Baghawī; Qurṭubī; Ibn Kathīr; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, *sub* Q 2: 128; al-Nasafī, *sub* Q 37:113).

Some exegetes say that between Mūsā and ‘Īsā, upon them peace, the Children of Isrā’īl received one thousand prophets (Māwardī, *sub* Q 28:1; Zamakhsharī; Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 5:44; Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* 2: 253; for a detailed discussion see: Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*; Bāb dhikr jamā‘at min anbiyā’ Banī Isrā’īl ba‘da Mūsā, ‘alayhi-l-salām). The final prophet sent to the Children of Isrā’īl was ‘Īsā, upon him peace, who was a Messenger to the Children of Isrā’īl (Q 3:49), who said, “O Children of Isrā’īl! Truly I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which came before me in the Torah and bearing glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me whose name is Aḥmad” (Q 61:6). The believers are commanded to believe in all Prophets and make no distinction between them

(Q 2:136, 285; 3:84).

### The Book of Mūsā

The Book given to Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace, is explicitly mentioned 18 times as *al-Tawrāt*—the Torah (*q.v.*, for a list of verses see ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Mu‘jam, sub* bāb al-tā’, al-tawrāt). According to Ibn ‘Abbās, the was Torah written on seven Tablets made of *zabarjad* (variously interpreted as topaz, aquamarine or chrysolite) and these contained the explanation of all things and moral teachings (*maw‘iza*) (Samarqandī), “that can save them from ignorance” (Muqātil) and “from going astray” (Samarqandī). It is simply called *the Book* in Q 17:2: *And We gave Mūsā the Book, and made it a guidance for the Children of Isrā’īl, [saying] do not take anyone other than Me as the disposer of your affairs* (wakīlan). “It is *guidance* that leads to the truth and justice, and a *light* that enlightens all that was ambiguous for them regarding legal rulings” (Zamakhsharī, *sub* Q 5:44). The prohibition to take other than Allah as their *wakīl* is pure Monotheism (*tawhīd*; Rāzī). The Book is described as containing a *detailed explanation* (tafṣīlan) of all things (Q 6:154)—a comprehensive iteration (*bayānan mufaṣṣalan*) of everything that is needed in matters of religion (Bayḍāwī, Nasafī), and containing all legal regulations of the religion (*jami‘ al-sharā’i‘ al-dīn*) (Khāzin).

Elsewhere, those Jews who did not act according to the Torah and did not obey its commandments, prescriptions, and laws are likened to a donkey carrying books, because donkeys cannot understand the meaning of the books they carry (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ibn al-Jawzī), or as Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. ca. 117/735-736) said, “A donkey does not know whether it is carrying books or a scuttle on its back”.

### Deliverance from Fir‘awn (Pharaoh)

At the time of Mūsā, upon him peace, the Children of Isrā’īl were enslaved and tyrannized by the ruler of Egypt (Q 3:11; 7:103-4, 127; 8:52, 54; 14:6; 26:16; 28:4)—Fir‘awn (Pharaoh)—who is characterized as *the one who transgressed* (innahu ṭaghā) (Q 20:24, 43; 79:17). The principal connotation of *ṭaghā* is “to disobey (*‘aṣā*), to behave in an arrogant manner (*takabbara*), to disbelieve (*kafara*), and to haughtily tyrannize (*tajabbara*)” (Qurṭubī, al-Khāzin, *sub* Q 20:24). “Pharaoh divided the Children of Isrā’īl into groups—one group was forced to build houses, the other plowed and harvested, and yet another served in the royal court” (Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 2:49). He killed the male Israelites because his magicians told him that an Israelite boy would destroy his kingdom (Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 2:49) or he saw in a dream “flames of fire emerging from Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*), devouring the houses of the [ancient] Copts (*dūr*

*al-qibḷ*) but not the houses of the Children of Isrāʾīl. He thus concluded that the undoing of his kingdom would be at the hand of a man from Banū Isrāʾīl” (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:49).

In time, Prophet Mūsā was commanded to ask Pharaoh to “*send with me the Children of Isrāʾīl*” (Q 7:105); elsewhere, both Mūsā and Hārūn, upon them peace, ask Pharaoh to “*send with us the Children of Isrāʾīl*” (Q 20:47; 26:17). That is, to “set them free from imprisonment and from your tyranny (*qahrīka*) and permit them to worship your Lord and their Lord, for they are the descendants of a noble Prophet, Isrāʾīl, who is Yaʿqūb b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm,” and Ibrāhīm is *Khalīl al-Raḥmān* [the intimate friend of Allah]” (Ibn Kathīr). But Pharaoh would not let them go. Their eventual deliverance from his tyranny was through Divine intervention: *We revealed to Mūsā, ‘Set forth with My servants by night and strike for them a dry path through the sea. Be not afraid of being overtaken, and fear not* (Q 20:77).

The deliverance of the Children of Isrāʾīl from Pharaoh’s captivity (see e.g. Q 2:49; 7:105, 138, 141; 20:80; 44:30) is one of the greatest signs of Allah’s blessings upon them (see Q 14:6; 7:103-171; Q 28:3-6); *And the most beautiful Word of your Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Isrāʾīl because they were patient. And We destroyed all that Pharaoh and his people had wrought and that which they used to build* (Q 7:137). This was a reward for their patience (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*); the fulfillment of the Word was to “save them and to destroy their enemies” (Ibn al-Jawzī), “by providing them help and establishing them on earth, as also mentioned in His Words, *and We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors* (Q 28:5)” (Baghawī).

Many exegetes cite Ibn ‘Abbās and Qatāda (d.117/735), who said that Mūsā, upon him peace, left Egypt with six hundred (or six hundred and twenty) thousand able-bodied fighters, not counting those under the age of twenty due to their youth and those above the age of sixty, due to their old age (Mujāhid, Ṭabarī, Baghawī, *sub* Q 2:50), whereas when the Children of Isrāʾīl first came to Egypt at the time of Prophet Yūsuf, upon him peace, they numbered only seventy-two (Baghawī, *sub* Q 2:50).

### **Inherited and Promised Land**

After their deliverance from the tyranny of Pharaoh, the Children of Isrāʾīl were told to “*Dwell in the land (al-arḍ) and when the promise of the Hereafter comes to pass, We shall bring you forth as a mixed assembly*” (Q 17:104). The exegetes offer various opinions regarding *the land* where the Children of Isrāʾīl were to dwell: (i) it covered the territory of Jordan, Palestine and Egypt (Samarqandī; Māwardī; Baghawī, Qurṭubī, and Khāzin); (ii) Syro-Palestine (*al-Shām*) (Ṭabarī;

Makkī; Ibn ‘Aṣṣiyya); Syro-Palestine and Egypt (Tha‘ālībī); (iii) “whichever part of the earth you desire, in the east and the west, dwell there in peace, without fear of being expelled” (Māturīdī); (iv) Muqātil bin Sulaymān (d. 150/767), whose exegesis of verses related to pre-Qur’ānic events often includes Israelite accounts, quoting from Ibn Jurayj (80-150/699-767), considers *the land* in this verse to mean a land “beyond China” (*warā’ al-ṣīn*), to which one of their tribes was directed after the Children of Isrā’īl killed their prophets.

This tribe sought to disavow the disbelief of the others and asked Allah Most High to separate them from the others. In response to their prayer, a way was opened up for them to go to the land beyond China (*sub* Q 17:104; also see below his exegetical remarks on Q 7:159). Several later commentators include Muqātil’s explanations in their works (*cf.* Ṭabarī; Samarqandī; *Ibn Kathīr, sub* Q 7:159).

In Q 28:5, the Children of Isrā’īl are said to be the inheritors of the land: *We desired to confer blessing upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders* (a’immatan) *and make them inheritors* (al-wārithīn). By the consensus of the exegetes, the *oppressed* are the Children of Isrā’īl (Ṭabarī; Makkī; Ibn Kathīr; Ibn al-Jawzī). They are called ‘inheritors’ in this verse, either because they literally possessed the lands previously held by Pharaoh and his people, or metaphorically, because they took with them jewelry from the Egyptians (Rāzī; Baghawī; Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 26:59). In either case, immense wealth came into their possession (Rāzī). Another passage (Q 44:17-34), however, specifically mentions that it was both the land and the wealth of Pharaoh that was bequeathed to them, when he and his people rejected the Message and Mūsā called unto his Lord, and his Lord commanded him to *set forth at night with My slaves; you will surely be pursued. And leave the sea behind becalmed; their army will be drowned. How many gardens and springs did they leave behind, and sown fields and a goodly dwelling, and prosperity they rejoiced? Thus it was. And We bequeathed it unto another people. Neither Heaven nor earth wept for them, nor were they granted respite. And We delivered the Children of Isrā’īl from a humiliating punishment—from Pharaoh. Truly, he was the worst squanderer. And We chose them over all the worlds. And We gave them signs wherein was a manifest trial.* Al-Ṭabarī, citing Qatāda (d.117/735), and several later exegetes say this verse refers to the bequeathing of the land and wealth of the Egyptians to the Children of Isrā’īl (*cf.* Ṭabarī; *cf.* Māwardī; Qurṭubī; Ibn Kathīr).

Q 10:93 refers to an excellent abode (*mubawwa’a ṣidqīn*) wherein they were established: *And indeed, We established the Children of Isrā’īl in an excellent abode* (*mubawwa’a ṣidqīn*) *and We provided them pure sustenance. They did not differ among themselves until after the knowledge had come to them. Allah will judge their differences on the Day of Judgment.* Most exegetes cite the two early

opinions about this abode: according to Qatāda, the excellent abode refers to the territory of Syro-Palestine and Jerusalem (*al-Shām wa Bayt al-Maqdis*); according to al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. ca. 102/721), it refers to Egypt and Syro-Palestine (cf. Ṭabarī; Saṣ'ānī; Māwardī; Makkī; Samarqandī; Ibn 'Aṭīyya). However, in a clear break with the majority, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī (d. 468/1075) interprets the verse to be a reference to the two Jewish tribes of Yathrib, that is, Banū Qurayza and Banū al-Naḍir; and he interprets *pure sustenance* to be dates and fruits, and their difference to be differences concerning their belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace (*Wajīz*).

### Pure Sustenance, Provisions Declared Unlawful

The Children of Isrā'īl received two special foods (see FOOD AND DRINK): *al-mann* and *al-sawwā*; both mentioned together three times (Q 2:57; 7:160; 20:80) as blessing, because these provisions required no work on their part, and they caused no fatigue or hardship (Zajjāj, Ma'ānī, sub Q 2:57). Commentaries explain *al-mann* variously as a snowflake-like substance which was sweet like honey and fell on the trees (Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz*; Farrā', *Ma'ānī*, sub Q 2:57; Rāzī, *Nasafī*); either called "*taranjīm*" (Zajjāj, *Ma'ānī*), or "*al-taranjabīn*, that we [Arabs] know well" (Farrā', *Ma'ānī*; a sweetish juice which exudes from the allhagi maurorum tree; as if it fell from the heaven). Al-Māwardī mentions seven different explanations for manna: (i) something that fell on trees and people ate it; (ii) *ṣamgha* [*ṣamgh* and *ṣamgha* denote, in the language, the sap that exudes from "*ṭalḥ*—Acacia gummifera" tree (a variety of acacia); here, a sweet fluid that falls on trees; cf. Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, Tha'ālibī, *Jawāhir*, sub Q 2:54-57; Saṣ'mīn, '*Umdat*, faṣl al-mīm wa-l-nūn]; (iii) a kind of drink which they drank by mixing it with water; (iv) honey ('*asal*'), which came down [from the sky]; (v) flat loaves of bread; (vi) ginger (*zanjabīl*); and (vii) *al-turanjabīn* (*Nukat*; see also Ṭabarī; Ibn al-Jawzī, sub Q 2:57). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, "Truffles (*al-kam'a*) are from the *mann* and their juice is curative for the eye" (Bukhārī, sub Q 7:143; Muslim, Ashriba, faḍl al-kam'ati wa mudāwāt al-'ayn bihā).

*Al-sawwā* is glossed as a bird (as per Mujāhid and Qatāda), a bird similar to quail (*al-sumānī*), but greater in size (as per Suddī) or quail itself (cf. Ibn Jurayj; Ṭabarī; Yaḥya b. Salām; Zajjāj, *Ma'ānī*; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). The *pure sustenance* (*al-ṭayyibāt*) in Q 10:93, and *We provided them pure sustenance*, is glossed as "permissible provisions" (*ḥalāl al-rizq*) (Makkī, *Hidāya*), which were "good and useful (*al-nāfi'*) and delightful (*mustaṭāb*) by nature and Law" (Ibn Kathīr).

Certain types of food were declared unlawful *due to wrongdoing* (fa-bi-zulmin) *on the part of those who are Jews* (alladhīna hādū), *We made unlawful for*



them [certain] pure foods (ṭayyibātīn) which had previously been lawful to them, and for their averting many [people] from the Way of Allah (Q 4:160). Citing Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767), the Andalusian exegete Abū Muḥammad Makki b. Abī Ṭālib al-Qaysī (d. 437/1045) says this verse refers back to Q 6:146: *And to those who are Jews We prohibited every animal of [uncloven] hoof (kulla dhī zuḥur), and of cattle and sheep We prohibited for them their fat (shuḥūmahumā), except what adheres to their backs or the entrails or what is joined with bone. By that We repaid them for their injustice. And indeed, We are truthful (Hidāya; see also: Samarqandī, sub Q 4:160). The wrongdoing on the part of those who are Jews refers to their violation of the Covenant; disbelief in the Signs of Allah (bi-āyātī-l-lāh); calumny against Maryam, upon her peace; turning away from the Way of Allah and diverting others from Truth; devouring unlawfully the wealth of the people; forging lies in the name of religion; accepting bribes; and falsifying the Scripture (Ṭabarī; Ibn al-Jawzī, sub Q 4:160). “They deserved this prohibition because of their infringement (baghyihim), oppression (tughyānihim), opposition to their Messenger and their disagreement with him” (Ibn Kathīr, sub Q 4:160).*

Another reference to dietary restrictions appears in Q 3:93: *All food was lawful for the Children of Isrāʾīl except for what Isrāʾīl had deemed unlawful for himself before the Torah was revealed; ask them to bring the Torah and recite it if they are true in their claim.* A hadith explains the circumstances leading to Prophet Isrāʾīl’s self-prohibition of certain food. A group of Jews came to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and asked certain questions, promising to believe in his prophethood if the answers were correct. Among other things, they asked, “Inform us about what Isrāʾīl had made unlawful for himself.” The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, answered: “He suffered from sciatica (ʿirq al-nasā) and when the disease prolonged and he could not find a cure for it, he took an oath to give up his favorite food if he was cured. He was cured and thus he gave up eating camel meat and its milk (Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, abwāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān, wa min sūrat al-raʿd; Ahmad, *Musnad*, 4:277 §2471; Ḥākim, *kitāb al-tafsīr*, wa min sūrat Āl ʿImrān; 2:292).

Prophet Yaʿqūb’s “sons and later descendants also accepted these prohibitions due to their respect for their forefather. They did that without having a Divine revelation for this and without having heard anything about [the prohibition] from the tongue of Prophet Isrāʾīl” (Ṭabarī, *sub* 3:93). Al-Rāzī adds more details: “A group of Jews said to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, “You claim to follow the religion of Ibrāhīm (*millat Ibrāhīm*); if it is so then how can you eat camel meat and drink camel milk, while all of these were prohibited in the Religion of Ibrāhīm?” The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, responded: “These were permitted to Ibrāhīm, Ismāʿīl, Ishāq and Yaʿqūb, upon them peace. But, Yaʿqūb made them unlawful for himself due



to some reasons and this prohibition prevailed among his descendants.” The Jews rejected this. The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, asked them to bring forth the Torah and show where it mentions prohibition of the camel meat and milk for Ibrāhīm. The Jews could not find a line about this and their lies became evident” (*Tafsīr*, sub Q 3:93).

### **Twelve Guarantors (*Nuqabāʾ*)**

Each of the twelve tribes of the Children of Isrāʾīl had a *naqīb*. The noun *naqīb* (pl. *nuqabāʾ*), a hapax legomenon used in Q 5:12, denotes someone “who investigates a nation (*al-bāḥith* ‘*an al-qawm*) and their condition” (Rāghib, sub *n-q-b*). Al-Wāḥidi explains *naqīb* as someone “chosen to be warrantor (*kafīl*) and guarantor (*ḍamīn*) and he guaranteed the fulfillment of the Covenant on behalf of their nation” (*Wajīz*). *Naqīb* is similar to *al-ʿarīf*—the one who is fully familiar with a nation and is appointed in a legal capacity as their superior” (Ibn Manzūr; Zamakhsharī, sub Q 5:12). Al-Zajjāj says, “*al-naqīb* is linguistically on the same pattern as *al-amīr* and *al-kafīl*... [the nouns] *naqab* and *nuqb* mean a path in a mountain and *naqīb* is the one who is acquainted with the innermost state (*dakhīla*) of a nation and he knows their virtues (*manāqibuhum*)—and this is the way to the knowledge of their matters”.

The verse in which the *nuqabāʾ* are mentioned also refers to the Covenant established with the Children of Isrāʾīl: *Allah had made a Covenant with the Children of Isrāʾīl, and We raised among them twelve chieftains (naqībān). And Allah said, “I am with you! Surely, if you establish the prayer, give alms, and believe in My messengers and support them, and lend unto Allah a goodly loan, I shall surely absolve you of your evil deeds, and shall cause you to enter Gardens with rivers flowing below. But whosoever among you disbelieves thereafter, surely he has strayed from the right way.”* The exegetes explain that after the drowning of the Pharaoh, the Children of Isrāʾīl were commanded to go to Syro-Palestine, where tyrants ruled. One man from each tribe was selected as the *naqīb* of that tribe and these *naqīb*s were sent ahead to the city of the tyrants (*al-jabbārīn*) to gather information about them and to inform their prophet, Mūsā, upon him be peace. All but two of the *nuqabāʾ* violated their promise by telling their tribes what they had seen, rather than reporting only to Mūsā. As a result of the news they heard from their *nuqabāʾ*, the Children of Isrāʾīl refused to fight the tyrants, and were thus punished with forty years of wandering (Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Ibn Kathīr. (For more on this incident, see below “Refusing to fight against the *Jabbārīn*”).

### **Believers and Disbelievers among them**

*The People of the Book are not all equal, among them is a group standing and reciting*

the verses of Allah during the night and prostrating. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good things. And those are among the righteous.” The meaning being that those who killed the prophets without right are not equal to those who recite the verses of Allah during the hours of the night; these latter are on the Straight Path (*dhawū ṭarīqa mustaqīma*)” (Zajjāj). The righteous among the People of Mūsā are praised in Q 7:159: *And among the people of Mūsā (min qawmi Mūsā), there is a community (umma) which guides by truth and by it establishes justice.* There is considerable diversity of views about the referent of this verse. Some exegetes understand it in relation to the verse that follows, which states that Allah Most High divided them into twelve tribes. Al-Ṭabarī takes it to refer to a tribe that refrained from killing the prophets and asked Allah to separate it from the transgressors. As already mentioned, Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī is of the opinion that the verse refers to “a small group (*‘iṣāba*)” from the People of Mūsā, “who live beyond China (*min warā’ al-Ṣīn*). Several later exegetes repeat this, adding further details, including that this tribe worships Allah in a fair and appropriate way; they believe in Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace; they left the Jewish rite of Sabbath and face the *qibla*; and that the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, met them during his Night Journey (cf. Samarqandī, Qurṭubī; Tha‘labī, *Kashf*; Zamakhsharī). According to al-Ṭabarī, the narration about them living beyond China is attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās by Abū Khālid ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ibn Jurayj (d. ca.150/767) (Ṭabarī).

Al-Rāzī discounts these opinions, calling them weak. Other exegetes understand the verse as broadly referring to those Israelites who adhered to Truth when the rest erred; yet another opinion is that the verse refers to those Jews of Madina who believed in the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace (Māwardī; Wāḥidī, *Basīṭ*; Rāzī). A pious group among the Children of Isrā’īl are called leaders in Q 32:24: *And We made from among them leaders (a’immatan) who guide by Our command, when they were patient and believed with certainty in Our Signs* (see also Q 28:5). Leaders here can either mean “chosen leaders (*ru’asā’*)”, who guide to all kinds of good as devout followers of the Prophets do, or to Prophets themselves (Ṭabarī, Baghawī; Māwardī; Wāḥidī, *Basīṭ*).

## Twenty-five Specific Transgressions

An eighty-four-verse passage of Sūrat al-Baqara (Q 2:40-123) lists a series of transgressions and acts of disobedience of the Children of Isrā’īl; others are mentioned elsewhere. These include the following:

### i. Breaking of the Covenant

The Covenant specifically established with the Children of Isrā’īl (Q 2:40,

63, 80-96, 100-101; 3:187; 4:154; 5:12, 70; 7:134, 33:8) was broken by them in many ways, including their denial of the Prophets sent to them after Mūsā, tempering the revelation, abandoning the sacred Law, rejecting the Signs of Allah, and slaying Prophets (Q 4:155; 5:13). The divine response to their claim that our hearts are enwrapped (*ghulf*)—also mentioned in Q 2:88—asserts that Allah Himself *has set a seal upon their hearts* (Q 4:155) which refers to their lack of receptivity to the divine Message (Ṭabarī). Their hesitation to slaughter the cow also constituted a breach of the Covenant because they disobeyed their prophet (Ṭabarī; Thaʿalibī, *sub* Q 2:67). As a consequence of breaking the Covenant, Allah Most High *hardened their hearts* (Q 5:13), that is, their receptivity for belief and obedience was taken away (Ṭabarī). Their hearts were hardened because they mixed belief and disbelief, like gold and silver—which in their natural state are malleable—become hard when mixed with other metals; a manifestation of their hardened hearts is their distortion of the divine Word, both by actual tempering of the text and through false interpretations (Zamakhsharī). Thus, *Because of their breaking of the Covenant, their rejecting the Signs of Allah, their slaying of the Prophets without right, and their saying, ‘Our hearts are wrapped’—nay, but Allah has set a seal upon their hearts because of their disbelief, so they believe not save a few*” (Q 4:155).

## ii. They Compromised the Unicity (*tawḥīd*)

Two verses (Q 9:30-31) charge the Jews and the Christians with attributing partners to Allah and taking their rabbis and monks as their lords, thus compromising belief in the Absolute Oneness of Allah Most High: *And the Jews say ‘Uzayr is the son of Allah, and the Christians say the Masīḥ is the son of Allah; that is their utterance from their mouths; they resemble the words of those who disbelieved before. Allah assail them! How they are perverted! They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords apart from Allah, as well as the Messiah, son of Maryam, though they were only commanded to worship one Allah. There is no god but He! Be He Glorified from all that they associate with Him.* The commentators differ about the specific Jews who made the statement about ‘Uzayr. Some say it was made by Finḥās, others say it was made by Salām b. Mishkam, al-Nuʿmān b. Awfā, Shās [variant form: Shaʿs] b. Qays and Mālik b. al-Ṣayf, who went to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and said, “How can we follow you? You have abandoned our prayer direction (*qibla*) and you do not think that ‘Uzayr is the son of Allah”. Then Allah revealed the verse (Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *Muḥarrar*; *sub* Q 9:30; see ‘Uzayr.)

The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, explained the meaning of taking *their rabbis and monks as lords apart from Allah* to ‘Adiyy b. Ḥātim, a Companion who was a Christian before accepting Islam, and who once heard the Prophet recite Q 9:31. When the Prophet finished reciting, ‘Adiyy said

to him, “We do not worship them.” The Prophet said, “Do they not forbid what Allah has permitted, whereupon you consider it forbidden, and do they not permit what Allah has forbidden, whereupon you consider it permissible?” He said, “Yes.” The Prophet then said, “That is worshipping them (*fa-tilka ‘ibādatuhum*)” (Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, wa min Sūrat al-Tawba; hadith classed *ḥasan gharīb*; Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 17:98 § 218; Ṭabarī).

Divine Unicity was also compromised by the Children of Isrāʾīl soon after they were rescued from the tyranny of Pharaoh: *When We brought the Children of Isrāʾīl across the sea, and they came upon a people devoted to their idols, they said, ‘O Mūsā, make for us a god like they have gods.’ He said, ‘You are indeed an ignorant people. As for these people, what they practice shall perish, and vain is that which they do’* (Q 7:138-39). The idols they saw were statues of cows (*tamāthīl baqar*), which seemed pleasing to them and they demanded that Mūsā, upon him peace, should make similar gods for them because they considered these idols were a means for gaining closeness to Allah Most High, just as the idol worshippers claimed, “*We do not worship them, save to bring us closer to Allah*” (cf. Q 39:3; al-Ṭabarī, al-Baghawī, al-Rāzī; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *Muḥarrar*, sub Q 7:138). Their demand also shows that the reality of Divine Oneness had not yet firmly established in their hearts and they were inclined to worship “other than Allah” (*ghayr Allāh*) (Qushayrī).

This was followed by the incident of their worshipping of the Calf made by al-Sāmīrī which they took as their deity (Zajjāj; Samarqandī, sub Q 7:148; Rāzī, sub Q 2:54). (For details, see CALF OF CHILDREN OF ISRĀʾĪL).

### iii. Killing of the Prophets

*And We declared to the Children of Isrāʾīl in the Book: ‘Verily, twice you will cause corruption in the land and will commit great transgression. So, when the time for the first of the two arrived, We raised against you some of Our slaves, who were great in might, and they ravaged your land. This was a promise that was bound to be fulfilled. Then We granted you an upper hand against them, and strengthened you with wealth and children, and multiplied your numbers. If you do good, you do so for your own self, and if you do evil, that is for your own self as well. For when the time for the second promise comes, they will disfigure your faces and enter the Masjid as they had entered the first time, and utterly destroy whatever they come upon. Maybe your Lord will have mercy on you, but if you revert, We will revert. And We have made hell a prison for the faithless.’* (Q 17:4-8)

The corruption (*fasād*) mentioned in the passage is explained in the commentaries as the killing of two prophets, Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā, upon them both peace (Ṭabarī; also see Makki); or that of Zakariyyā and Shīʿyā [b. Aṣṣiyā] (Māwardī; Ibn al-Jawzī). Abū al-Barakāt ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310) says the first mischief was the killing of Zakariyyā

and the imprisonment of Irmiyā' (with various vowelling: Armiyā, Muḥāhid, Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* 2:259), and the second was the killing of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā and their plan to kill 'Īsā (also see Zamakhsharī). Al-Bayḍāwī counts the killing of Shi'yā' (or Irmiyā') as the first mischief and the killing of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā as the second mischief; "and they also intended to kill 'Īsā" (*Tafsīr*, *sub* Q 17:4). The punishment mentioned for the two mischiefs is variously understood by the exegetes: Wahb b. Munabbih (d. ca.109/728) is quoted as saying that for killing Zakariyyā, Allah Most High sent Sābūr Dhū-l-Aktāf—a king from among the kings of the Persians—to lay waste the Children of Isrā'īl. For their killing of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā, Allah Most High sent Bukhtanaṣṣar (Nebuchadnezzar II) against them (Ṭabarī). Abū al-Su'ūd Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā al-'Amādī (d. 982/1574) says, "Allah sent His created slaves who possessed great military might and strength, [who fought under] Sanḥārīb (Sennacherib), Bukhtanaṣṣar or Jālūt" (*Irshād*, *sub* Q 17:5). Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Ghālīb Ibn 'Aṭīyya (d. ca.542/1147) summarizes various opinions:

The implication of these verses is that Allah Most High informed the Children of Isrā'īl in the Torah that there would occur on their part disobedience (*'isyān*), oppression (*tughyān*) and ingratitude for the blessings of Allah—such as [His sending of the] Prophets and Books to them—and [as a result] He will send against them a nation that will subdue, kill, and humiliate them. Then He will have mercy upon them and give them back a victorious life and restore their previous status. Then, once again, disobedience, ingratitude, sinning, killing, and disbelief in Allah will occur on their part, and Allah will, once again, send against them another nation that would destroy their houses, annihilate them and force them to excruciating exile; and it is said that between the two occasions, there would be two hundred and twenty years, during which prophets would keep coming to them; it is also said that there would be only seventy years. (*sub* Q 17:4)

Ibn 'Āshūr is more specific: "The first event resulted in the Babylonian captivity when Bukhtanaṣṣar, the king of Bābil and Āshūr conquered Jerusalem and deported the Children of Isrā'īl and imprisoned others, while the second event resulted in the conquest by the Byzantine Empire" (*Tafsīr*).

Eight other verses (Q 2:61, 87, 91; Q 3:21, 112, 181; 4:155; 5:70) mention the killing of the Prophets by the Children of Isrā'īl. Certain Jews of Madina also tried to kill the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. According to the majority of exegetes, Q 5:11 is a reference to this attempt at the time when the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, had gone to visit the Jewish tribe of Banū al-Naḍir in Madina with some of his close Companions in order to seek their assistance in paying the bloodmoney

(*diya*) for two men who had been killed by mistake. The Jews plotted to kill him, “saying to each other, ‘you will never find Muḥammad so close to you as he is now’” (Ṭabarī; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*). The Prophet was informed by Jibrīl, upon him peace, and he left the place. Q 5:11 was revealed in this connection: *O you who believe! Remember the blessing of Allah upon you, when a people were prepared to stretch forth their hands against you, but He withheld their hands from you. Be conscious of Allah and in Allah let the believers trust.* (Qurtubī, Samarqandī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*; also see below section on Jews of Madina.)

**iv. Their claim: “We slew the Messiah, ‘Isā, son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah”**

The claim of the Children of Isrāʾīl to have killed ‘Isā, upon him be peace, is emphatically rejected: *And because of their saying, ‘We slew the Messiah, ‘Isā, the son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah; and they slew him not, nor did they crucify him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt about it; they have no knowledge thereof; they only follow their conjecture; indeed, they slew him not for certain, but Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise.* “They wished and plotted to kill him, making great efforts to achieve this, but, undoubtedly, this is absolute unbelief..The Jews disbelieved in ‘Isā and they were his enemies, they intended to kill him; they called him a magician (*al-sāḥir*), the son of a magician woman (*ibn al-sāḥira*)” (Rāzī, *sub* Q 4:157). (For more details see CRUCIFIXION)

**v. Their tremendous calumny against Maryam**

The verse mentioning this calumny (Q 4:156) appears at the end of a passage that enumerates several other transgressions committed by the Children of Isrāʾīl:

*The People of the Book demand from you that you bring down a book from the Heaven; indeed, they had asked a greater thing of Mūsā, for they said, ‘Show us Allah openly,’ whereupon the thunderbolt seized them for their wrongdoing. Then they took the Calf, even after clear proofs had come to them; yet, We pardoned this and We gave Mūsā a manifest authority. And We raised the Mount over them by their Covenant, and We said to them, ‘Enter the gate, prostrating;’ and We said to them, ‘Do not transgress the Sabbath.’ And We made with them a solemn Covenant. Then for their breaking of the Covenant, and their disbelief in the signs of Allah, and their slaying of the prophets without right, and their saying, ‘Our hearts are encased,’—Nay! Rather, Allah has set a seal upon them for their disbelief, so they believe not, save a few—and for their disbelief, and their uttering against Maryam a tremendous calumny. (Q 4:153-156)*

This accusation is also alluded to in Sūra Maryam (Q 19), when Maryam, upon her peace, returns to her people carrying baby ‘Isā, to whom she gave



birth far away from them, they say, *O sister of Hārūn, Your father was not an evil man, nor was your mother unchaste* (Q 19:28). Divinely instructed, Maryam, upon her peace, points to the baby but they say, *how can we speak to a child in the cradle?* At this point, ‘Īsā, upon him be peace, speaks to them (Q 19:28-33). Their accusation against her was in fact due to their disbelief in the Absolute Divine Power of creation, for “by this statement they denied Allah’s all-embracing ability to create a child without a father” (Rāzī) and “whoever denies the Absolute Power of Allah (*qudrat Allāh*) is a disbeliever” (Khāzin). According to scholarly consensus, ultimately based on reports from Ibn ‘Abbās, this calumny was, infact, a false charge of adultery (*zinā*; see ADULTERY AND FORNICATION; CALUMNY, Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Sam‘ānī, Ibn Kathīr; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 4:156).

#### vi. Their hesitation to sacrifice the cow

As per exegetical explanations of the passage Q 2:67-73, which mentions this incident, a man was killed among the Children of Isrā’īl and his body was placed before the door of someone else’s house. They [the Jews] were confused and differed in identifying the killer. Then Allah Most High ordered His Prophet Mūsā [to command them] to slaughter a cow (Q 2:67) and strike the deceased with a part of the slaughtered cow (Q 2:73); the dead man would be revived and reveal the name of the killer (Māturidī, *Ta’wīlāt*; Rāzī, Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:67-73). Prophet Mūsā informed the Children of Isrā’īl, *Allah commands you to slaughter a cow*. They responded, *are you mocking us?* Mūsā, upon him be peace, replied, *I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant*. They then asked a series of questions about the nature of the cow to be slaughtered. Finally *they slaughtered her, but they almost did not*. Al-Tha‘ālībī says the response of the Children of Isrā’īl to Mūsā (*are you mocking us?*) is “a clear sign of the corruption of their belief (*fasādu i’tiqād*) in Mūsā” (*Jawāhir*, *sub* Q 2:67). This verse is indicative of their “breaking of the covenant, for they disobeyed their prophet” (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:67).

#### vii. Their refusal to fight against the *jabbārīn*

After the drowning of the Pharaoh, the Children of Isrā’īl were commanded to “*enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you, and do not turn back or you will be losers*.” They said, “*O Mūsā, indeed therein are people of tyrannical strength* (qawman jabbārīn), *and indeed, we will never enter it until they leave it; but if they leave it, then we shall enter*” (Q 5:21-22). The phrase *a people of tyrannical strength* is generally explained as “tall people, with exceptional physical power; they were the descendants of ‘Ād, and are referred to as ‘*amāliqa* (giants)” (Baghawī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). According to the broad consensus of the exegetes, the twelve representatives (*nuqabā’*) of the twelve tribes (*asbāṭ*) of Banū Isrā’īl



went on a reconnaissance trip where they saw these mighty people (; Māwardī; Qurṭubī; Ibn al-Jawzī). They returned and told their tribes what they had seen, even though Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace, had commanded them not to tell people anything. Thus they violated the promise, except for Kālīb b. Yūfinā, from the tribe of Yahūdihā and Yūsha' b. Nūn from the tribe of Ifrāthīm / Afrā'im b. Yūsuf. These two are the referents in Q 5:23, *who feared [their Lord] and whom Allah had blessed, said, "Enter upon them by the gate, for once you have entered it, you will be victors. And trust in Allah, if you are believers* (Q 5:23) (Baghawī; Zamakhsharī; Wāḥidī, *Wasīl*).

The majority of the Children of Isrā'īl, however, refused to follow the command, and instead, *They said: O Mūsā! Never shall we enter it so long as they remain therein; so, go forth, you and your Rabb, and fight. We shall sit here* (Q 5:24). After this response, Prophet Mūsā sought separation from them, saying, *My Lord! I have no power over anyone save myself and my brother; so separate us from the iniquitous people!*" (Q 5:25). Their response is understood as an act of defiance and disobedience. The word *Rabb* in their statement *so, go forth, you and your Rabb, and fight*, may refer to Hārūn, because Arabs use the word *rabb* (lord) for an elder as well as for one having a higher position, as it is used in *Indeed he is my master (rabbī), who has made good my residence* (Q 12:23) (; Māwardī; Sam'ānī). Or it may be a reference to Allah Most High, meaning "your Lord will help and support you" (Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz*; Ṭabarī). The outcome of this event was forty years of wandering: *He said, "Then verily, it shall be forbidden them for forty years; while they shall wander on earth. So grieve not for the iniquitous people"* (Q 5:26).

#### viii. Their substitution of another word for *ḥiṭṭa*

Two nearly identical passages (Q 2:58-59; 7:161-62) mention the violation of a Divine command, asking the Children of Isrā'īl to utter a specific word (*ḥiṭṭa*) while entering the gate of an unspecified city—identified as one of the gates of Jerusalem, "called *bāb ḥiṭṭa*" by Ibn 'Abbās, Qatāda, and Suddī (d. 127/745), and as "Jericho (Arīḥā), near Jerusalem" by Ibn Zayd (Ṭabarī; cf. Sammarqandī, *sub* Q 2:58; also see Rāzī and Ibn Kathīr for other identifications): *And when We said, "Go into this city and eat freely of that which is therein, from wheresoever you wish, and enter the gate prostrating, and say, 'ḥiṭṭa'; that We may forgive you your iniquities and We shall increase the virtuous."* But the wrongdoers replaced what they had been told to say with something else and We sent down upon the evil-doers wrath from Heaven for their evil-doing (Q 2:58-59). The word *ḥiṭṭa* means "*ḥuṭṭa 'annā awzāranā*"—"take down our loads from us" (Jawharī; Rāghib); or "unburden us an unburdening (Zamakhsharī). The Children of Isrā'īl mockingly substituted *ḥiṭṭa* with another word; thus, instead of saying *ḥiṭṭa* and entering the gate prostrating, they said *ḥabbatun fī sha'ra* ("a seed on a hair!") and entered the

gate moving on their buttocks (Bukhārī, *wa-qūlū ḥiṭṭa*; Muslim, Q 2:58; cf. Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:58); or they said *ḥaṭā simqāthā azba mazba*, a Hebrew phrase which in Arabic is *ḥabbatu ḥinṭatin ḥamrāʾu mathqūbatun fīhā shaʿra* (“red wheat grain threaded with a hair”) as per ‘Abd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/ca.652) (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, qawluhu bāb qawlihi ḥiṭṭa; Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, *sub* Q 2:58); or they said *ḥinṭa* (wheat) (Ṭabarī, Q 2:58). Instead of entering the city in humility, seeking forgiveness—as they were commanded—they entered the city mocking the Divine command (Zamkhasharī). The command is reiterated in Q 4:154, without the mention of prostration.

### ix. Their rejection of the Heavenly food

The Children of Isrāʾīl asked for the produce of the earth while they were in the desert and complained about having to eat only the heavenly manna and quail, which was given them without any toiling (cf. al-Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; Ibn ʿAṭīyya; Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 2:61). The verse where this rejection of the heavenly food is mentioned also carries a Divine judgment: *And when you said, “O Mūsā, we shall not endure one food, so call upon your Lord for us, that He may bring forth for us some of what the earth produces—herbs, cucumbers, wheat/garlic, lentils, and onions.” He said, “Would you substitute what is meaner for what is better? Go down to any town, and there you will have what you ask for.” Abasement and poverty were imposed on them, and they earned a burden of wrath from Allah. That is because they disbelieved in the signs of Allah, and killed the prophets without right. That is because they disobeyed, and were transgressors* (Q 2:61). The word *fūm* is understood to mean wheat as well as the bread made from it by the early exegetes (*al-ḥinṭa wal-khubz* in Farrāʾ). Al-Ṭabarī cites a narration from Ibn ʿAbbās, who said “*fūm* is wheat in the dialect of the Banū Hāshim”. It is also the opinion of several other exegetes including ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ, Mujāhid b. Jabr, Abū Mālik, al-Suddī, Qatāda, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Ibn Zayd (Ṭabarī). Others understand *fūm* to mean garlic (*al-thawm*; Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥatīm). The word *miṣran* is understood as “any big city” by most, but Abū al-ʿĀliya (478/1086) and al-Rabīʿ b. Anas (479/1087) held that the *miṣran* here refers to Egypt; this is based on a rare reading of *miṣran* as *miṣra* and other verses (Q 26:57-59; 44:25-28) which state that Allah Most High made the Children of Isrāʾīl inheritors of the lands and gardens of the Egyptians. Al-Ṭabarī, however, rejects the rare reading, because *miṣran* (any city) is the consensus opinion based on “all the codices that Muslims have and the agreement of the Readers’ recitation, as no one reads it by leaving out the *tanwīn* (“-an” the nunation; the sign of indefinite accusative case) and by dropping the *alif*, except for the one whose argument is not permissible in opposition to the overwhelming consensus of the authoritative Readers.” Furthermore, although Allah Most High bequeathed them the gardens and lands previously possessed by the

Egyptians, He did not return them to their land; rather, He promised Syro-Palestine (*al-Shām*) for them (*Tafsīr*).

**x. Their haste in committing sin**

*And you see many of them hastening to commit sin and transgression* (yusāri‘ūna fī-lithim wal-‘udwān) (Q 5:62). The phrase *many of them*, by scholarly consensus (Ibn ‘Abbās; Ṭabarī; Nasafī; Bayḍāwī; Qurṭubī), is a reference to the Jews. The noun “*ithm*—sin” in the verse is generally explained as unbelief by the majority (see e.g. Ṭabarī; Makkī, *Hidāya*). Al-Baghawī, however, understands it more generally as “disobedience towards Allah, and transgression stands for *ẓulm*—iniquity; or it is said that sin means their concealment of a portion of Torah, and injustice is what they added to it” (*Tafsīr*). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī remarks that “*musāra‘a*—hurrying” is generally used in the Qur’ān in reference to the virtuous deeds; for instance, “*they hasten* (yusāri‘ūna) *to do good deeds*” (Q 3:114) and “*We hasten* (musāri‘u lahum) *for them good things*” (Q 23:56) and consequently *al-‘ajala* (which also means hastening) would have been the word here, but Allah Most High uses *musāra‘a* advantageously (*li-fā’ida*), because they (the Jews) would embark boldly upon these objectionable acts as if they were on the right way (*ka-annahum muḥiqqūna fīhi*) (*Tafsīr*). “Ambitious desires overwhelmed them and carried them away to the labyrinths of pain” (Qushayrī).

**xi. Their transgression regarding the Sabbath**

The Sabbath, *al-sabt* in Arabic, from the root *s-b-t*, is mentioned six times (Q 2:65; 4:47, 154; 7:163; 16:124) as a noun. Observing the Sabbath was made obligatory for the Children of Isrā’īl (Q 4:154). It was, however, *only ordained for those who differed concerning it* (Q 16:124)—a verse which is variously understood to mean: “ordained only for the Jews and not for other religious communities, as it was not part of the Law in the religion of Ibrāhīm, upon him peace” (Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 16:124); as a curse for those who differed about it (Sam‘ānī); or because they arbitrarily chose its observance and nonobservance (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr). Q 7:163 mentions the dwellers of an unspecified *town by the sea*, who were tested regarding the Sabbath, as fish would surface on their Sabbath and not on other days. The town is identified in the commentaries as Ayla, Midian, or Tiberias and the event is said to have occurred during the time of Prophet Dāwūd, upon him peace (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Rāzī; Qurṭubī). Two verses (Q 2:65; 7:166) specify punishment for transgressing the Sabbath to have been their metamorphosis into apes, “*Be you apes, despised*”. The transgressors are also referred to in Q 5:60, as those *Allah has cursed and upon whom is His Wrath, and among whom He has made some to be apes and swine*. The punishment is recalled in Q 4:47, as a warning to the People of the Book, specifically to the Jews of Madina, to *believe in what We*

have sent down, confirming that which is with you, before We blot out faces and turn them backwards, or curse them as We cursed the People of the Sabbath (cf. Ṭabarī; Qurtubī).

According to the majority view, the Sabbath transgressors were metamorphosed into apes, they survived for three days during which they neither ate nor drank nor produced offsprings (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Rāzī; Qurtubī). Mujaḥhid b. Jabr, however, denied their physical metamorphosis and said only their hearts metamorphosed and their intellects were made like those of apes (or, as per another edition of his *Tafsīr*, he said, they did not metamorph into apes, but this verse is like Q 62:5, which likens them to an ass bearing books). Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Qurtubī both cite this opinion and al-Qurtubī calls it a singular opinion, “which no other exegete has, as far as I know, and Allāh knows best”. (For a fuller exposition, see SABBATH.)

#### **xii. Their distortion (*tahrīf*) of the Scripture**

This is specifically mentioned in five verses (Q 2:59; 3:78; 4:46; 5:13, 14) and, according to exegetical explanations, was done for financial gain, to conceal the places where the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, was mentioned in their Books (see AHMAD, UPON HIM BLESSINGS AND PEACE), to alter the legal rulings of the Torah, “like the Law of stoning” (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; for this, also see Q 5:15), after taking bribes (Makkī, *sub* Q 2:75), and it was accomplished by twisting their tongues (Q 3:78), and through false interpretations by their scholars. Al-Baghawī says some Jews who were known to do this included Kaʿb al-Ashraf, Mālik b. al-Ṣayf, Ḥuyayy b. Akḥṭab, Abū Yāsir and Shuʿba b. ʿAmr, who with their tongues altered and changed the real content of their Books (*Tafsīr*, *sub* Q 3:78) (see TAMPERING).

#### **xiii. Their disregard of the Book of Allāh**

The majority of the exegetes take the referent of Q 2:101 to be the Jews: *And when there came to them a Messenger from Allāh, confirming that which is with them, a group of those who have been given the Scripture cast the Book of Allāh behind their backs, as if they knew not* (cf. Baghawī, Qurtubī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ibn ʿAṭiyya). Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (107-198/725-814) explains the verse as: “They wrapped [the Torah] in silk (*ḥarīr*) and brocade (*dībāj*), and they decorated it with gold and silver, but they did not permit that which is permitted by it and they did not prohibit that which is prohibited by it. This is the meaning of *throwing it behind the back*” (Qurtubī, *sub* Q 2:101). The same theme occurs in Q 3:187.

#### **xiv. Their demand to see Allāh**

Q 2:55: *And when you said, ‘O Mūsā, we will never believe you until we see Allāh outright (jahratan).’* Al-Ṭabarī says they demanded “to see Allāh with the eyes (*ʿiṭānan*), without any veil (*lā sāṭir*) between us and Him, and no covering

should prevent us from seeing Him, and we should look at Him with our eyes (*ḥattā nanẓura ilayhi bi-absārinā*). This was said either by the seventy men, who accompanied Mūsā to Mount Ṭūr or by the whole nation of the Children of Isrāʾīl, except those whom Allah saved from this sin (Baghawī; Ibn al-Jawzī). Their demand is also recalled in Q 4:153: *The People of the Scripture ask you to bring down a Book from the heaven, but they had asked of Mūsā [even] greater than that, saying, 'Show us Allah outright.'* Al-Rāzī says that when a Book was revealed unto Mūsā, they were not satisfied with this Divine portent; instead, they asked for the vision (*al-ruʿya*), with their own eyes (*al-muʿāyana*). This is a proof that their [new] demand for a Book to be sent down is not for seeking guidance, but mere stubbornness (*sub* Q 2:55).

#### xv. Their reproachable sayings

*"We are the children of Allah and His beloved"*

Two passages (Q 5:12-30 and 41-86) in Sūrat al-Māʾida (Q 5) mentions a series of transgressions committed by the Children of Isrāʾīl; in some verses Christians and hypocrites are also included. Some of their transgressions appear successively, making a continuous narrative. Q 5:18 includes Christians in their claim: *The Jews and the Christians say, 'We are the children of Allah and His beloved.'* Most commentators take the statement to be metaphorical, as al-Wāḥidī explains: "The Jews believe that Allah, in His affection and sympathy for them, is like a compassionate and kind-hearted father" (*Wajīz*). Al-Rāzī says that a word is omitted here; what the Jews meant is *naḥnu abnāʾ rusulī-llāhi*—we are the sons of Messengers of Allah (*Tafsīr*); the Jews made this statement, purposefully wanting to omit that element (*rasūl // rusul*) of the genitive construction (Khāzin). According to Ibn ʿAbbās, Allah be pleased with him and his father, the Prophet invited some Jews of Madina to Islam, warning them of Divine punishment, but they rejected his invitation, saying, "Why would we fear punishment from Allah? *We are the children of Allah and His beloved*" (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, Rāzī). Their claim is repudiated and they are asked, *Why then does He punish you for your sins? Nay, you are but [mortal] humans, from among what He has created. He forgives whomsoever He wills and He punishes whomsoever He wills, and unto Allah belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is in between them; and unto Him is the journey's end.*

*"The Hand of Allah is shackled"*

*The Jews say, "The Hand of Allah is shackled." Shackled are their hands, and they are cursed for what they say. Nay, but His two Hands are outstretched, He bestows as He wills. Surely, what has been sent unto you by your Lord will increase many of them in rebellion and disbelief. And We have cast enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection. As often as they kindle a flame of war, Allah extinguishes it. They strive to work corruption on Earth and Allah loves not the workers*

*of corruption.* (Q 5:64)

The verse contains a strong reproach for the Jews for their “insolence and recklessness toward their Lord, by describing Him in such an inappropriate manner” (Ṭabarī). “Shackled and outspread hands,” says al-Zamakhsharī, “are metaphors for stinginess and generosity, like His Words, *And do not make your hand shackled to your neck* (Q 17:29)” (Zamakhsharī). Other commentators, relating from Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Ikrima, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, and Qatāda, mention that Allah Most High was generous with the Jews, giving them all kinds of good things and making some of them the wealthiest men. But when they disbelieved in Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and denied his message and belied him, Allah held back from them what He had bestowed upon them previously; and this is why Finḥās b. ‘Āzūrā’ said *the hand of Allah is shackled* (Zamakhsharī, Rāzī, Baghawī). Al-Rāzī says: When the Jews saw the extreme poverty of some Companions of the Prophet, they said by way of mockery and ridicule that the God of Muḥammad is poor; His hands are shackled (*Tafsīr*).

*“Allah is poor”*

This statement is quoted verbatim in Q 3:181: *Allah has certainly heard the words of those who said, ‘Allah is poor and we are rich.’ We shall record what they said, and their slaying of the prophets without right, and We shall say, ‘Taste the punishment of the Fire.’* Al-Ṭabarī and al-Wāḥidī both provide the following occasion of revelation for the verse on the authority of ‘Ikrima and al-Suddī, according to which the statement was uttered by Finḥās b. ‘Āzūrā [al-Baghawī gives the name as ‘Āzūrā’], who was one of the erudite scholars of the Madinan Jews to Abū Bakr, who hit him and said, “By the One in whose Hand is my soul, if there were no treaty between us and you, I would have cut your throat, O enemy of Allah.” Thereafter, Finḥās went to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and said to him, “O Muḥammad! Look at what your Companion has done.” The Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace, said to Abū Bakr, “What made you do what you did?” He said, “O Messenger of Allah, verily the enemy of Allah uttered calumnious words (*qawlan ‘azīma*) and he claimed that Allah is poor and they were rich. I became angry for the sake of Allah and I struck his face.” But Finḥās denied this account. Thereafter, Allah Most High revealed, *Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said, ‘Indeed, Allah is poor, while we are rich,’* refuting Finḥās’ claim and corroborating the words of Abū Bakr (*Asbāb*, sub Q 3:181; see also, Ṭabarī and Baghawī).



“We hear and disobey”

*And when We made a Covenant with you and raised the Mount over you, “Take hold of what We have given you with strength, and listen.” They said, “We hear and disobey,” and they were made to drink the calf into their hearts because of their disbelief. Say, “Evil is that which your belief enjoins upon you, if you are believers.”* Zayn al-Islām Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin b. ‘Abd al-Mālik al-Naysābūrī al-Qushayrī (376-465/ca.986-ca.1073) comments, “As if no counsel was beneficial for them, no punishment deterred them from their disobediences, and they paid no heed to any reprimand; and they did not act according to what was required” (*Tafsīr*). “The meaning of *listen* in the verse, al-Ṭabarī explains, “is to pay heed to what is being commanded, and accept it in full obedience, obey and act upon it” (*Tafsīr*). “Some scholars hold that they uttered *we hear and disobey* in reality, an exaggerated statement reflecting their stubbornness and offense; others hold that this is a metaphorical construction and they did not actually pronounce these words, but their actions amounted to saying it” (Ibn ‘Aṭīyya). The commentators explain that *wa ushribū fī qulūbihim al-‘ijla bi-kufrihim* (lit. “and their hearts were made to drink the Calf due to their disbelief”) is “a metaphorical statement (*tashbīh wa majāz*), indicating that the matter of the Calf had lodged itself in their hearts” (Ibn ‘Aṭīyya); it indicates “the love of the Calf” that had taken hold of their hearts (Ibn Kathīr). *Whosoever is an enemy of Jibrīl, he it is who sent it down upon thy heart by the command of Allah, confirming that which was there before, and as a guidance and glad tidings for the believers* (Q 2:97).

#### xvi. Their claim to be the exclusive friends of Allah

“Say, O you who are Jews! If you claim that you are the close friends of Allah, to the exclusion of other people, then long for death if you are truthful” (Q 62:6). In response, they are challenged to long for death, since “Allah does not punish His special friends (*awliyāʾ*); rather, He honors them (*yukrimuhum*), and bestowed blessings upon them. So, if you are truthful in your claim, then long for death so that you can find ease from the sorrow of this world (*karb al-dunyā*), its anxieties (*humūmihā*), and its distresses (*ghumūmihā*), and so that you can reach the delights of the Gardens (*rawḥ al-jinān*) and its blessings through death” (Ṭabarī). Q 62:7-8 asserts that they will never long for death, *because of what their hands have put forth; and Allah knows the wrongdoers*. Yet, despite their running away from it, death will certainly take over and they will be returned to the *Knower of the Unseen and seen, and He will inform you of that which you used to do*. A similar rebuke is given in Q 2:94: *If the abode of the Hereafter with Allah is for you alone, to the exclusion of other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful*. For anyone who believes that he belongs to the People of Paradise,



death should be more beloved to him than life (Māwardī, *sub* Q 2:94). *But they will never long for it, because of what they have sent ahead, and Allah knows the wrongdoers. You will find them the most covetous of people for life, even more than the idolaters; each one of them would wish to live a thousand years, although that would not remove him from the punishment. And Allah sees whatsoever they do* (Q 2:95-96).

#### xvii. Usury and other unlawful earnings

Q 4:161 censures Jews for their consumption of usury though they were prohibited from it, indicating that interest-based earnings were unlawful for them, as reinforced in the Qurʾān (*cf.* 2:275-79; 3:130; 30:39). The verse also censures devouring others' wealth illegitimately. Exegetes say that this refers to the practice of some Jewish rabbis and Christian monks (Q 9:34) who would accept bribes for legal decisions and distort religion through their writings, which they claimed to be Divine writ (Makkī; Baghawī, *sub* Q 4:161).

#### xviii. Their dispute about Ibrāhīm

Jews and Christians both claimed special status with Allah (Q 2:111-13; 5:18; 62:6) as well as with the Friend of Allah—Ibrāhīm, upon him be peace (*cf.* Q 4:125: *And who is better in religion than the one who submits his face to Allah, is virtuous, and follows the religion of Ibrāhīm as a ḥanīf? And Allah took Ibrāhīm as his intimate friend*). The Children of Isrāʾīl claimed this special status due to their genealogical descent from Ibrāhīm, through Ishāq and Yaʿqūb, upon them all peace. Several commentators report the saying of Ibn ʿAbbās, may Allah be pleased with him and his father both, who said, “the Jews say, ‘we are the children of Ibrāhīm’” (*cf.* Samarqandī, *sub* Q 7:163; Baghawī, *sub* Q 3:33; Ibn ʿAṭīyya, *sub* Q 62:6). They trace this claim variously to incidents involving the Jews of Madina. The Qurʾān denies the Jewish claim of a special status with Allah and His intimate Friend, for Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian and the Torah and Injīl were not sent down but after him (Q 3:65-67). Al-Rāzī says, “The Jews claimed that Ibrāhīm was upon their religion and the Christians claimed that he was upon their religion. Allah has discredited these claims (*fa-abtala-Ilāhu ʿalayhim dhālika*), for the Torah and Injīl were not sent down but after him; so how can anyone consider [Ibrāhīm] to be a Jew or Christian?” He then entertains an objection: one may argue that you cannot also claim him to be a Muslim, for Islam was not sent down but a long time after him. If you respond by saying that what you really mean is that he adhered to the principles of Islam, then the Jews and the Christians can claim likewise. Al-Rāzī's answer is that “the Qurʾān informs us that Ibrāhīm was a Muslim and a ḥanīf [*cf.* Q 2:135; 3:67, 95; 6:161; 16:120, 123; 22:78], whereas the Torah and the Injīl do not say that he was a Jew or a Christian” (Rāzī, *sub* Q 3:65).

### xix. Their penchant for misguidance

By the consensus of the exegetes, Jews—and more specifically the Jews of Madina—are the referent in Q 4:44, which begins a passage listing several other transgressions, including their “purchase of misguidance”: *Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Book, but who purchase misguidance (al-ḍalāla), and wish that you should stray from the Path?*” (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Ṭabarī; Baghawī restricts the scope of the referent in this verse to the Jews of Madina). Makkī explains the phrase *purchase misguidance* by saying: “they prefer choosing the way that misleads, instead of choosing the path of Divine guidance (*al-hudā*)” (*Hidāya*). This is understood as a reference to their replacing true belief with erroneous ways and rejection the Prophet Muḥammad (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Rāzī; Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 4:44). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explains that the verb *purchase* here means “to prefer”: “The verse contains an ellipsis (*iḍmār*); the implication is that they they acquire error in exchange for guidance, as in [Q 2:16], *It is they who have purchased misguidance [in exchange] for guidance; [their commerce has not brought them profit; and they are not rightly guided]*” (*Tafsīr*, *sub* Q 4:44; see BUYING AND SELLING).

### xx. Their belief in *jibt* and *tāghūt*

Q 4:51 reads: *Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture, who believe in al-jibt and al-tāghūt, and they say about the disbelievers, “They are better guided than the believers.”* Exegetes give different explanations for the two nouns; *al-jibt* is defined as something containing no good (Rāghib, *sub* *j-b-t*); it is an Arabicized word (*kalima dakhīla*), for the stem *j-b-t* is not known in Arabic—originally it was *jibs* (Ibn ‘Ashūr); it means sorcery and sorcerer (*siḥr* and *sāḥir*), idols in general (*al-aṣnām*), or the devil—*al-shayṭān* (Ibn al-Jawzī). *Al-tāghūt* is a collective noun for everything that is worshipped besides Allah (Rāghib, *sub* *t-gh-y*); or the devil itself, or a sorcerer or *kāhin* (the soothsayer, or the Jewish priest; cf. the Hebrew word *kohen*, in the sense of priest) (Ibn al-Jawzī). Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī (110-209/708-829) says that “*jibt* and *tāghūt* together mean everything worshipped [besides Allah], be it a stone or earth (*madar*) or a picture or the devil” (*Majāz*). Al-Ṭabarī holds that *jibt* is used to denote idols (*al-aṣnām*) in general, while *tāghūt* means *tarājimat al-aṣnām*, those soothsayer-priests who interpret the words of the idols and convey them to the audience, telling them lies so as to lead them astray. He adds: “some hold that *jibt* is the *kāhin* while *tāghūt* refers to a Jewish man called Ka‘b b. al-Ashraf who was the leader of the Jews” (*Tafsīr*). Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib mentions on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās that in this specific verse, *al-jibt* refers to Ḥuyayy b. Akḥṭab and *tāghūt* refers to Ka‘b b. al-Ashraf (*Hidāya*; cf. Ṭabarī, Sam‘ānī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Māturīdī), to whom the Jews often turned for advice; they are called by these two names because they always strove to

seduce others (*ighwā' al-nās*) and lead them astray (Rāzī). Al-Qurṭubī also cites Ibn Mas'ūd, who said that *jibt* refers to Ka'b b. al-Ashraf and *tāghūt* refers to Ḥuyayy (*Tafsīr*). Despite differing on the details, exegetes agree that this verse refers to a specific group of Jews (Tha'ālibī, *Jawāhir*).

#### **xxi. War-mongering and working corruption**

Q 5:64 criticizes the Jews for wishing war: *As often as they kindle a flame of war, Allah extinguishes it. They strive to work corruption on Earth, and Allah loves not the workers of corruption.* This is understood by many commentators to refer to the Jews of Madina specifically, and Jews throughout their history more generally. Several exegetes have commented that the 'war' referenced here was their battles against the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, as reported from al-Ḥasan and Mujaḥid. Others say that the import was more general, referring to their failed plots and lost battles throughout history (Ālūsī; Ibn al-Jawzī). Al-Ṭabarī commented that 'corruption' here meant rejecting the verses of Allah, refuting His Prophets, and contravening His commands and prohibitions (*Tafsīr*). Ibn al-Jawzī gave four other possible implications of the term: general disobedience (as per Ibn 'Abbās and Muqātil), erasing the mention of Muḥammad, upon him peace, from their books and opposition to Islam (as per al-Zajjāj), disbelief, and oppression (as per Māwardī) (*Zād*). Al-Baghawī says, "Allah made them differ [amongst themselves] in their religion...they spread corruption by violating the Laws of Torah...Allah imposed Bukhtunaṣṣar over them; then they spread corruption once again, and Allah sent the Romans and Byzantines against them; then they spread corruption once again, and Allah empowered the Majūs [Zoroastrians, *q.v.*] over them; then they spread corruption once again, and Allah sent Muslims against them" (*Tafsīr*).

#### **xxii. Denial of the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace**

Most of the Jews who were contemporaneous with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, denied his prophethood even though they find him inscribed in the Torah and the Injil that is with them (Q 7:157), and should have recognized him as they recognize their children, as per one explanation of Q 2:146, *those unto whom We have given the Book recognize him/it as they recognize their children, but a group of them knowingly conceal the Truth. The Truth is from your Lord; so be not among the doubters*, which may also refer to their recognition of the direction of the *qibla*, or to both (Ṭabarī; Sam'ānī; Qurṭubī; Ibn Kathīr; Māwardī; Samarqandī). 'Abd Allāh b. Salām—the Jewish rabbi who became an erudite Companion of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said similar words: "Indeed, I recognize him even more than I recognize my children" (Ṭabarī; Samarqandī). The recognition of the Prophet, upon him blessings

and peace, is particularly incumbent on the rabbis (*aḥbār al-yahūd*) and the monks of the Christians (cf. Ṭabarī; Baghawī; Makkī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*), but they “conceal all that is found in their books” (Ibn Kathīr). “The scholars of the Jews and Christians had two vocations (*ḥirfātān*): They disbelieved in Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, although, they knew in their hearts that he is truly a Messenger sent by Allah Most High—and Allah prohibits this activity in the first verse [meaning Q 3:70]. Their second vocation is to excel in spreading doubts (*fi ilqāʾ al-shubuhāt*) and in concealing arguments, evidence, and clear proofs (*fi ikhfāʾ al-dalāʾil wal-bayyināt*); and Allah Most High prohibited this kind of activity in the second verse.” (*Tafsīr, sub Q 3:71*).

Ibn ‘Abbās, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, said, Q 2:6, *Indeed, those who disbelieve—it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them—they will not believe*, was “sent down concerning the Jews of Madina at the time of the Messenger of Allah and it rebukes them for their disavowal of the prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and their accusing him of lying, even though they knew him and had knowledge that he was the Messenger of Allah to them and to all people (Ṭabarī). Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib says Q 3:99 (*Say: O People of the Book! Why do you avert (limā taṣuddūna) those who believe from the Way of Allah, seeking to make it crooked while you are witnesses. And Allah is not unaware of what you do*) addresses the Jews and Christians and the meaning of *averting from the Way of Allah* is their denial of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and all that he brought of religion (*Hidāya*; cf. Samarqandī). This *averting from the Way of Allah* was realized by belying the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, through their claim that his description is not found in their books (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). Al-Māwardī also situates the verse in the context of Madina and says, “diverting others means their inciting (*al-ighrāʾ*) the tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj so that they began to remember wars of the Time of Ignorance (*al-Jāhiliyya, q.v.*)... and this is a specific act on behalf of the Jews [of Madina]; or it may mean their belying the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and their denial of his unquestionable references in their Books” (*Nukat*).

Ibn ‘Abbās said Q 2:97 (*Whosoever is an enemy of Jibrīl, then he is who sent it down upon your heart by the command of Allah, confirming that which was there before, and as a guidance and glad tidings for the believers*) was revealed when some Jews came to the Prophet and asked him who brings revelation to him. When he said Jibrīl, they said, had it been Mikāʾīl, we would have followed you, because the latter is the angel of rain and mercy and Jibrīl brings down war and death and he is our enemy (Wāḥidī, *Asbāb, sub Q 2:97*). Another account states that ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, (d. 23/644), Allah be pleased with him, asked certain Jews why they did not believe in the Prophet, and they said, “Jibrīl is

our enemy because instead of us, he gave the prophethood to others” (Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, sub Q 2:97; Samarqandī).

**xxiii. Believing at the beginning of the day and disbelieving at its end**

Q 3:72 reads: *And a group of the People of the Book says, 'Believe in what was sent down unto those who believe at the start of the day and disbelieve at its end, that haply they may return.'* The exegetes understand this to refer to some of the Jews of Madina (Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Wāḥidī identify a group of twelve rabbis, who said to one another, let us embrace the religion of Muḥammad in the morning verbally, and disbelieve in him in the evening, and say, “Verily, we have studied our books and discussed the matter with our scholars and we have realized that Muḥammad is not mentioned in [our revealed Book]; maybe his Companions will desist and doubt their belief [in the veracity of Islam]” (*Zād*; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Baghawī). Many early exegetes, including Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujaḥhid b. Jabr, and Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī (d. 150/767), attribute this statement to the Jews of Madina or to the Jews of Khaybar, who attempted to misguide the weak believers at the time when the direction of the prayer was changed from Jerusalem toward the Ka‘ba in Makka (cf. Q 2:144). They said, let us take this directive during the day, but return to our direction in the evening, and it may happen that some Muslims would say, “Those are the People of the Book and they know better” (Baghawī).

**xxiv. Wishing to turn Muslims back to disbelief**

The desire of the People of the Book to turn the believers back to disbelief is mentioned in Q 2:109 and Q 3:100. Q 2:109 reads: *Many of the People of the Book wish they could turn you back to disbelief after you have believed, out of envy in their souls, even after truth has become clear to them. So pardon and forbear, until Allah comes with His command; truly, Allah is Powerful over all things.* Al-Ṭabarī and several other commentators specify the Jewish poet Ka‘b b. al-Ashraf—whose poetry ridiculed the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and who incited Muslims to turn back on their belief—as the special referent of this verse; others cite a report from Ibn ‘Abbās, who said that the verse was revealed after the Battle of Uhūd (3/625), when a group of Jews said to the Muslims, “How do you evaluate what has hit you recently? If you had been following the Truth you would not have been defeated. So turn back to our religion—it is much better for you” (Samarqandī; Ibn Abī Hātim, Qurṭubī; Makki; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, sub Q 2:109).

Q 3:72 (above) was understood as part of the efforts to confuse Muslims with the hope of leading them away from their faith (*Zād*; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Baghawī).

## xxv. Hostility Toward believers

This hostility was specifically mentioned in Q 5:82: *You will surely find the most hostile of men toward those who believe to be the Jews and those who ascribe partners unto Allah, and you will find the nearest of them in affection toward those who believe to be those who say, "We are naṣārā (Christians)"; that is because among them are priests and monks, and because they are not arrogant.* Al-Rāzī notes that Allah brackets the Jews with the polytheists because they were extremely hostile (*fī ghāyat al-ʿadāwa*) to Muslims; moreover, the fact that Allah mentions them first, before the polytheists, suggests that they are more hostile than the polytheists. Al-Rāzī goes on to explain that this verse is intended to relieve the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, of his distress over the Jews' hostility; Allah is clarifying that their rebellion (*tamarrud*) and disobedience (*maʿṣiya*) is nothing new, but part of their history of rejecting their own prophets as well. Even though, from the creedal perspective, the disbelief of the Christians is more offensive (*aghlaẓ*) than that of the Jews, because Christians dispute the truth regarding both divinity and prophethood, while the Jews dispute only with regard to prophethood, yet, despite their gross disbelief, the Christians tend to "turn away from the world, focus on worship and they do not have yearning for leadership, pride (*takabbur*), or haughtiness (*taraffuʿ*).... On the other hand, despite their disbelief being lighter (*akhaff*), the Jews are characterized by their intense greed for this world (*bil-ḥirṣ al-shadīd*), which is the well-spring of all blameworthy traits, for whosoever is excessive in his pursuit of the world abandons his religion in pursuit of the world and engages in all kinds of prohibited (*maḥẓūr*) and abominable (*munkar*) things (Rāzī, *sub* Q 5:82).

In sum, the Qurʾān identifies them with those *who have incurred Divine wrath* as per the majority view of the exegetes who identify Jews and Christians to be the respective referents of the concluding verse of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (Q 1:7): *The path of those whom You have blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are astray* (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Qurṭubī; Samʿānī; Baghawī; Rāzī; Ibn Kathīr; Suyūṭī, *Durr*). This identification is supported by other verses (Q 2:61; 3:112; 5:60; 48:6) and the ḥadīth of ʿAdiyy b. Ḥātim (see Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Juzʾ 3, No. 26), in which the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, identifies the Jews as those who have incurred Divine wrath and Christians as those who have gone astray (Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, al-Qurʾān, wa min Sūra Fātiḥat al-kitāb; graded *ḥasan gharīb*; Alḥamad, *Musnad*, 32:124 § 19381; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Manāqib al-ṣaḥāba, dḥikr ʿAdiyy b. Ḥātim, 16:184); al-Suyūṭī calls it "an exegesis by the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and by all the Companions and Successors" (*Ḥāshiyat Nawāhid al-Abkān*, 1:244).

## Muslims and the Torah



Abū Hurayra, Allah be well-pleased with him, said, “The People of the Book used to recite the Torah in Hebrew and explain it to Muslims in Arabic. The Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace, said to them, ‘Neither verify nor deny what the People of the Book say; rather say, *We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us* (2:136)’” (Bukhārī, al-ʿiṭṣām bil-kitāb wal-sunna, qawl al-Nabī ṣallā-Llāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam “lā tasʿalū ahl al-kitāb ʿan shay”).

Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773-852/1371-1449) explains that in this ḥadīth, “the People of the Book refers to the Jews, but the ruling is general, thus, it also applies to the Christians” (*Fath*, 9:111). Al-Bukhārī also cites the saying of Ibn ʿAbbās, Allah be pleased with him and his father, who said, “O Muslims! How do you ask the People of the Book, while your Book—revealed to His Prophet—is the most recent news from Allah (*akhbār bi-l-lāhi*) and you recite it; it is the Book that has not been distorted. And Allah has revealed to you that the People of the Book have changed with their own hands what was revealed to them and they say, ‘This is from Allah,’ in order to gain some worldly benefit thereby. Is the knowledge revealed to you not sufficient to prevent you from asking them? By Allah I have never seen any one of them asking (Muslims) about what has been revealed to you” (Bukhārī, al-Shahādāt, lā yusʿalū ahl al-shirk ʿan al-shahādati wa ghayrihā).

In a related ḥadīth, narrated by Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh, an incident is mentioned which emphasizes the same point: “ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb came to the Prophet, upon him peace and blessings, with a book he had obtained from some of the People of the Book. He read it to the Prophet, who became angry, and said, ‘Are you hesitant regarding it, O son of Al-Khaṭṭāb? By the One in whose Hand is my soul, I have certainly been sent with that which is pure and clear proof. Do not ask them [the People of the Book] about anything, for they may inform you of something which is true and you may reject it; or they may inform you of something which is false and you may believe it. By the One in whose Hand is my soul, even if Mūsā was alive, he would have no choice but to follow me’” (Aḥmad, *Musnad*, Musnad al-Mukthirīn min al-ṣaḥāba, Musnad Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh, 23:349 § 15156; al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab*, 1:347 §175). In religious matters, the Prophetic unambiguously forbade Muslims to imitate or borrow anything from others. He said, “Whoever imitates a people is one of them” (Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, Libās, fī lubs al-shuhra; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 9:127 § 5116; al-Ṭabarānī, *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn*, 3:94 §1862). (Qurṭubī).

### **The Jews of Madina and their interactions with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and Muslims**

The Jewish response to the Qurʾān and the coming of the last Prophet, upon



him blessings and peace, began while the Prophet Muhammad was still in Makka. The Quraysh sent al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith and ‘Uba b. Abī Mu‘īṭ to the Jewish scholars of Madina, whom they held in high esteem because of their religious knowledge, to inquire about the veracity of his prophethood. The Jews advised them to ask the Prophet three questions; if he answered correctly then he is a prophet. The two returned with the questions and the Quraysh asked the Prophet about the youth who had taken refuge in a cave (Q 18:9), Dhūl-Qarnayn (Q 18:83), and about the spirit (*al-rūḥ*; Q 17:85). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said I will respond tomorrow, but he did not say *if Allah so wills* (Q 18:23-24) and did not receive revelation for fifteen (or forty, as per Rāzī) days, which made him very sad. Finally Jibrīl, upon him peace, came with Sūrat al-Kahf (Q 18), which responds to the questions about the youth in the cave and Dhūl-Qarnayn; the response to the question about the spirit is in Q 17:85 (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 18:5; *cf.* Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 17:85; Māturidī, *Ta’wīlāt*, *sub* Q 18:9; Rāzī, *sub* Q 19:64; see CAVE; PEOPLE OF THE CAVE; DHŪL-QARNAYN; SPIRIT).

The three Madinan Jewish tribes—Banū Qaynuqā‘, Banū al-Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayẓa—contemporaneous with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, are not named in the Qur’ān, but they are the direct and implied referent of many verses, specifically, the twenty-four-verse Sūrat al-Ḥaṣhr (Q 59) which contains so many direct references to Banū al-Naḍīr that Ibn ‘Abbās used to call it Sūrat Banī al-Naḍīr (Wāḥidī, *Wasīṭ*; Ibn ‘Aṭiyya, *Muḥarrar*; Baghawī, Ibn al-Jawzī; Khāzin, *Iubāb*, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 59).

Some Jews of Madina accepted Islam, these included the most learned rabbi of Banū Qanuqā‘, al-Ḥuṣayn b. Salām, to whom Prophet gave a new name, ‘Abd Allāh (al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Sīra ‘Abd Allāh b. Salām). His tribe, however, repudiated him. He said to them, “O Jews! Be conscious of Allah. By Allah, apart from Whom there is no other diety, you know for certain that he is the Messenger of Allah and he has brought a true religion!” They said, “You lie.” (Bukhārī, *Manāqib al-Anṣār*, *hijrat al-Nabī wa aṣḥābiḥ ilā-l-Madīna*; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, Islam ‘Abd Allāh b. Salām, *qawmulhu yukadhdhibūnahu wa lā yattabi‘ūnahu*).

Upon his arrival in Madina, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, established a formal Treaty with the three Jewish tribes of Madina and a bond of brotherhood (*mu‘ākhāt*) between the Madinan Muslims—Banū al-Aws, Banū al-Khazraj, the Anṣār—and the newcomers from Makka, the Muhājirūn. All communities were to jointly defend against outside aggressors, bearing their share of military expenditures and receiving their share of war booty. Yathrib was declared inviolable for all signatories of the Treaty and mutual rights and responsibilities were guaranteed (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, al-Rasūl yuwādi‘ al-

Yahūd). The Treaty did not last, however, and soon after the Battle of Badr (2/624), Banū Qaynuqā' demonstrated open hostility. When the news of Muslim victory reached them, Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, their poet, left Madina and took refuge with the disbelievers in Makka, inciting them with his poetry to take revenge. One day, the Prophet admonished them in their market place, saying, "O Jews, Beware of Allah and of that which befell the Quraysh on the Day of Badr. Submit yourselves before the same would reach you. You surely know that I am a Prophet-Messenger (*nabiyy mursal*) and you find my mention in your Book." They said: "O Muḥammad, you should not deceive yourself by [what happened when] you met those inexperienced in war. By Allah, if we were to fight you, you would know that we are men [of war]" (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, amr Banī Qaynuqā'). Several commentators say that Q 3:12 was revealed in reference to these Jews: *Say to those who disbelieve, 'You shall be overcome and gathered together in Hell—an evil resting place'* (Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr). Banū Qaynuqā' were expelled from Madina for breaking the treaty.

The second tribe to break the treaty was Banū al-Naḍīr. They secretly entered into a treaty with the Quraysh against the Madinan Muslim community. Their expulsion took place after the Battle of Uhūd fought in 3/625 after a siege. Banū al-Naḍīr were permitted to carry with them their belongings that could be loaded on a camel (Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 59:2). Q 59:2 ascribes their expulsion to Allah Most High: *He it is Who expelled those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book*. The verses that follow state that whatever befell them and their palm trees, which were cut down during the siege, was by the permission of Allah (Q 59:2-5). Around the same time, some members of this tribe plotted to kill the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, by throwing a stone on his head from top of a house (Ibn al-Jawzī, *sub* Q 59; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, amr ijla' banī-l-Naḍīr).

The third Jewish tribe of Madina Banū Qurayza broke the Treaty in the midst of the Battle of the Trench imposed on Madina in 5/627 by a ten-thousand-strong army consisting of Makkan disbelievers and their allies, while all able-bodied Muslims were stationed by the trench, which was hurriedly dug around the city to protect it (see MADINA; TRIBES AND CONFEDERATES). When the siege of the city prolonged, the disbelieving Confederates secretly plotted an attack from within the city by persuading the Jews to attack Muslims from their side. Muslims found out the secret plot and thwarted it. The outcome of the Battle of the Trench is mentioned in Q 33:25: *And Allah turned back those who disbelieved in their rage; they attained no good. Allah sufficed the believers in Battle; and Allah is Strong, Mighty*. The Prophet, with his Companions, had hardly returned to Madina, laid down his arms, and taken a bath, when Jibrīl came, as per the account of his wife, 'Ā'isha (d. 58/678)—Allah be well-pleased with her—and

said, "Have you laid down your arms? By Allah, we [Angels] have not laid them down yet. So set out for them." The Prophet asked, "Where (are we to fight now)?" Jibrīl said, "Toward this side," pointing toward Banū Qurayza. So the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, went out toward them (Muslim, *al-Jihād wal-siyar*, bāb jawāz qitāl man naqaḍa-l-‘ahd wa jawāz inzāl ahl al-ḥiṣn ‘alā ḥukm ḥākim ‘adl ahl li-l-ḥukm, Bukhārī, *al-Jihād wal-siyar*, al-ghusl ba’d al-ḥarb wal-ghubār; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, Kitāb al-maghāzī, Ghazwat al-Khandaq).

The Prophet sent word to those Muslims who had fought at the battle to rush toward the Banū Qurayza and pray the afternoon prayer there. The Muslim siege of Banū Qurayza lasted twenty-five days (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 33:26-27). Finally, Banū Qurayza agreed to have the matter decided by Sa’d b. Mu‘adh b. al-Nu‘mān b. Imrī’ al-Qays al-Awsī al-Ashhālī (see Dhahabī, *Siyar*, Juz’ 1, No. 41), the leader of Banū al-Aws, who were a close ally of Banū Qurayza. Sa’d b. Mu‘adh, may Allah be pleased with him, was wounded during the Battle of the Trench and he was in Madina at that time. "The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, sent for Sa’d and he arrived, (riding) a mule. When he approached, the Prophet said to the Anṣār, "Stand up for your chief, for the best among you." Then he said to Sa’d, "These (i.e. Banū Qurayza) have agreed to accept your verdict." Sa’d said, "Kill their warriors and take their offspring as captives." On that the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, "You have judged according to Allah’s Judgment," or, "according to the King’s judgment" (Bukhārī, Kitāb al-jihād wa-l-siyar, bāb idhā nazala-l-‘aduww ‘alā ḥukm rajul; Muslim, *al-Jihād wal-siyar*, bāb jawāz qitāl man naqaḍa-l-‘ahd wa jawāz inzāl ahl al-ḥiṣn ‘alā ḥukm ḥākim ‘adl ahl li-l-ḥukm; also see Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, *sub* Q 33:26-27; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, Taḥkīm Sa’d fī amr Banī Qurayza).

By the consensus of the exegetes, the "People of the Book" in Q 33:26-27 refer to Banū Qurayza who had supported the confederates: *And He brought those of the People of the Book who supported them down from their strongholds, and cast terror into their hearts. Some you slew, and some you took captive. And He bequeathed unto you their land, their homes, their property, and a land you have not trodden. And Allah is Powerful over all things.*

The last remaining concentration of Jews around Madina in Khaybar fell after the Battle of Khaybar (7/628) with abundant spoils coming into the hands of the Muslims, fulfilling the Divine promise made in Q 48:20: *Allah has promised you abundant spoils that you will capture—then He hastened this for you and restrained the people’s hands from you, that it may be a sign for the believers, and that He may guide you upon a straight path.* The majority of exegetes gloss *abundant spoils* as the spoils of Khaybar (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr).

These early Jewish responses to the Qurʾān, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and Muslims have paradigmatically influenced Jewish-Muslim relationships throughout the centuries and they continue to have their impact.

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Zamakhsharī. *Kashshāf*.

**See also:** ĀDAM, UPON HIM PEACE; ABŪ BAKR, ALLAH BE PLEASED WITH HIM; 'ĀD; ADULTERY AND FORNICATION; ALLIANCE AND TREATY; ANṢĀR; AYYŪB; BĀBIL; BELIEF; BELIEVERS; BOOKS; CALF OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRĀ'ĪL; COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET; COVENANT; DĀWŪD, UPON HIM PEACE; DHŪL-KIFL; DHUL-QARNAYN; DISBELIEF; FIR'AWN; FOOD AND DRINK; HĀRŪN, UPON HIM PEACE; HELL; HIJRA; HŪD, UPON HIM PEACE; IBRĀHĪM, UPON



HIM PEACE; IDRIS, UPON HIM PEACE; IDOLS AND IDOLATRY; ILYĀS, UPON HIM PEACE; ʿĪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; ISHĀQ, UPON HIM PEACE; ISMĀʿĪL, UPON HIM PEACE; JĀHILIYYA; JĀLŪT; JIBRĪL, UPON HIM PEACE; JIZYA; KAʿBA; LŪT, UPON HIM PEACE; AL-MAJŪS; MARYAM, UPON HER PEACE; MESSENGERSHIP; MIKĀʿĪL, UPON HIM PEACE; MUHĀJIRŪN; MUḤAMMAD, UPON HIM BLESSINGS AND PEACE; MUḤKAM AND MUTASHĀBIḤ VERSES; MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION; NŪH; OCCASIONS OF REVELATION; PEOPLE OF THE BOOK; PEOPLE OF THE CAVE; PROPHETHOOD; QARŪN; QIBLA; SABBATH; ŠĀLIḤ, UPON HIM PEACE; AL-SĀMIRĪ; SHUʿAYB, UPON HIM PEACE; SPIRIT; SULAYMĀN, UPON HIM PEACE; ṬĀLŪT; TAMPERING; UḤUD; USURY; YAʿQŪB, UPON HIM PEACE; YAHYĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; AL-YASĀʿ; YATHRIB; YŪNUS, UPON HIM PEACE; YŪSUF, UPON HIM PEACE; ZAKARIYYĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; ZAKĀT.

## MUZAFFAR IQBAL AND CSABA OKVATH

article comprises the following sections: i. Definitions and Usage; ii. Key Features; iii. Covenant; iv. Obligation to believe in the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace; v. Double Reward; vi. Closeness to Believers; viii. Divine Promise of their Ascendancy; ix. Prohibition to take them as *awliyāʿ*; x. Refuted Doctrines: (a) Alleged Divinity of ʿĪsā, upon him peace; (b) Their Belief that ʿĪsā, upon him peace, was the Son of God; (c) Trinity; (d) Alleged Crucifixion; (e) Monasticisms; xi. Refuted Claims: (a) Exclusive Soteriology; (b) Their Claim about Ibrāhīm, upon him peace, and his Children; (c) Their Claim to be the Sons and Beloved of Allah; xii. Their Excesses; xiii. Mutual Imprecation; xiv. Implied References; xv. A Protected People; xvi. Bibliography.

### Definitions and Usage

The Qurʾān uses three appellations for Christians: *naṣārā*, *ahl al-injīl*, and *ahl al-kitāb*. Two otherwise prevalent Arabic equivalents of Christians and Christianity, *Masīḥiyyūn*, *Masīḥiyya*, are not used in the Qurʾān.

- vi. **Naṣārā:** *Naṣārā* is used 14 times in its plural form and once in the singular (*naṣrānī*) (Q 2:62, 111, 113x2, 120, 135, 140; 5:14, 18, 51, 69, 82; 9:30; 22:17; and Q 3:67 respectively).

- There are two opinions about the term's provenance. According to the first opinion, it is a toponym from the Levantine village called Nāṣira (Nazareth), "where ʿĪsā, the son of Maryam, was born" (Yāqūt, *Buldān*, *sub* nāṣira); thus, ʿĪsā, upon him peace, was called al-Nāṣirī, "as per the opinion of Ibn ʿAbbās (3<sub>BH</sub>-68/619-688) narrated through an unsatisfactory chain" (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:62). Other names given for this village include Nāṣrān, Naṣūriyya, Naṣrūna and Naṣrān (Fayrūzābādī; Ibn Manẓūr). Ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Rāzī (d. after 666/1267) says its singular masculine form (*naṣrān*) "is never used without the ascriptive *yāʿ* (*yā al-nisba*), [hence *naṣrānī*]" (*Mukhtār*, *sub* n-ṣ-r; also see Ibn Manẓūr for a similar explanation).
- According to the second opinion, it is derived from the root n-ṣ-r

(*naṣara-yansuru-naṣran*—“to help”), especially in the sense used in Q 61:14, which quotes a conversation between Prophet ‘Īsā, upon him be peace, and his companions. He asks, ‘*Who are my helpers unto Allah?*’ (man anṣārī ilā-Llāh). The disciples respond, ‘*We are the helpers of Allah*’ *We believe in Allah; bear witness that we are Muslims*. Q 3:52 has the same question and answer (see below). Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923) quotes a couplet in support of the view that they are called *naṣārā* because of their mutual help and assistance (*li-nuṣra ba‘ḍuhum ba‘dā wa tanāṣurihim*) (sub Q 2:62; for a similar linguistic explanation, see Rāghib, sub *n-s-r*). Abūl-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/ca. 1344-1392) also supports this opinion and holds that the final *yā’* in *naṣrānī* is exaggerative (*li-l-mubāligha*), not ascriptive (as it was in the first opinion above), in recognition of their help to the Messiah (*al-Masīh*) (sub Q 2:62; also see Fayrūzābādī, *Baṣā’ir*).

- In Q 5:14, the appellation *naṣārā* is mentioned as a self-proclaimed attribute: *Those who say, “we are naṣārā”*. Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209) says, “Allah Most High did not say *mina-l-naṣārā* (“from the Christians”), because they called themselves by this name, claiming to support Allah Most High. The referent are those who said to ‘Īsā, ‘*we are the helpers of Allah*’ (naḥnu anṣārū-Llāh, Q 3:52). This name is, in fact, a name of praise (*ism madhī*), but Allah Most High clarifies that they claimed this attribute [to be theirs], but they were not thus attributed by Allah” (*laysū mawṣūfūna bihā ‘ind-Allah*); for similar explanations, see Qushayrī; Baghawī; Samarqandī; Bayḍawī; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya).

VII. **Ahl al-Injīl** (“People of Injīl”), used once (Q 5:47). Injīl is directly mentioned twelve times (Q 3:3, 48, 65; 5:46, 47, 66, 68, 110; 7:157, 111; 48:29; 57:27); it is often mistranslated as Gospel, but it is not the four Gospels of the New Testament which were authored by known human beings; rather, it is the Qur’ānic name of the revelation sent to ‘Īsā, upon him peace.

- Christians are included in the three Qur’ānic terms referring to the “People of the Book”: *ahl al-kitāb*—used thirty times in eight Madinan suras (Q 2:105, 109; 3:64, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 98, 99, 110, 113, 199; 4:123, 153, 159, 171; 5:15, 19, 59, 65, 68, 77; 33:26; 57:29; 59:2, 11: 98:1, 6) and once in a Makkan sura (Q 29:46); *alladhīna ūtū-l-kitāb* (“those who were given the Book”), which occurs fifteen times (Q 2:101, 144, 145; 3:19, 100, 186, 187; 4:47, 131; 5:5, 57; 9:29; 57:16; 74:31; 98:4); and, *alladhīna ūtū naṣībān min al-kitāb* (“those who were given a portion of the Book”), used thrice (Q 3:23; 4:44, 51).

- The term “People of the Book” technically refers to both Jews (*al-yahūd*) and Christians (*al-naṣārā*) (Muqātil; Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Baghawī; Rāzī; Ibn ʿĀshūr, *sub* Q 6:156; Māturīdī, *sub* Q 4:47; Samarqandī, *sub* 29:46), “along with all [their *sub*sects] who accept Torah and Injil” (Ibn Qudāma, *masʿalat yuqātal ahl al-kitāb wa-l-majūs*), on the basis of Q 6:156, which constitutes “an explicit proof that [the term] “People of the Book” refers to Jews and Christians only, to the exclusion of *Majūs*” (Jaṣṣāṣ, *sub* Q 6:156; Māturīdī, *sub* Q 4:47).
- The exegetes variously identify verses where the term “People of the Book” refers to Jews, Christians, certain individuals or groups among them, or Jews and Christians together; see the section “Implied References”.

Monks (Q 5:82; 9:31, 34), priests (Q 5:82; 9:31, 34), and monasticism (Q 57:27; *raḥbāniyya*) are also mentioned in various contexts (see below and MONASTICISM AND MONKS; CHURCHES, SYNAGOGUES, AND MONASTERIES).

### Key Features

Key features of Christians and Christianity in the Qurʾān are intimately connected with its account of the life and prophethood of ʿĪsā, upon him peace, whose special birth (see BIRTH) is attested and alleged crucifixion is denied: *They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him* (Q 4:157, see CRUCIFIXION). He is “the Messiah” (*al-Masīḥ*) (Q 3:45; 4:157, 171-172; 5:17, 72, 75; 9:30-31), a Prophet (*nabī*, Q 19:30) and a Messenger (*rasūl*, e.g., Q 4:157, 171; 5:120), sent to the Children of Isrāʾīl (*rasūlan ilā banī Isrāʾīl*, Q 3:49; and in other phrases, Q 3:53; 4:171; 5:75; 61:6). The Qurʾān stresses the human nature of both ʿĪsā and his mother, upon them peace. His likeness *in the sight of Allah is that of Ādam; He created him from earth, then said, “Be!” and he was* (Q 3:59). And elsewhere, *The Messiah, son of Maryam, was naught but a Messenger—Messengers have passed away before him. And his mother was truthful (ṣiddīqa). Both of them ate food. Behold how We make the signs clear unto them; yet behold how they are perverted!* (Q 5:75). The verse precludes all illusions to the divinity of ʿĪsā and his mother, because—like all human beings—they had the need to eat, “which is a euphemism for the need to void themselves; and this cannot be the characteristic of a God and, secondly, the need to eat due to necessity indicates their incapacity [to remain without food], and for God there can never be an incapacity” (Māturīdī). ʿĪsā, upon him peace, in fact, declares his own servanthood to Allah, *Indeed, I am the servant of Allah* (Q 19:30). “The very first words he spoke declared the transcendence of his Lord, the Exalted, from having a child and confirmed his servanthood to Him” (Ibn Kathīr). The servanthood of ʿĪsā, upon him peace, is also one of the characteristics

of Prophet Muḥammad (Q 17:1; 25:1; 53:10; 57:9; see SLAVES OF ALLAH) and of all other Prophets and Messengers (Q 14:11; 4:172; 5:73).

Fasting, prayers, and giving of alms comprise main acts of worship in Christianity, as they do in all other revealed religions (Q 2:43, 83, 110, 177, 183, 277; 4:77, 162; 5:12; 7:156; 9:71; 19:31, 55; 21:73; 22:41; 24:37; 98:5). The verse ordaining fasting in the month of Ramadan (Q 2:183) states that it was also prescribed for *those before you*—a phrase which refers to Christians, as per the eminent Successor-jurist and hadith transmitter ‘Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Hamdānī al-Sha‘bī (d. ca. 104/721) (Ṭabarī; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya) and to all Prophets and their people since Ādam, upon him peace (Rāzī). The revelation sent to ‘Īsā, upon him peace, contained Laws which abrogated or modified certain injunctions of the Torah (Q 3:50) and the Christians were commanded to judge by the Injil: *Let the people of the Injil judge by what Allah has sent down therein; whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down—it is they who are iniquitous* (Q 5:47).

### Covenant

*And with those who say, ‘We are naṣārā,’ We made a covenant. Then they forgot part of that whereof they were reminded. So We stirred up enmity and hatred among them, till the Day of Resurrection. God will inform them of what they used to do* (Q 5:14). Since ‘Īsā, upon him peace, was sent to the Children of Isrā’īl, who already had a Covenant through Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace, this new Covenant is understood to be a renewal of the previous Covenant, with the modification of certain Laws. It also included the requirement to believe in the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, *whom they find inscribed in the Torah and the Injil that is with them* (Q 7:157) and whom they were to recognize (Qurṭubī; Baghawī, *sub* Q 5:14). The enmity and hatred that will prevail among them till the Day of Resurrection (see DAY OF RECKONING) may either refer to enmity between Christians and Jews, or between various sects of Christians, “because every group declares all other groups disbeliever” (Rāzī); or specifically between three Christian sects: the Nestorians—who believed the Messiah to be the son of God, the Jacobites—who said, God is the Messiah, and the Melkites—who said God is the third of the three, the Trinity consisting of the Messiah, his mother, and God” (Samarqandī).

### Double Reward

Two verses (Q 28:54; 57:28) promise double reward to those Jews and Christians to whom the message of the Qur’ān has reached and they believe in it. *Those unto whom We gave the Book before it, they are believers in it. And when it is recited unto them, they say, “We believe in it; verily it is the truth from our Lord. Verily we were Muslim even before it.” It is they who will be given their reward twice over for their*

*having been patient. And they repel evil with good, and spend from that which We have provided them* (Q 28:52-54).

“This is so because they believed in the Books of the Prophets who came before the advent of our Prophet, Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, [in these Books] they find descriptions and praise of Muḥammad, thus, they already believed in him and his Book, even before the descent of the Qur’ān, that is why they said, “*verily we were already Muslims even before it*” (Ṭabarī).

In Q 57:28, their double reward is called “*a double portion of His Mercy*”: *O you who believe! Fear Allah and believe in His Messenger; He will [then] give you a double portion of His Mercy, provide you a light by which to walk, and forgive you; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful* (Q 57:28). “The light by which to walk is the Qur’ān and the way of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace” (Ṭabarī; also see Māwardī; Samarqandī; Baghawī). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, “Three types of people will receive a double reward: a man from the People of the Book who believed in his Prophet, lived to see the time of Muḥammad, believed in him, followed him and attested his truth; a slave who fulfilled his duties towards Allah and towards his masters; and a man who had a female slave and he taught her good manners, educated her well, then freed her and married her; he will receive a double reward” (Muslim, Īmān, wujūb al-Īmān bi-risālati nabiyyinā Muḥammad; Bukhārī, Jihād wa-l-Sayr, faḍl man aslama min ahl al-kitābayn).

## Refuted Doctrines

### (a) Alleged Divinity of ‘Īsā, upon him peace

The Christian belief in the divinity of ‘Īsā, upon him peace, is mentioned in two direct statements from them (Q 5:17, 116) and equated with disbelief (*kufūr*): *They certainly disbelieve, those who say, “Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.” Say, “Who would have any power over Allah if He desired to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and those on earth all together?” Unto Allah belongs sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them. He creates whatsoever He wills, and Allah is Powerful over all things* (Q 5:17). Al-Rāghib notes that the Qur’ānic text does not say, “Messiah is God,” but rather, it quotes Christians claiming, “God is the Messiah,” and explains that in essence, the two statements are the same, because the claim is that the Messiah possesses both Divine nature (*lāhūt*) and human nature (*nāsūt*) (see also, Abū Ḥayyān, *sub* Q 5:17; and Shaahrastānī, *Milāl*, Juz’ 2, faṣl al-thānī: al-naṣārā—al-Ya‘qūbiyya, who says “fa-ṣāra-l-ilah huwa-l-masīḥ—God is thus identified with the Messiah”). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī says the phrase “*and those on earth all together...*” is a reminder that ‘Īsā is similar to everyone who has a physical form (*ṣūra*), innate created

peculiarity (*khilqa*), corporeality (*jismiyya*), physical composition (*tarkīb*), and changeable attributes and circumstances—in other words, he too is a creature of Allah. Then He said, *‘He creates whatsoever He wills, and Allah is Powerful over all things.’* There are two aspects of *He creates whatsoever He wills*: (i) at times He creates a human being from a father and a mother, as is customarily known, at times without a father and mother, as in the creation of Ādam, upon him peace, or without a father, as was the case for ‘Īsā, upon him peace; (ii) [it may refer] ‘Īsā’s proportioning of the shape a bird with clay and Allah’s creation of flesh, life, and ability in it as ‘Īsā’s miracle (*cf.* Q 3:49; 5:110), [and ‘Īsā’s miracles of] reviving of the dead, the healing of the blind and the leper—and there can be no objection to Allah Most High’s actions (*sub* Q 5:17; for a similar explanation of the last part of the verse, see Zamakhsharī).

In Q 5:72, Prophet ‘Īsā is directly quoted, refuting their belief in his divinity: *They certainly disbelieve, those who say, “Indeed Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.” But the Messiah said, “O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.” Surely whosoever ascribes partners unto Allah, Allah has forbidden him the Garden, and his refuge shall be the Fire.* The verse rejects both the literal and analogical understandings of the Christian doctrine with respect to the relationship between ‘Īsā and Allah Most High, as Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 333/ca.945) points out. “It is illogical for a deity to be born of a human being. Thus ‘Īsā, upon him peace, could not be God; for if it were so, surely his mother would be more entitled to this status, because she precedes him and an antecedent is more entitled to [divinity] than the descendant. When someone has a child, they have it of their very own substance (*jawhar*), not from that of someone else; were it not logically impossible for Him to take a son, He would [in any case] not have taken it from the substance of humankind, as [is indicated] in Q 21:17, *had We wished to find a pastime We could have taken it from Ourselves.*”

In Q 5:116, ‘Īsā, upon him peace, is himself questioned about what people believed about him: *And when Allah said, “O ‘Īsā, son of Maryam! Did you say unto people, “Take me and my mother as gods apart from Allah?”” He said, “Glory be to You! It is not for me to utter that to which I have no right. Had I said it, You would surely have known it. You know what is within me and I know not what is within You. Truly it is You Who has absolute knowledge of things unseen.* Al-Ṭabarī says,

This will be asked on the Day when Allah will assemble the Messengers and ask, ‘What was the response you received?’ (*cf.* Q 5:109), but it is also said that it took place when ‘Īsā, upon him peace, was raised by Allah (*cf.* Q 3:55; 4:158), as per a report from al-Suddī.” In either case, the response of ‘Īsā, upon him peace, is, “Exalted are you (*tanzīhan Laka*) far above that O my Lord.... It is not for me to utter that to which I have no right; I cannot



and must not say that—for I am but a created slave (*‘abdun makhhlūq*) and my mother is Your slave (*amatun Laka*); how could a slave and slave-woman claim divinity (*al-rubūbiyya*)? Had I said it, Thou wouldst surely have known it; [‘Īsā] says: There is nothing that could be concealed from You and You know it with certainty that I did not say that, and I never ordered people [to worship me].

In Q 5:72, ‘Īsā, upon him peace, is quoted as calling his people to *worship Allah*, that is, “declare the Oneness of Allah (*waḥḥidū-Llāha*) and obey Him [Who is] *my Lord and your Lord*; that is [He] is my Creator and your Creator and He is my Sustainer (*rāziqī*) and your Sustainer” (Samarqandī). The assertion that Allah is *my Lord and your Lord* is mentioned in four other verses (Q 3:51; 5:117; 19:36; 43:64) on the tongue of Prophet ‘Īsā, upon him peace, underscoring his human nature. Several commentators specify that among the Christians, certain sects—such as the Jacobites (*Ya‘qūbiyya*)—believe in essential unity between Allah and ‘Īsā, upon him peace (Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Ibn al-Jawzī).

Al-Qurṭubī cites a report from Ibn ‘Abbās who said, “Allah Most High does not bear children as did Maryam, and he is not born as was ‘Īsā. In *He begets not* [cf. Q 112:3] one finds an explicit refutation of Christian doctrine and also an answer to those who said “*Uzayr is the son of Allah*” [an allusion to the Jews, in Q 9:30]”. Transcendent Unicity of Allah Most High is succinctly stated in the early Makkan Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ (Q 112), about which Abū Muḥammad Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūnus b. Rafī‘ al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) refutes “in its four verses all [forms of] disbelief (*kufṛ*) and fancies (*ahwā’*); it is called Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ (“the Sura of Sincerity”) because it sweeps away all impurities foreign to the transcendence (*tanzīh*) of Allah, Exalted is He above all that is not befitting to Him”.

### (b) Their Belief that ‘Īsa, upon him peace, was the Son of God

From the Qur’ānic perspective, polytheism (*shirk*, *q.v.*) is an unforgiveable sin (Q 4:48; also see Q 4:36; 5:72; 31:13). Thus, belief in a human being as son of God, whether in an analogical sense or as someone eternally begotten and co-eternal with “God, the Father,” directly opposes the Qur’ānic descriptions of the Creator, which are uncompromising about His Absolute Oneness and His incomparability to anything else (Q 2:163; 4:171; 5:73; 6:19; 16:22; 18:110; 21:107; 41:6; 42:11; 112:4); He has no partner, no helper (Q 2:22,165; 14:30; 34:33; 39:8; 41:9) and like Him there is nothing (Q 42:11); He has neither an opponent nor a rival (Q 6:19; 15:96; 17:22, 39, 42; 21:22; 23:91, 117; 51:51); He begot neither a son (Q 2:116; 4:171; 6:100-101; 9:30-31; 10:68; 17:111; 18:4; 21:26; 25:1) nor a daughter (Q 6:100; 16:57; 37:149; 43:16; 52:39); He has no

mate (Q 6:101; 72:3); He is beyond duality (Q 16:51) or trinity (Q 4:171; 5:73), He has always existed—He is the First and the Last, the Outwardly Manifest and the Inwardly Hidden, Who has knowledge of all things (Q 57:3), the changeless (Q 2:255; 3:2; 20:111; 112:2) Lord of the Heavens and the Earth (Q 13:16; 17:102; 18:14; 19:65; 21:56; 26:24; 37:5; 38:66; 43: 82; 44:7; 78:37)—the possessor of all the attributes of perfection (Q 59:23; 62:1). and He alone deserves to be worshipped (Q 1:2; 5:28; 7:54; 13:16; 19:65; 37:4-5; 38:65-66).

Al-Ḍaḥḥāk calls the Christian belief about ‘Īsā, upon him peace, being the son of God “the most hideous disbelief (*ashnaʿ al-kufr*).” Q 9:30 refers to this claim as mere statements, *And the Christians say, ‘the Messiah is the son of Allah.’ That is merely what they say with their mouths* (see also Q 4:171; 5:17; 19:35). Al-Qurṭubī explains “*what they say with their mouths*,” means “mere sounds with no meaning; ... it is only words uttered by the mouth, a claim that has no authentic meaning behind it. For they acknowledge that Allah Most High did not take a female companion (*ṣaḥība*); how then can they claim that He has a child? This is a lie, just a statement of the tongue (*qawḥun lisānī*)—compared to authoritative statements (*al-aqwāl al-ṣaḥīḥa*) confirmed by proofs and evidence.... Allah has not mentioned any kind of speech linked to mouths and tongues unless it refers to wicked speech (*qawḥ zūr*), like His Words *they say with their mouths what was not in their hearts* (Q 3:167; also 48:11); and *grave is the word that comes out of their mouths; they speak not except a lie* (Q 18:5) (Qurṭubī, *sub* 9:30).

Al-Rāzī equates it with idol worshipping:

There is no difference between the one who worships an idol and the one who worships the Messiah or anyone else, because in the latter case, a human being is taken as deity and this constitutes association with Allah (*shirk*). After Allah Most High has declared, in the previous verse, that the Jews and the Christians do not believe in Allah, He explains it in this verse through their ascription of child to Allah; whoever admits this concerning God (*fī ḥaqqi-l-ilāh*) has, in fact, rejected God Himself (*anḥara-l-ilāh*)... Furthermore, if we observe attentively, we can ascertain that the disbelief of an idol-worshipper is more insignificant (*akḥaff*) than the disbelief of the Christians, due to the fact that the idol-worshipper does not say that this idol is the creator of the world or the deity of the world, but he considers it a means by which he can get closer to the obedience of Allah. The Christians subscribe to the idea of incarnation (*al-ḥulūl*) and union [of God and man] (*al-itṭiḥād*) and this is an extremely abominable disbelief. Thus, it has become evident that there is no difference between the devotees of incarnation (*ḥāʾulāʾ al-ḥulūliyya*) and other polytheists (*ṣāʾir al-mushrikīn*).

### (c) Trinity

The belief that God exists, simultaneously and eternally, as a communion of

three distinct beings—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—constitutes a plurality that is utterly foreign to the Qur’ānic descriptions of Allah, one of Whose Beautiful Names is *al-Ṣamad*, “which indicates absolute unlikeness of Allah to anything that the polytheists take as a deity” (Rāghib, *sub ṣ-m-d*). In Q 4:171, the Christians are commanded to ...say not ‘Three’; desist, it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son.... In Q 5:73, the rebuke is severe, *They certainly disbelieve who say, ‘Truly God is the third of the three,’ whereas there is no god save One Allah. If they do not refrain from what they say, a painful punishment will befall those who disbelieve.* The exegetes mention different Christian sects who held different views about who the persons are in the Trinity. Al-Ṭabarī, for instance, says that before they became divided into Jacobites, Melkites, and Nestorians, the majority of Christians held that the Eternal God (*al-ilāh al-qadīm*) is one essence (*jawharun wāḥidun*), accompanied by three hypostases (*thalātha aqānīm*): the unbegotten father (*aban ghayra mawlūd*), the son begotten without a father (*ibnan mawlūdun ghayra wālid*), and the spouse who is between them (*zawjan mutatabba‘a baynahumā*) (*Tafsīr*).

Abū-l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī (d. 468/1075) says the phrase *third of three* amounts to holding Allah, ‘Īsā and Maryam on the same Divine level (*Basīl*). Other exegetes attribute Trinity to various Christian sects. For instance, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas‘ūd al-Farrā’ al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122) ascribes this statement to the Marqūsiyya sect, who hold that “divinity is common between Allah the Exalted, Maryam and ‘Īsā, each one of them being god, thus there are three gods” (*Tafsīr*). Al-Qurṭubī says the Melkites (al-malikiyya/al-malkāniyya), the Nestorians (al-naṣṭūriyya) and the Jacobites (al-ya‘qūbiyya) hold this belief, for they say that the Father (*abun*), the son (*ibnun*) and the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*) are together one god; but they do not mean three distinct gods.

#### (d) Alleged Crucifixion

Q 4:157 quotes and refutes *their saying*, “We killed the Messiah, ‘Īsā, son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah.” But they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear so to them. Those who differed about this are in doubt. They have no knowledge of it—they follow mere conjecture. The certainly did not kill him. “These words imply tremendous disbelief and their real intention to [kill the Messiah]” (Rāzī). Qurṭubī points out that Christian sects differ on the crucifixion—the Nestorians hold that ‘Īsā was crucified in his human nature (*fī nāsūtihi*), not in his divine nature (*lā min jihat lāhūtihi*); whereas the Melkites hold that crucifixion affected both his natures. The Christian veneration of the Cross is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’ān, but Abū Wahb ‘Adiyy b. Ḥatīm al-Ṭā’ī said (when he was still a Christian), “I went to the Prophet, upon

him blessings and peace, wearing a golden cross around my neck; when he saw it, he said, “What is this, O ‘Adiyy? Throw away this idol (hādhā-l-wathan)” (Qurṭubī and Khāzin, *sub* Q 9:31; Tirmidhī, Sunan, Abwāb Tafsīr al-Qur’ān, wa min sūrat al-Tawba). For a more complete discussion, see CRUCIFIXION.

### (e) Monasticism

In Q 57:27, monasticism is mentioned as a self-constructed way: *We sent after them Our Messengers and We sent ‘Isā, son of Maryam, and We gave him the Injīl and placed kindness and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. And monasticism (rahbāniyya) they invented—We did not ordain it for them—only to seek to please Allah. Yet they did not observe it with proper observance. So We gave those of them who believed their reward, yet many of them are iniquitous* (Q 57:27). Al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī and several other exegetes quote a report from Ibn ‘Abbās, according to which after the corruption of the message revealed to ‘Isā, upon him peace, by the kings who came after him, certain Christians—who had remained true to the original message—were threatened and they withdrew from the world and thus invented monasticism. By the time of the Prophet, only a few remained of the earlier true Christians. Then, “the man left his hermitage, the wandering person returned, others left their small houses and believed in him [Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace] and accepted him as true [Prophet]”. (Ṭabarī) (see MONASTICISM AND MONKS).

## Refuted Claims

### (a) Exclusive Soteriology

Q 2:111, *And they say, ‘None shall enter Paradise except that they be Jews or Christians.’ Such are their fancies. Say: ‘Bring your proof, if you are truthful’* and Q 2:113, *The Jews say, “The Christians stand on nothing,” and the Christians say, “The Jews stand on nothing,” though they recite the Book. Those who do not know say the same thing. Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they differ* are explained by the exegetes in the context of their revelation, which is said to be the visit of the Christians of Najrān to Madina during which they met the Jews of Madina and both groups mutually cursed (*fa-tasābbū*) and accused one another (Baghawī, *Tafsīr*; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). “The Jews disbelieved in ‘Isā, his religion, and in the Injīl, and the Christians disbelieved in Mūsā and the Torah, by this, each of them disbelieved in their Book, because the Injīl confirms the veracity of Mūsā and the Torah, which [foretells] the glad tidings of ‘Isā and [confirms] the authenticity of his prophethood (*ṣiḥḥat nubuwwatiḥ*) and both of them confirm the veracity of Muḥammad, upon him be blessings and peace. Thus, Allah Most High reprimands both groups for their false accusations” (Ibn ‘Aṭiyya). Each group cherishes hope for itself and assumes

salvation for their cause, but mere conjecture (*mujarrad al-ḥusbān*) without proof is fruitless (Qushayrī). This verse is also an allusion to their claim that no good can reach the Believers from their Lord, and in the end they [Jews and Christians] wish to turn [the Believers] back to disbelief” (cf. Q 3:100; Bayḍāwī, *sub* Q 2:111). Q 2:120 and Q 2:135 further expand on the theme of exclusivism, the former stating that the Christians, like the Jews, will never be pleased with the Muslims until the latter follow their religion and the latter by referring to their statement, *And they say, “Be Jews or Christians and you shall be rightly guided”*. The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, is commanded to respond by saying, *“Rather, [ours is] the creed of Abraham, a ḥanīf, and he was not of the idolaters.”* (see ḤANĪF AND ḤUNAFĀ’).

### (b) Their Claim about Ibrāhīm, upon him peace, and his children

Christians and Jews both claimed that Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, Ishāq, Ya‘qūb, and *al-asbāt* [the descendants, the tribes] were all following their religion (Q 2:140). Q 3:65-67 refutes their claim that Ibrāhīm, upon him peace, was a Jew or a Christian; after all, *the Torah and the Injīl were not revealed until after him*. Their retroactive claim “contains an evident chronological contradiction for “both Judaism and Christianity were born and became accepted religions after the revelation of their Books—the Torah and the Injīl—which happened long after the death of Ibrāhīm, upon him be peace (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*). How could Ibrāhīm be a follower of a religion that appeared after him—this is a contradiction originating in conjecture (Qushayrī, *sub* Q 3:65). Rather, Ibrāhīm is identified as *ḥanīf*—upright and inclining towards truth, and *muslim*—a submitter to Allah (see Makkī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Qushayrī).

### (c) Their Claim to be the Sons and Beloved of Allah

*And the Jews and the Christians say, “We are the sons of Allah, and His beloved.” Say, “Why then does He punish you for your sins?” Nay, but you are mortals of His creating. He forgives whomsoever He wills, and He punishes whomsoever He wills, and unto Allah belongs sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them, and unto Him is the Return* (Q 5:18). Ibn ‘Abbās, Allah be well-pleased with them both, says, “the phrase, the Jews and the Christians said, refers to the statements of two particular groups—the Jews of Madina and the Christians of Najrān (*Tanwīr al-miqbās*). Al-Ṭabarī also mentions another report from Ibn ‘Abbās, which names three Jews of Madina, who, when invited and warned regarding Allah by the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said to him, “Do not worry about us, O Muḥammad; by Allah, we are the sons of Allah and His beloved.” This, al-Ṭabarī says, is like their claim that fire will not touch us, except for a few days (Q 3:24). “Arabs, according to the linguistic features of their language, may express news, especially in instances of boasting, as an

account on behalf of the whole community, even if the speaker was a single person from among them; as they can say, “*naḥnu-l-ajwād al-kirām*—we are the most generous people,” even though “the generous” is applicable to only a single person from among them, who was probably not even the speaker himself. ... This explains why Allah described the statement as coming from all Christians, even though only some of them made the statement” (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*; for a similar, but more detailed explanation, see Māwardī).

Whether it is meant literally or not, the claim of being sons of Allah is rejected, because “filiation (*al-bunuwwa*) necessitates a kind of similarity, kinship and familial ties (*mujānasa*), whereas al-Ḥaqq [the Truth, meaning Allah] is free (*munazzah*) from such; and affection between two genetically similar [entities] (*al-mutajānisayn*) necessitates sharing common traits (*ihṭizāz*) and familial intimacy (*muʿānasa*), whereas *al-Ḥaqq* is far above that. Allah Most High responded to them, saying, *Nay, but you are mortals of His creating*. And it is not possible for the created to be part of the Eternal (*baʿḍan li-l-qadīm*), for the Eternal has no parts of His Oneness; and if He has no dividable parts, it is impossible for Him to have a child. If it is inconceivable for Him to have a child, it is also inconceivable that there exists affection, in such a way as they believe, between them and Him” (Qushayrī).

### Their Excesses

In two verses (Q 4:171; 5:77), the People of the Book are commanded not to overstep the bounds in their religion. In Q 4:171: *O People of the Book! Do not go to excess in your religion, nor utter anything concerning Allah save the truth. Verily the Messiah, ʿĪsā, son of Maryam, was only a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He committed to Maryam, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not “Three.” Refrain! It is better for you. God is only one—Allah; Glory be to Him that He should have a child! Unto Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth, and Allah suffices as a Guardian.* Q 5:77 states: *Say, “O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion beyond the truth, and follow not the caprices of a people who went astray before, and led many astray, and strayed from the right way.”*

Al-Samʿānī and al-Rāzī point out, that Jews and the Christians “both committed excesses in the matter of ʿĪsā; the Jews by their failure to recognize his right (*bil-taqṣīr fī ḥaqqihī*) and the Christians by exceeding the limits” (cf. their *Tafsīrs*, sub Q 4:171). “The religion of Allah is between the one who falls short (*al-muqasṣir*) and the one who commits excesses (*al-ghālī*)” (Ibn Qutayba; Jaṣṣās; Rāzī). Excess (*ghuluww*) is “iniquitous transgression of the boundaries” (Zajjāj, sub Q 4:171) that is explicitly forbidden in matters of religion (Baghawī); and it can also mean “being extreme in specific matters (*al-tashaddud*)”



(Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*).

In his *Latā'if al-ishārāt* ("Subtle Indications"), al-Qushayrī says that one aspect of the Christians' "overstepping of the bounds" mentioned in the verse is "the contradiction of their saying that one is three and three is one. Persisting in absurdity only increases absurdity and nothing else" (*Tafsīr*). Al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) explains: "Allah Most High prohibits committing excess in religion in two ways: excess with respect to Absolute Oneness (*tawḥīd*) and excess in deeds; their excess with respect to *tawḥīd* is ascribing a son to Him, Exalted is He above their saying; and their excess in deeds is that they invented unlawful acts, like monasticism (*al-rahbāniyya*), permitting the prohibited and prohibiting the permitted" (*Aḥkām*, *sūrat al-baqara*, *al-āyatu al-tāsi'a* 'ashrata: *qawluhu Ta'ālā qul yā ahl al-kitāb*).

The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, "Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Maryam, for I am only a slave; so, call me the 'Slave of Allah and His Messenger'" (Bukhārī, *Aḥādīth al-anbiyā'*, *bāb qawlu-Llāhi wa-dhkur fī-l-kitābi maryama idh intabadhat min ahlihā*).

### Mutual Imprecation

As already mentioned, some eighty verses at the beginning of Q 3 were revealed on the occasion of the visit of a delegation of Christians who came to Madina from Najrān in the year 9 or 10 (632 or 633) and disputed with the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace (Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*). The delegation was headed by three prominent leaders—'Abd al-Masīḥ al-'Aqīb, who was their prince and in charge of their affairs; al-Ayham al-Sayyid; and Abū Ḥāritha b. 'Alqama, their bishop—who argued for various Christian doctrines. They asked: "Why do you scold our lord (*tashtumu ṣāḥibānā*)?" (Ṭabarī, *Baghawī*, *Tafsīrs*). They also inquired about virgin birth (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*, *sub* Q 3:59). They claimed that 'Īsā, upon him peace, was God, because he revived the dead, healed lepers, and spoke of unseen realities; that he was the son of God, because he had no human father; and that he was the third of three, because God employs the first person plural in revealed scripture (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, *Dhikr naṣārā Najrān*).

The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, replied that 'Īsā was a slave of Allah and invited them to accept Islam. They refused. The Prophet told them that three of their practices hold them back from accepting Islam: worshipping the cross, eating pork, and claiming that Allah has a son (Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, *sub* Q 3:59). He recited to them Q 3:59: *Indeed, the example of 'Īsā in the sight of Allah is like that of Ādam. He created him from dust, and then said to him 'Be!' and he was.* When they still refused to accept the truth, Allah Most High commanded

his Prophet, upon him blessings and peace: *And whosoever disputes with you concerning him (namely ‘Īsā, upon him peace), after the knowledge which has come unto you, say: ‘Come! We will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray humbly (nabtahil) and invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie’ (Q 3:61).* They asked for time until the next morning to consult one another. The next day, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, brought with him his two grandsons (al-Ḥasan (d. 50/670) and al-Ḥusayn (d. 61/680), his daughter Faṭīma (d. 10/632), and his cousin ‘Alī (13<sub>BH</sub>-40/609-660)—but the Christians refused both to participate in the mutual imprecation (*mubāhala*) or to accept the invitation of Islam. Instead they agreed to pay a the special tax meant for such people (*jizya*) twice a year, in Muḥarram and Rajab. The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, sent Abū ‘Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ (40<sub>BH</sub>-18/583–639) to collect the agreed amount (Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*; Samarqandī, Baghawī, *sub* Q 3:61; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*).

### Foretelling of Aḥmad, upon him blessings and peace

Prophet ‘Īsā, upon him peace, foretold the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace: *And when ‘Īsā, son of Maryam said: “O Children of Isrā’īl! Behold, I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming whatever is before me of the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me and whose name is Aḥmad.” And when he came unto them with clear proofs, they said, “This is manifest sorcery” (Q 61:6).* Aḥmad is second of the two Qur’ānic names of the Prophet, who said, “I have specific names: I am Muḥammad, and I am Aḥmad, and al-Ḥāshir (the Gatherer, i.e., leading Resurrection), and al-Māḥī (the Eradicator, i.e., of unbelief), and al-‘Āqib (the Concluder, i.e., of Prophets and prophecy)” (Bukhārī, *Tafsīr*, qawluhu ta‘ālā min ba‘dī ismuhu Aḥmad; Muslim, *Faḍā’il, fī asmā’ilh*; Tirmidhī, *Adab, mā jā’ fī asmā’ al-Nabī*; Dārimī, *Sunan, Riqāq, asmā’ al-Nabī*; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Nahja*, introduction p. 29-40).

Every Prophet has foretold his people about the Final Prophet, but Allah Most High has singled out ‘Īsā with this mention [in the Qur’ān] because he is the last of them in sequence before our Prophet, upon them be blessings and peace. Thus He has made clear that the glad tidings of his coming involved every successive Prophet, until they concluded with ‘Īsā (Qushayrī, *sub* Q 61:6).

### Obligation to Believe in the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace

Two almost identical verses (Q 2:62; 5:69) group together Believers, Jews (see CHILDREN OF ISRĀ’ĪL), Christians, and Sabeans (*al-ṣābi’ūna, q.v.*), promising them their reward with God: *Truly those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabeans—whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and works righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord; no fear shall come upon*

them, nor shall they grieve (Q 2:62). A third verse (Q 22:17) mentions Christians among a cluster of five other groups, all of whom will receive Divine judgment: *Indeed, those who believe and those who are Jews, and the Sabians and the Christians and the Magians and those who associate with Allah—Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, Allah is Witness over all things.*

The exegetes discuss the applicability of these verses after the advent of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. According to Ibn ‘Abbās (300-68/619-688), Q 2:62 was abrogated by Q 3:85, *Whosoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers* (Ṭabarī; Māwardī; Qurṭubī). Al-Ṭabarī says, “the belief of the Jews, the Christians and the Ṣābi‘ūn [mentioned in the verse] is their attesting the truthfulness of Muḥammad and what he brought. Whoever among them comes to believe in Muḥammad, in what he brought and in the Last Day, and works righteousness, and does not alter or change so that he dies in this [faith], the reward for his deeds and his wage awaits him with his Lord, as He has described.” (*sub* Q 2:62; for similar explanations see, Qurṭubī, Bayḍāwī, Ibn Kathīr). Abū Isḥāq al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) says, “It is impossible that anyone of them can be said to have faith without believing in the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and the proof of this is His Words *Those who disbelieve and turn away from the path of Allah—He has rendered their deeds in vain. And those who believe and perform righteous deeds, and believe in what has been sent down unto Muhammad—and it is the Truth from their Lord—He has absolved them of their evil deeds and set their state aright* (Q 47:1-2)” (Ma‘ānī, *sub* Q 2:62). As a principle, the Qur’ān insists that no distinction be made between Prophets (Q 2:136, 285; 3:84; 4:150-152) and thus Q 2:62 and 5:69 do not include those who accept some of the Books but reject other Divine Revelations; thus, Q 2:62 refers to only those from among the named groups who believe in all Prophets and all Divine Books (Māturīdī, *sub* Q 2:62).

The phrase “*whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and works righteousness* (‘amila ṣāliḥan)” —the portion that is present verbatim in the first two verses—refers to a person from among the four groups mentioned in these verses, “who followed his religion before it was abrogated [by the subsequent Divine Revelation], and who believed in the Beginning [of creation] (*al-mabda’*) and the Final Abode (*al-ma‘ād*) in his heart (*muṣaddiqan bi-qalbihi*) and who performed his deeds in full accordance with the Law. It is also said that it refers to everyone who became believer with a sincere faith (*īmānan khāliṣan*) from among the disbelievers and embraced Islam with true acceptance—then those *will have their reward with their Lord*, Who promised it to them based on their faith and good deeds” (Bayḍāwī, *sub* Q 2:62).

The principle invoked by the exegeses in their explanation is based on the

presence of a core set of unchanging beliefs throughout the course of human history. Thus, explaining Q 42:13, *He has prescribed for you as religion the same as that which He enjoined upon Nūḥ, and that which We revealed unto thee, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, and ʿIsā, that you establish religion and not be divided therein. Grievous for the idolaters is that to which you call them. Allah chooses for Himself whomsoever He will and guides unto Himself whosoever turns in repentance*, Ibn Kathīr says:

Allah the Exalted mentions the first Messenger sent after Ādam—that is, Nūḥ, upon them be peace—and then the last of them, Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace—and then He mentions [three of] those who came in between them—resolutely determined Messengers, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and ʿIsā bin Maryam. This verse mentions five Messengers, just as they are mentioned in Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, where He says, *And when We took from the Prophets their covenant, and from you, and from Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, and ʿIsā son of Maryam* (Q 33:7). The Message which all the Messengers brought was to worship Allah alone, with no partner or associate, as Allah says: *And We did not send any Messenger before you but We revealed to him, 'Verily, there is no god but I; so worship Me.'* (Q 21:25). [The Prophet said], “We Prophets are children of different mothers (*awlādu ʿallāt*) and our religion is one.” [Muslim, Faḍāʾil; faḍāʾil ʿĪsā]. That is, the common element (*al-qādr al-mushtarak*) between them is ‘worship of Allah’—the One, Who has no partner, even though their Laws and ways (*sharāʾiʿuhum wa manāhijuhum*) may differ, as Allah says, *For each among you, We have prescribed a Law and a way* (Q 5:48), [commanding to] *establish religion and not be divided therein* (Q 42:13), meaning, Allah enjoined all the Prophets, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all, to be as one and He forbade them to differ and be divided. (*Tafsīr*)

The second principle employed in explanations of the status of the People of Book is that of sequential Abrogation of one Divine Law with a subsequent Law and all previous Laws by the Law brought by the Prophet, upon him be blessings and peace. The Qurʾānic verses supporting this principle include Q 3:19 (*Truly the religion in the sight of Allah is Islām...*), Q 3:85 (*Whosoever seeks a religion other than Islām, it shall not be accepted of him*), and verses stating the universality of the Prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad for all people, lands, and until the end of Time, such as Q 4:79; 7:158; 21:107; 25:1; and 34:28 (*And We sent you not, but to entire humankind, as a bringer of glad tidings and a warner; but most people know not*).

The Prophet, upon him be blessings and peace, himself said—while mentioning five things which were not given to anyone before him—“Every Prophet [before me] was sent to his nation only, but I have been sent to all humankind.” (Bukhārī, K. al-Tayamamum; Muslim, al-Masājīd wa mawāḍiʿ al-ṣalāt, juʿilat li al-arḍ masjidan wa ṭulḥuran, where the wording is slightly

different, “I have been sent to the Red and the Black”, which, Ibn Kathīr (*Tafsīr*) said, “amounts to the same thing”). The Prophet also said, “By Him in whose hand is the soul of Muḥammad, any person of this Community, any Jew, or any Christian who hears of me and dies without believing in what I have been sent with, will be an inhabitant of hell” (Muslim, *Īmān*, wujūb al-*Īmān* bi-risāla nabiyyinā Muḥammad ṣallā-Llāhu ‘alayh wa-sallam ilā jamī‘ al-nās, wa naskh al-milal bi-millatihi). Abū-l-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj b. Muslim al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī (ca. 206-261/821-875) records this hadith in the Book of Faith (*Kitāb al-Īmān*) in a chapter tellingly entitled, “Obligation (*wujūb*) of believing that our Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, was sent as a Messenger to all humanity and [the belief that] through the Sacred Law (*sharī‘a*) revealed to him, all previous Laws were abrogated”. His foremost commentator, Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (631-676/1234-1277), comments, “In this is the proof that the Messengership of our Prophet has abrogated all previous religions (*fa-fihi naskh al-milal kullihā*), its intrinsic meaning (*mafhūmihi*) also proves that anyone to whom the message of Islam has not reached is excepted from [this verdict], because of the accepted principle that there is no judgment before the Law has reached [the one being judged]” (*Sharḥ*). In *Rawḍat al-tālibīn*, his legal work on Shāfi‘ī Law, an abridgement of ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfi‘ī al-Qazwīnī’s (d. 623/1226) *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr*, which, in turn, is a commentary on al-Ghazālī’s (d. 555/1111) *al-Wajīz*, al-Nawawī says: “Anyone who does not believe that whosoever follows a religion other than Islam—like the Christians—or has doubts about their disbelief (*taḳfīrihum*), or who validates their religion (*ṣaḥḥaḥa madh-habahum*), such a person is himself a disbeliever (*fahūwa kāfir*), even if his Islam and creed are manifest” (*Rawḍat al-tālibīn*, 10:70).

In his *al-Mustasfā min ‘ilm al-uṣūl* (*The clarified from legal theory*), al-Ghazālī himself had said, “It is the consensus of the entire Umma (Community) that the Sacred Law of Muḥammad—upon him blessings and peace—has abrogated the laws of all of his predecessors either in totality or in whatever contravenes it—and this is agreed upon; whosoever denies this, violates the consensus” (*Mustasfā*, K. al-Naskh, Sec 2; p. 1:89). It is important to note that these legal works specifically mention abrogation of Laws and rulings and not articles of faith upon which rests the foundation of religion, such as belief in the Unicity of Allah Most High (*tawḥīd*), Resurrection, Prophethood, Angels, and the Hereafter—all of which remain unchanged since the beginning of revelation (cf. al-Shawkānī’s two monographs *Irshād al-thiqāt ilā ittifāq al-sharā‘i‘ ‘alā al-tawḥīd wal-ma‘ād wal-nubuwwāt* and *al-Maqālat al-fākhira fī ittifāq al-sharā‘i‘ ‘alā iḥbāt al-dār al-ākhirā*, both published within his collected *Fatāwā*; also see al-Bahūtī al-Ḥanbalī’s (d. 1051/1641), *Kashshāf al-qinā‘*, 6:170 and Ibn Qudāma,

*Rawḍa*, 1:229).

### Their Closeness to Believers

Affection for the believers serves as a mark of differentiation between the Jews and the Christians: *You will surely find the most hostile of men toward those who believe to be the Jews and those who ascribe partners unto Allah, and you will find the nearest of them in affection toward those who believe to be those who say, “We are naṣārā (Christians);” that is because among them are priests and monks, and because they are not arrogant* (Q 5:82). Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujaḥid b. Jabr (d. ca. 104/722); Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (45-95/665-713), ‘Ikrima (d. 104/722), Qatāda (d. 117/735), and al-Suddī (d. 127/745) all report the occasion of revelation of this verse to be the arrival of a delegation of Christians from Abyssinia who came to visit the Prophet along with Ja‘far [b. Abī Ṭālib] and his companions who had migrated to Abyssinia (Mujaḥid; Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Rāzī; Samarqandī; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*). Al-Suddī (d. 127/745) says: “The Najāshī sent twelve men—seven priests and five monks—to the Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace, to meet him and ask him questions. The Prophet recited to them what Allah had revealed to him. They wept and believed. Then they returned to al-Najāshī. [Upon hearing the report of his envoys], He departed [from his city] with them [to come to Madina] but died on his way. The Prophet and the Muslims prayed [his funeral prayer in absentia, *ṣalāt al-ghā’ib*] and asked forgiveness for him” (Samarqandī, *Baḥr*; Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 5:82). The name of the Aksumite monarch (who were generally called al-Najāshī) at the time of this event is cited as Aṣḥama b. Abjar (Aṣḥama is Arabicized as ‘Aṭiyya; cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, bāb hijrat aṣḥāb Rasūli-Llāhi min Makka ilā arḍ al-Ḥabasha, 3:98), who died in 10/632 (Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, ḥadīth al-hijrat al-tūlā ilā-l-Ḥabasha, p. 213). His funeral prayer in absentia, led by the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, is a fully authenticated event, witnessed by many Companions of the Prophet, including Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. ca.77/696), who said he was standing in the second row: “When the Najāshī died, the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said, “Today a pious man has died; get up and offer the funeral prayer for your brother Aṣḥama.”” (Bukhārī, *Manāqib al-Anṣār*, *Mawt al-Najāshī*; Muslim, *Janā’iz*, fī-l-takbīr ‘alā-l-janāza; Mālik, *Janā’iz*, mā jā’a fī-l-takbīr ‘alā-l-janā’iz; also reported in several other major collections of hadith, including, but not limited to, Aḥmad, 7:116 § 7282; and Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, *Janā’iz*, mā jā’a fī ṣalāt al-Nabī ṣallā-Llāh ‘alayhi wa-sallam ‘alā-l-Najāshī).

Some commentators say Q 5:82 is specifically concerning these Christians, while others consider it to be the general characteristic (*ṣifa*) of all those Christians “who were the true believers upon the Law of ‘Īsā (*‘alā shari‘at ‘Īsā*) and when Allah Most High sent His Prophet Muḥammad, upon him



blessings and peace, they believed in him” (Ṭabarī; Samarqandī; Māwardī; Qurṭubī). Māwardī favors the former while al-Ṭabarī prefers the latter, because, “according to my understanding, the correct opinion in this context is that Allah Most High describes the characteristics of a people, who say ‘*we are naṣārā*’ and the Prophet of Allah finds them as those who are the nearest in affection to the People of Faith in Allah and in His Messenger; but He did not mention [specific] names for us.” (*Tafsīr*).

### Prohibition to take them as *awliyāʾ*

The exegetical discussions on Q 5:51, *O you who believe, do not take the Jews and the Christians as awliyāʾ*, include two basic queries: (i) the meaning of *awliyāʾ* (“close friend, near, adjacent, neighboring, supporter, helper, benefactor”) in this verse; and (ii) whether or not the injunction is temporally constrained. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī (d. ca.502/1108) explains the linguistic and Qurʾānic usage of *awliyāʾ* (sing. *walī*) by drawing upon related words from the root *w-l-y*: “The primary meaning of *al-walāʾ* *wal-tawāl* is to put two or more things next to one another in such a way that nothing can come between them; from this emerged its metaphorical usage in the sense of nearness (*qurb*), whether spatially (*makān*) or in relationship, religion, friendship, help, or creed.”

The weight of the scholarly opinion points to taking the word *awliyāʾ* in this verse to mean “close allies”, “protectors,” and “those to whom one turns for help”, as al-Rāghib and others point out that such an understanding is consistent with the Qurʾānic usage of this word in other verses such as Q 9:23, where believers are asked not to take even their fathers and brothers as *awliyāʾ* if they prefer disbelief over belief; and in Q 3:28, *Let not believers take disbelievers as awliyāʾ rather than believers*; and likewise in Q 4:89, 139, 144. In a passage (Q 5:78-81) containing one of the strongest condemnations of those who disbelieved among the Children of Isrāʾīl, one of their gravest sins is said to be that they took *awliyāʾ* from among the disbelievers and had they believed in Allah and the Prophet, and that which was sent down unto him, they would not have taken them as *awliyāʾ*, but many of them are iniquitous (Q 5:81).

The majority of exegetes consider the prohibition of close allegiance with Jews and Christians to be generally applicable across time. However, they also add that this verse specifically commanded a few individuals around the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, which included ‘Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit, who had allies among the Jewish tribes living around Madina; ‘Abdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl and other unnamed hypocrites, who supported the Jewish tribe of Banū Qurayza and the Christians of Najrān; Abū Lubāba b. ‘Abd al-Mundhir; al-Zubayr; and Ṭalḥa (cf. Ṭabarī, Samʿānī; Rāzī; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*; Ibn al-ʿArabī, *sūrat al-Māʾida*; *ittikhādhl waliyyin li-l-Muslimīn*; Makki).

Al-Ṭabarī is unequivocal in his explanation about the general applicability of the verse to all believers:

Allah Most High prohibits all Believers (*al-mu'minīna jamī'an*) from taking the Jews and the Christians as helpers (*anṣāran*) or allies (*ḥulafā'*) instead of the people of faith in Allah and His Messenger. And He declares that whosoever takes them as helpers, allies, and *awliyā'* (*naṣīran wa ḥalīfan wa waliyyan*) besides Allah and His Messenger and the Believers, such a person belongs to them in their joining of forces (*al-taḥazzub*) against Allah, His Messenger, and the Believers. Indeed, Allah and His Messenger disavow (*barī'an*) such a person. It may be that the verse was revealed regarding 'Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit and 'Abdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl and their Jewish allies, or regarding Abū Lubāba concerning his action with regard to the Jewish tribe of Banū Qurayza [see e.g. Baghawī], or regarding the two men, as per al-Suddī, one of whom wanted to join the Jews in Dahlak and the other wanted to join the Christians in the Levant (*al-Shām*)...but even if this is so, the appropriate method to decide [about the applicability of the verse] is to decide according to the generally applicable literal wording of the Revelation (*li-zāhir al-tanzīl*)...Nevertheless, the verse was undoubtedly revealed in connection with a hypocrite (*munāfiq*) who supported a Jew or a Christian, because he feared for himself some adversities, for the following verse refers to it in His Words, *Yet you see those in whose hearts is a disease hastening to them, saying, "We fear lest a change of fortune should befall us." It may be that Allah will grant victory, or a command from Him. And then they shall be remorseful for that which they secretly harbored in their souls* (Q 5:51).

### Implied References

The exegetes identify several verses which refer to Christians without naming them directly. These identifications are sometimes not exclusive or definite. Such verses include:

- **Q 1:7:** *The path of those You have favored, not of those who incurred wrath, nor of those who are astray.* The majority view of the exegetes is that those who have incurred wrath are the Jews and those who are astray are the Christians. Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938) says, "I know of no difference of opinion on this among the exegetes" (Tafsīr; also see Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; Bayḍāwī, Tafsīrs; Suyūṭī, Asrār p. 60, where he declares an exegetical consensus about this interpretation). The hadith of 'Adiyy b. Ḥātim b. 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd al-Ṭā'ī (d. ca. 66/686), the son of the poet Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī (al-Dhahabī, vol. 3: 163, no. 26), is often cited in support of this explanation: 'Adiyy b. Ḥātim said, "The Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace upon him, said, 'those who incur wrath are the Jews, and those who are astray are the Christians'" (Aḥmad, Muṣnad, 35:20§21095; Tirmidhī, Tafsīr, wa min sūra Fātiḥati al-kitāb; al-Haythamī, Mawārid, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Sūrat al-Fātiḥa; al-Fārisī, Iḥsān, dhikr iftirāq al-yahūd wa-

l-naṣārā firaqan mukhtalifa; Suyūṭī, Itqān, Type 80; Suyūṭī, Muḥimāt, sub Sūrat al-Fātiḥa). Ṭabarī and Bayḍāwī both also cite Q 5:77, who went astray before and led astray many and have strayed from the Straight Path, in support of this interpretation (Tafsīrs; see *ASTRAY*);

- **Q: 2:114:** *And who does greater wrong than the one who bars [entrance to] the mosques of Allah, lest His Name be remembered therein, and strives for their ruin? They are those who should not enter them, save in fear. Theirs is disgrace in this world, and theirs is a great punishment in the Hereafter.* Ibn ‘Abbās (3BH-68/619-688) identified that those who bar worshippers to enter mosques to be the Christians and the mosque as Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem (Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Sam‘ānī, and Ibn Kathīr; Suyūṭī, Muḥimāt);
- **Q 2:116:** *They say, “Allah has taken a son.” Glorified be He in His transcendence! Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and earth; and all surrender to Him in obedience.* The referents here are either Christians alone (cf. Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Sam‘ānī, Ibn Kathīr), or Christians, Jews, and the polytheists of Makka (Qushayrī and Rāzī; Makkī, Hidāya);
- **Q 2:118:** *Those who do not know say, “Why does Allah not speak to us, nor a sign come to us?” Those who came before them also spoke likewise; their hearts are alike; We have made the signs clear for a people who have certitude.* They are either the Christians, per Mujaḥhid b. Jabr (d. ca. 104/722); the Jews, per Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (45-95/665-713) and ‘Ikrima (d. 104/722), both reporting from Ibn ‘Abbās; or the Arab polytheists, per Qatāda (d. 117/735) and al-Suddī (d. 127/745). The verse’s context is the refutation of the Christian claim of a divine son (Q 2:116), hence al-Ṭabarī rejects the latter two ascriptions (*Tafsīr*);
- **Q 2:138:** *The ṣibgha of Allah—and which ṣibgha can be better than that of Allah? And we are His worshippers.* This verse rejects Christian custom of baptism (Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*). Linguistically, *ṣibgha*, derived from the root ṣ-b-gh, carries the meaning of imparting a new color through immersing a cloth in a dye (Ibn Manzūr). In theological terms, *ṣibgha* is the original *fiṭra* (Ibn Fāris). Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī says *ṣibgha* refers to the “innate faculties, like the intellect (*‘aql*), which Allah has created in humankind and by which the human being is differentiated from animals” (*Mufradāt*). The phrase *ṣibghata-llāh* is explained by the exegetes as “*fiṭra* (the primordial nature) upon which Allah Most High created humans” (cf. Q 30:30), as per Mujaḥhid (d. 102/720 or 104/722); “the religion of Allah” (*dīn Allāh*),” as per Qatāda (Māwardī; al-Qurṭubī; Ibn Qutayba, *Mushkil*, sub Q 2:138); and “the way (*millat*) of Ibrāhīm”, as per al-Farrā’ and al-Zajjāj (*Ma‘ānī*)—Ibrāhīm being the archetypical monotheist (*ḥanīf*) (Q 3:95).

Thus, *ṣibgha* understood as *fiṭra* is contrasted with the Christian custom of either immersing the child in baptismal water (*māʾ al-maʿmūdiyya*) or pouring it over the child's head, per a report from Ibn ʿAbbās (Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Rāzī, *Tafsīrs*). The *ṣibgha* of Allah is “*al-ḥanīfiyyat al-muslima*, and not your immersing of children in water” (Makkī);

- **Q 2:143-46**, which was revealed in the second year after the Hijra in reference to the changing of *qibla*—the direction of prayer—from Jerusalem toward Makka mentions Jews and Christians as *those unto whom We have given the Book recognize it as they recognize their children* (specifically the scholars among them: Ṭabarī), as does *everyone has a direction toward which he turns* (cf. Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr);
- **Q 2:159-60**: *Truly those who conceal what We have sent down of clear proofs and guidance—after We made it clear to mankind in the Book—are those who are cursed by Allah and cursed by the cursers; save those who repent, make amends, and make it clear; they are those unto whom I relent. And I am the Ever-Relenting, the Most Merciful.* This verse refers to the scholars of the Jews and Christians who conceal the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, while those who repent and correct themselves are those who embraced Islam from among them (cf. Ṭabarī; Baghawī; Ibn ʿAṭiyya; al-Balansī, *Mubhamāt*);
- **Q 2:177**: *Piety is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west....* The Christians are those who “faced eastward” (Ṭabarī; Ibn Kathīr);
- **Q 2:257**: *Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light. As for those who disbelieve, their protectors are false deities (tāghūt); they bring them out of light into the darkness. They are the inhabitants of the Fire, wherein they shall dwell forever.* The phrase *those who disbelieve* refers either to Christians (Ṭabarī; Makkī) or to all those from the People of the Book who disbelieved [in the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace] (Ibn Abī Ḥātim); or specifically to the leaders of the misguided among them (Ibn ʿAṭiyya; Baghawī);
- **Āl ʿImrān (Q 3)**: A number of exegetes—including Ṭabarī, Abū-l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī (d. 468/1075), the Andalusian exegete Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), and Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī (849-911/1445-ca.1505)—say that some eighty verses at the beginning of Madīnan Sura *Āl-ʿImrān* (Q 3) were revealed in reference to the visit of the Christian delegation from Najrān, consisting of sixty riders, among whom were fourteen of their nobles, including three who decided all their affairs. They stayed in the Prophet's Mosque for several days, prayed facing

east, and disputed with the Prophet regarding ʿĪsā, upon him peace. Their unyielding disputation led to the challenge of mutual imprecation (*mubāhala*) that the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, issued, following the revelation of Q 3:61: *Say to them: Come, let us summon our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then imprecate one another and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars* (Ṭabarī; Ibn al-Mundhir; Naḥḥās; Waḥidī, *Asbāb*, Sūrat Āl ʿImrān; Suyūṭī, *Asrār*, pp. 60-61; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 1:573-584). Al-Suyūṭī also highlights the mirroring of the sequence of mention of the Jews and Christians in Q 1:7 in the two suras which follow Q 1. In Q 1:7 Jews are the referent of (*those who have earned Divine wrath*); this is followed by a reference to the Christians (*those who are astray*). Al-Suyūṭī says, “Whenever the People of the Book are mentioned in [Sūrat al-] Baqara (Q 2), the Jews are specifically intended and Christians are not directly addressed (*lam yaqaʿ bi dhikr al-khiṭāb*); in *Āl ʿImrān* (Q 3), the Christians are directly addressed abundantly, and some eighty verses at its beginning were revealed concerning the delegation [of Christians] from Najrān. [The second last verse of Q 3] *And among the People of the Book are those who believe in Allah, and what has been sent down unto you, and what has been sent down unto them, men humble to Allah, not selling the signs of Allah for a small price; their wage is with their Lord; Allah is swift in reckoning* (Q 3:199), is concerning the Najāshī and his companions from amongst the Christians who entered Islam, as reported in the hadith” (*Asrār* pp. 60-61):

- Q 3:20: The disputants in the verse are identified in the commentaries as the Christians from Najrān (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī; Bayḍāwī; Ibn Kathīr);
- Q 3:59-61: *Truly the likeness of ʿĪsā, in the sight of Allah, is as that of Ādam...* This is a refutation of the divinity of ʿĪsā, upon him peace, claimed by the Christian delegation from Najrān (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Bayḍāwī, Ibn Kathīr);
- Q 3:80: *Nor could he order you to take the angels and prophets as lords.* This is an allusion to two delegations, one of Jews led by Abū Rāfiʿ al-Quraẓī, and the other of Christians from Najrān (Balansī, *Mubhamāt*; Ibn Hishām, *Mā nazala fī qawl Abī Rāfiʿ wa-l-najrānī* “A-turīdu an naʿbudaka kamā taʿbudu-l-naṣārā ʿĪsā”; Ibn Abī Ḥatīm and Ibn Kathīr; Shawkānī, *Fathḥ al-qadīr*);
- Q 3:78: Among them is a group who twist their tongues with the Book, to make you think that what they say is from the Book, but it is not from the Book. And they say, “this is from Allah,” but it is not

from Allah. And they utter lies about Allah knowingly. There are two reports from Ibn ‘Abbās regarding this verse. According to the first, the group refers to the Jews (Ṭabarī, Tafsīr; Wāḥidī, Wajīz; Qurṭubī, Tafsīr; Makkī, Hidāya), specifically the Jews who lived around Madīna (Ṭabarī, Tafsīr); according to the second, transmitted via al-Ḍaḥḥāk, it refers to both the Jews and the Christians (Baghawī, Tafsīr; Ibn al-Jawzī, Zād), since both altered their Books (the Torah and the Injīl, respectively).

- Q 3:90: Truly those who disbelieve after having believed, then increase in disbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted, and they are the ones who are astray. This verse refers to both the Jews and the Christians (Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīrs);
- Q 4:150: Truly those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers, and seek to make a distinction between Allah and His messengers, and say, “We believe in some and disbelieve in others,” and seek to take a way between. They are the Jews—who disbelieved in ‘Īsā and Muḥammad, upon them peace, and believed in other prophets—and the Christians, who believed in ‘Īsā and all prophets before him, but disbelieved in Muḥammad (Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Sam‘ānī, Ibn Kathīr);
- Q 7:169: Then they were succeeded by generations who inherited the Scripture, but took the [unlawful] gains of this lower world, saying, “We will be forgiven.” Some exegetes hold that this refers to the Christians (*cf.* Mujaḥhid, Ṭabarī);
- Q 13:43: *Whosoever has the knowledge of the scripture* is explained by the exegetes to be a reference to Salmān al-Fārisī and Tamīm al-Dārī, two Christians who entered Islam, as well as to Rabbi ‘Abd Allāh b. Salām who accepted Islam; according to others, it refers to Jews and Christians generally (*cf.* Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī; Ibn al-Jawzī, Zād; Balansī, *Mubhamāt*);
- Q 16:103: And We certainly know that they say: It is only a human being who teaches him. The tongue of the one they refer to is non-Arabic (a‘jamī), while this [Qur’ān] is in clear Arabic. Exegetical and “occasions of revelation” (asbāb al-nuzūl) literature identify more than one persons of Christian background as referent of the one they refer to; he is variously named as Bal‘ām, Ya‘īsh or Yā‘īsh, and Jabr; Sam‘ānī says there were two such slaves and the name of the second was Yasār (Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Sam‘ānī);
- Q 17:111: *And say: Praise be to Allah, who has not taken a son....* This verse refutes the claims of the Jews, the Christians, and the polytheists who attributed offspring to the Creator (Ibn Kathīr, ; Balansī, *Mubhamāt*);

- **Q 18:9-22:** The People of the Cave (*aṣḥāb al-kahf*) are identified in the exegetical literature as a group of young Christians who fled persecution under the reign of the pagan Roman Emperor Trajan Decius (Dīqyānus) (d. 401<sub>BI</sub>/251) (cf. Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Sam‘ānī, Ibn Kathīr);
- **Q 18:103:** Say, “Shall I inform you who are the greatest losers with respect to their deeds?” This refers to the Jews and the Christians and the priests and monks in their cells and monasteries (cf. Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Jawzī; Balansī, Mubhamāt);
- **Q 23:53:** But the people divided their religion among them into sects—each faction exulting in what it had. This refers to the splintering of Judaism and Christianity into various sects (Wāḥidī, Wajīz; Balansī, Mubhamāt; Baghawī).
- **Q 28:51:** And indeed We have caused the Word to reach them, that haply they may reflect. This either refers to both the Jews and the Christians (Balansī, Mubhamāt), or specifically to those Christians who came from Ethiopia (*al-Ḥabasha*) and believed in the Message of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace (Baghawī);
- **Q 30:32:** Of those who have divided their religion and became sects.... This is considered a general reference to the Jews and the Christians (cf. Ṭabarī, Baghawī);
- **Q 36: 13-20:** In the parable of the People of the City (*aṣḥāb al-qarya*), the city is identified as Antioch (*Anṭākiya*) (Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*), and the man who came running from the farthest part of the city is identified as a Christian martyr by the name of Ḥabīb b. Muriyy or Ḥabīb al-Najjār of Antioch, who was a carpenter (cf. Ṭabarī; Qurṭubī; and Ibn Kathīr; Ibn al-Jawzī);
- **Q 43:65:** But the parties differed among themselves. Woe unto those who do wrong: they will face the punishment of a painful day! This refers to the Christians who disputed among themselves regarding ‘Īsā, upon him peace, or to both the Jews and the Christians who disputed about the same matter (cf. Ṭabarī, Rāzī, Qurṭubī);
- **Q 85:4-10:** Most exegetes conclude that these verses refer to the massacre of the Christians of Najrān at the hands of the Jewish ruler of Yemen around 110 <sub>BI</sub>/524 (Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr). These verses are especially significant in that they refer to pre-Islamic Christians as “believers.” They were thrown into ditches where fire blazed (Ṭabarī; Baghawī; Sam‘ānī; Ibn Kathīr) (see PEOPLE OF UKHDŪD)
- **Q 105:** Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the people of the elephant? This sura describes an event in the year of the birth of the



Prophet, upon him blessings and peace (570 C.E.), generally known as “the Year of the Elephant,” when Christians from Ṣan‘ā’, Yemen, led by the warlord Abraha (usually known as *Abraha al-Ashram*—the one who has a disfigured nose or is harelippled) was sent by the Axumite Christian kingdom to destroy the House of Allah (*bayt Allāh*), the Ka‘ba, in Makka (see PEOPLE OF THE ELEPHANT) (cf. Baghawī, Qurṭubī, *Tafsīrs*).

### A Protected People

In Islamic jurisprudence, People of the Book living under Muslim rule are protected subjects (*ahl al-dhimma*, also *ahl al-‘aql*) for they conclude a communal treaty which secures their lives and wealth. They do not pay *zakāt* but pay a special tax (*jizya*) and receive protection (al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūt*, Siyar; al-Kāsānī, *Badā’i‘ al-ṣanā’i‘*, Siyar), which is mentioned in Q 9:29 (*Fight those who do not believe in Allah and in the Last Day, and who do not forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, and who do not follow the Religion of Truth among those who were given the Book, till they pay the jizya with a willing hand, being humbled*). According to most exegetes, the verse was revealed during the expedition of Tabūk (Ṭabarī, ) in 9/630, and “the Christian inhabitants of the border towns of Ayla, Jarbā’, and Adhrulḥ concluded peace treaties with the Prophet, upon him be blessings and peace, agreeing to pay this tribute” (Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr; Ibn Hishām, al-ṣulḥ ma‘a Ṣāliḥ Ayla). For lexical, exegetical, and jurisprudential details, see *JIZYA; TREATY AND ALLIANCE*.

The Prophetic traditions attest the inviolable status of such Christians and the People of the Scripture in general: “Whoever kills a *mu‘āhad* (one who is granted protection) shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise, though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years [of travel]” (Bukhārī, *Jizya*, bāb ithm man qatala mu‘āhadan bi-ghayr jurm). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, also said, “Beware: if anyone wrongs a *mu‘āhad*, or diminishes his right, or forces him to work beyond his capacity, or takes from him anything without his consent, I shall plead for him (*fa-anā ḥajjjuhu*, i.e. for the *mu‘āhad*) on the Day of Judgment” (Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Awwal kitāb al-kharāj wal-fay’ wal-imāra*, bāb fī-l-dhimmi).

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**See also:** ABROGATION; ĀDAM, UPON HIM PEACE; AḤMAD, UPON HIM PEACE; ALLIANCE AND TREATY; ANGELS; ANṢĀR; BELIEF; BELIEVERS; BIRTH; BOOKS; READINGS OF THE QURʿĀN; CHILDREN OF ISRĀʿĪL; CHURCHES, SYNAGOGUES, AND MONASTERIES; COERCION; COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET; COVENANT; CRUCIFIXION; DAY OF RECKONING; DISBELIEF; DISBELIEVERS; DISCIPLES OF ʿĪSĀ; ḤANĪF AND ḤUNAFĀ; HIJRA; SPIRIT OF HOLINESS; HYPOCRITES AND HYPOCRISY; IBRĀHĪM, UPON HIM PEACE; INJĪL; ʿĪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; ISHĀQ, UPON HIM PEACE; ISMĀʿĪL, UPON HIM PEACE, JIZYA; AL-MAJŪS; MARYAM, UPON HER PEACE; MESSENGERSHIP; MESSIAH; MONASTICISM AND MONKS; PEOPLE OF THE BOOK; PEOPLE OF THE CAVE; PEOPLE OF THE ELEPHANT; PEOPLE OF THE PIT; POLYTHEISM AND POLYTHEISTS; PROPHETHOOD; QIBLA; RESURRECTION; AL-ŠĀBĪʿŪN; SLAVES OF ALLAH; UMMA; YAʿQŪB (ISRĀʿĪL), UPON HIM PEACE; YAḤYĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; ZAKĀT.