Globethics Repository



Comparison of the Hebrew Writings and Bible (Genesis 37-42) with Quranic Sura Yusuf as Example for Cultural Adaption.

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Haase, Fee-Alexandra
Publisher	Frankfurt University
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-10 14:08:08
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/191394

Journal of Religious Culture

Journal für Religionskultur

Ed. by / Hrsg. von Edmund Weber
in Association with / in Zusammenarbeit mit Matthias Benad
Institute of Religious Peace Research / Institut für Wissenschaftliche Irenik
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

ISSN 1434-5935 - © E.Weber – E-mail: irenik@em.uni-frankfurt.de
web.uni-frankfurt.de/irenik/

No. 105 (2008)

Comparison of the Hebrew Writings and *Bible* (*Genesis* 37-42) with Quranic Sura *Yusuf* as Example for Cultural Adaption.

A Study of a Cross-Cultural Differentiation Process of Textual and Oral Traditions for Religious Writings Under the Historical Conditions of Middle East Societies

By

Fee-Alexandra Haase

The text corpus we are interested in, the Quranic Sura *Yusuf*, is one of the various traditions of the story of Joseph narrated in legends and in the three books *Torah*, *Bible*, and *Quran*. While narrative parts of the story of Joseph in the *Bible* and *Genesis*/Hebrew writings and the *Quran* show similarities as a narrative without any dogmatic impact *expressis verbis*, we find in the *Quran* especially in the beginning section and the closing section of the Sura *Yusuf* additional text parts of this character. These parts are non-narrative and from the perspective of their function they have missionary aims glorifying the *Quran* and the religion Islam. While the *Bible* and *Torah* continue the narrative of Joseph with his second journey to Egypt, the *Quran* closes the narrative of Joseph after the first story. What we compare is the Christian *Bible* (*Genesis* 37-42) and *Torah* vs the Quranic Sura *Yusuf*. In the *Old Testament* the story of Joseph is told in the verses 37-50 of *Genesis*. The *Hebrew Bible* contains the narrative of Joseph starting with *Genesis* 30:24 and the birth of Joseph and ending in *Genesis* 50:26 and the death of Joseph at the age of 110 in Egypt. We can state that the Quranic narrative is the

shortest one lacking the introduction of the birth and genealogy of Joseph we find in the Jewish text and the introduction of the Christian *Bible*.[1]
Our interest is an analysis of the structure of the tradition of the narrative itself and other elements implemented in the *Sura Yusuf*. We approach the text with the question of the types of tradition and their function comparing the passages regarding their differences. The traditions of the material as it is presented in the *Quran* evokes the question of the sources of this latest and most recent version of the narrative of Joseph among the writings claiming to be holy scriptures. We can say for sure that here a dominant oral tradition served for the final version in the *Quran.* Accessing the narrative from the most recent literal version of the *Quran* we will face the oral traditions and their external sources. With a text-immanent analysis of the narrative in the *Quran* we will indicate the major passages that can be considered to serve exclusively for the establishment of a belief system integrating positions of research in this field. A loss of authenticity compared to the Yewish sources and a shortened variation of the older texts goes here hand in hand with a promotion of the new belief. W. St. Clair-Tisdall mentioned that Islam retains much from pre-Islamic Arabia including the word *allah* as the name for God. The concept of monotheism did exist in the *jahiliyya*, and even the pagans conceived of a supreme god that ruled over all the others.[2] Thus, this religious concept must have been intended to be the means of mission towards other folks. In the polytheistic ancient Egyptian empire the Islamic religion after Muhammad found a place to project the religious aim in a narrative as a paradigm of mission taken from Hebrew sources as an act of competition with Christianity that did not change the historical settings to be used as a writing promoting its faith.
Traditionally the first and last part of the sura were considered to be *vox dei* prophecies. When reading it related to the history of Islam itself and the production of the *Quran*, these parts show us the editorial history of the *Quran* as a book and the efforts taken to establish it as the authority against various oral traditions of the *Quran* in a time when early missionary work was done. It was also necessary to make a distinction between the narratives in the *Quran* and stories of the story from a Hebrew and Christian perspective. In this reading the legendary material of the Hebrews would serve as argument for the historical situation of Islam at the time of Uthman, which is described in the first and last part of the sura.

---

[1] Here standard works on the narrative of Joseph in the OT and Quran:
See for variations in formulas of quotation. Pp. 155-181
See for the role of dialogue in Joseph. Pp. 182 -204
In: Longacre, Robert E. Joseph. A Story of Divine Providence. A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39 – 48. 2. ed. Winona Lake, Ind : Eisenbrauns, 2003
Redford, Donald. A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50). Leiden: Brill, 1970
Endo, Yoshinobu. The Verbal System of Classical Hebrew in the Joseph Story: An Approach from Discourse Analysis. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996
Goldman, Shalom. The Joseph Story in Jewish and Islamic Lore. New York, N.Y., New York Univ., Diss., 1986
Macdonald, John. Joseph in the Quran and Muslim Commentary: Acomparative Study. In: Muslim World. XLVİ (1956), 113-31, 207-24.
Michalak, Laurence. Notes on Using the Story of Joseph from the Koran (12th Sura). [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.geocities.com/htl_c/nov20.html>
<http://etext.virginia.edu/koran.html>

[2] Morad, Sharon. Summary of the Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. Edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998) Part Two: Chapter Twelve: The Sources of Islam (pp. 227-292). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

I Narrative Segments of the Literal Documents

Both the *Genesis* of the *Old Testament* and *Torah* and the *Quran* contain the narratives of

The Dream of Joseph
The Selling of Joseph
Joseph in Egypt with the sub-narratives
Joseph and Potiphor's Wife
The Prison Stay of Joseph
The Dream of the Pharao
Joseph's Meeting with his Brothers

The *Bible* introductory narrative is an epitome for the narrative. The *Quran* introduction and closing part are a glorification of the book. Indeed, the *Quran* narrative starts all at once with the dream of Joseph.

II State of Research

We mention here some specifica of the different scriptures. In the *Torah* before the brothers returned to Egypt with their father after this second trip into Canaan god spoke to Jacob in a dream (Gen. 42-47). In the *Torah* Judah proposed to his brothers to kill Joseph (37: 26-27). İn the *Torah* (37:36) the Midanites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar. In the Hebrew *Genesis* (41:45) Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Tzaphnath Paaneach not mentioned in the *Quran*. Stokes mentioned that "earlier rabbinical commentators were generally less interested in pinning down historical details. Instead, they tended to view Joseph as an exemplar, an idealized model of human conduct who combined physical beauty and moral excellence."[3] In the *Torah* and *Bible* Joseph demands that Simeon, one of the brother, remains in Egypt as hostage while the others go back to get Jacob's son Benjamin. In the *Quran* Simeon is not held as hostage. In the *Quran* Potiphar's wife invites women to a party cutting their hands when seeing Joseph. Since this passage is found exclusively in the *Quran*, we can ask about its specific function. For Joseph it is a sign of his appeal to women and the influence of *allah* they express in their exclamations. The *Quran* says that Joseph refuses to leave his prison until Potiphar's wife admits her guilt. Dave Miller in *Islam, the Quran, and New Testament Christianity* compared narrative details of the *Genesis* and the *Sura Yusuf*. In twelve of fifteen details Miller showed parallels between the Hebrew writings and the *Quran*, while the *Old Testament* version is completely different.[4] One of Miller's conclusions is: "It is self-evident and unmistakable that the Quran contains a considerable amount of borrowed material from uninspired Talmudic sources, rabbinical oral traditions, and Jewish legends—stories that abound in puerile, apocryphal, absurd, outlandish pablum."[5] Miller's final conclusions are: "The Quran does not possess the attributes of divine inspiration. The Quran possesses

---

[3] Stokes, Jim. "The Story of Joseph in Five Religious Traditions". In: World Order, 28:3 (Spring 1997), 35-46. Bahai Library. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://bahai-library.com/articles/stokes.joseph1.html>

[4] Miller, Dave. Islam, the Quran, and New Testament Christianity. Study Guide. Disc 2: Islam and the Quran. Truthguide. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.truthguide.org/islamstudy/Week4and5.doc>

[5] Miller, Dave. Islam, the Quran, and New Testament Christianity. Study Guide. Disc 2: Islam and the Quran. Truthguide. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.truthguide.org/islamstudy/Week4and5.doc>

characteristics that verify its human origin."[6] Miller stated: "Muhammad likely had very little, if any, contact with the actual Bible. His contact with the Bible was dependent on the stories related to him by the Jews—which he then mistook as accurate portrayals of Scripture."[7] Mustansir Mir mentioned in *The Quranic Story Of Joseph: Plot, Themes, And Characters*: "If the analysis presented in this article is basically correct, then we are faced with the question to what extent the Sura of Joseph is typical or atypical of Quranic composition in general. Is there a similar structure also in other parts of the Quran? Is there in the Quran, underlying all the differences, a definite pattern of composition which is then adapted to meet the specific needs of different sūras? In this context simply raising the question must suffice. [...] In analyzing the story I have confined myself largely to the data furnished by the Qur'ān, and have not made any explicit comparisons between the Qur'ānic and Biblical accounts of the story. Such a comparative study, if undertaken along the lines here followed, could well throw new light on some of the hitherto insufficiently explored aspects of the relationship between,the two scriptures."[8] In the summary of *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* the aim of the narratives of the *Quran* is described as follows: "Muhammad's use of stories about prophets served two functions: (1) it provided a clear connection with the previous 'religions of the book', and (2) it showed his countrymen that his religion had been preached before and those who rejected it were punished."[9]

The position of the Islamic writers in general claims errors of the *Bible* vs correctness of the *Quran.* Such a statement is not grounded in any text analysis, since we find here indeed traditions of Hebrew narratives and the latest one is the Islamic one. Most of the discussions here show an impact claiming a 'truth' of the *Quran*. Khaleel Mohammed.stated that "because the Quran stresses its Arabic nature, Muslim scholars believe that any translation cannot be more than an approximate interpretation, intended only as a tool for the study and understanding of the original Arabic text."[10]

The Tradition prior to the Death of Muhammad

Previous research has shown that the sura *Jusuf* relies on Hebrew material, while less similarities to the Bible are evident. The story must have been known in an Arabic version or must have been a result from translation/interpretation of the material prior to Muhammad. Following Alphonse Mingana Wakidi wrote that a Christian slave, Ibn Qumta, taught Muhammad and that Ibn Abi Sarh claimed that he could change what he wanted in the *Quran*

---

[6] Miller, Dave. Islam, the Quran, and New Testament Christianity. Study Guide. Disc 2: Islam and the Quran. Truthguide. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.truthguide.org/islamstudy/Week4and5.doc>

[7] Miller, Dave. Islam, the Quran, and New Testament Christianity. Study Guide. Disc 2: Islam and the Quran. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.truthguide.org/islamstudy/Week4and5.doc>

[8] Mir, Mustansir. "The Quranic Story Of Joseph: Plot, Themes, And Characters." In: The Muslim World, 1986, Volume LXXVI, No. 1, pp. 1-15. Islamic Awareness. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.islamic-awareness.org/Quran/Q_Studies/Mirjoseph.html>

[9] Morad, Sharon. Summary of The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book, edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998). The Narratives of the Koran (pp. 330-348). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[10] Khaleel, Mohammed."Assessing English Translations of the Quran". In: Middle East Quarterly. Spring 2005. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.meforum.org/article/717>

just by writing to Ibn Qumta.[11] Maududi in his *Commentary for Surah 12* sees parallels between the life of Joseph and Muhammad regarding the topics exile and imprisonment: "The subject matter of this Surah indicates that it was revealed during the last stage of the Holy Prophet's residence at Makkah, when the Quraish were considering the question of killing or exiling or imprisoning him. At that time some of the unbelievers put this question (probably at the instigation of the Jews) to test him :"Why did the Israelites go to Egypt?""[12] Andrew Rippin stated following Wansbrough that what the *Quran* is trying to evidence, what tafsir, sira, and theological writings are trying to explicate, is how the sequence of worldly events centered on the time of Muhammad was directed by god.[13] Under this aspect the literary themes of the *Quran* can be understood as self-reference to Muhammad. In *The Origins of The Koran* Ibn Warraq stated that there is a notable lack of critical scholarship on the *Quran*. For Ibn Warraq the traditional account claims that the *Quran* was revealed to Muhammad, written down in bits, and not collated before Muhammad's death. The collection under Abu Bakr (632-634) was the first collation of the *Quran*. Uthman (caliph from 644-656) made an official codex of the *Quran*. Uthman, Aisha, and Ibn Kab insisted that much of the *Quran* had been lost: "Looking at non-Muslim all we can say is that Muhammad lived, was a merchant and taught about Abraham. If Muhammad preached a message of Jewish religious contents, was is an opposition against upcoming Christianity".[14]

The Islamic Tradition after the Death of Muhammad

Already in the 19th centuy Nöldeke mentioned that Muhammad repeatedly emphasized that the *Quran* is in Arabic, but he borrowed many foreign terms to express ideas that had no Arabic expression and sometimes he misused these terms. For Nöldeke the Medinan suras are longer and contain sketches of the histories of previous prophets, laws, and diatribes against Jews and Christians. The beginning of each sura has a cryptic series of letters for which no meaning is known.[15] In the early 20th century Leone Caetani stated that the *Quran* today is not the same as that given by Muhammad. During the lifetime of the prophet and immediately afterwards verses were circulating that were either apocryphal or mistakenly attributed to the prophet: "The Uthmanic recension was necessary to deal with the uncertainty regarding the canonical text, while the first recension under Abu Bakr and Umar is a myth".[16]

---

[11] Morad, Sharon. Summary of The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book, edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998). The Narratives of the Koran (pp. 330-348). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[12] Maududi, Syed. "Commentary for Surah 12". Islamcity. USC Muslim Students Association Islamic Sever. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/quran/maududi/mau12.html>

[13] Morad, Sharon. Summary of The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book, edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998). The Narratives of the Koran (pp. 330-348). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[14] Morad, Sharon. Summary of The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book, edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998). The Narratives of the Koran (pp. 330-348). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[15] Morad, Sharon. Summary of The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book, edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998). The Narratives of the Koran (pp. 330-348). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[16] Morad, Sharon. Summary of The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book, edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998). The Narratives of the Koran (pp. 330-348). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .

For Mingana the corruption of oral transmission explains the inaccuracies of the stories: "Historical errors include: Mary being the sister of Aaron (S. 3:31ff), Haman being Pharaoh's minister (S.28:38), and the conflation of Gideon and Saul (S. 2:250). Mingana mentioned that the *Quran* today is substantially identical with this second recension, though not necessarily with the words of Muhammad. The claim that the *Quran* is perfect Arabic is absurd – there are many examples of repetition, weak rhyme, changing letters to force a rhyme, foreign words, bizarre usage or change of names (e.g. Terah to Azar, Saul to Talut (S. 2:248250), Enoch to Idris (S. 19:57)."[17] Opposed to the *Bible* the *Quran* refers to the ruler at the time of Joseph as a 'king'. This expression we can consider as a reference to the Hebrew term *melekh* used in the Hebrew *Torah* that is similar to the Arabic word *malik*. The sequence from *Genesis* 37 to 50 is the longest unbroken narrative in the *Torah*. Joseph in the *Torah* is named *mishneh le-melekh*, 'second to the king'. Following Mingana the earliest records about compilation are from Ibn Said (844), Bukhari (870) and Muslim (874). In 639 CE the *Bible* had not been translated into Arabic. "Teaching regarding the Torah, inheritance, and denial of the divinity and death of Christ existed in the Arab community. No reference was made to any Arab holy book. Some of the Arab conquerors were literate. Arabic script at that time was less developed and could not differentiate between dialectical variations due to missing diacritical signs".[18]

Arthur Jeffrey mentioned that Muslim tradition is largely fictitious: "After all, this same tradition says that very little had been recorded and that large amounts of the *Quran* were in danger of being lost when Muslims were killed at Yamama".[19] For Jeffrey a look at Muslim commentaries reveals many difficulties with the vocabulary of the *Quran*. The commentators tended to assume that Muhammad "meant the same things as they would mean by certain words, and they interpreted the *Quran* in light of the theological and judicial controversies of their time".[20] Charles Cutler Torrey mentioned that after exhausting the Arabian possibilities Muhammad began "to rely on Jewish material because it was well-known and would give the new religion greater credibility in the wider world".[21]

<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[17] Morad, Sharon. Summary of the Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. Edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998) Part Two: Chapter Twelve: The Sources of Islam (pp. 227-292). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[18] Morad, Sharon. Summary of the Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. Edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998) Part Two: Chapter Twelve: The Sources of Islam (pp. 227-292). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[19] Morad, Sharon. Summary of the Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. Edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998) Part Two: Chapter Twelve: The Sources of Islam (pp. 227-292). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[20] Morad, Sharon. Summary of the Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. Edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998) Part Two: Chapter Twelve: The Sources of Islam (pp. 227-292). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

[21] Morad, Sharon. Summary of the Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. Edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998) Part Two: Chapter Twelve: The Sources of Islam (pp. 227-292). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

III Detail Analysis of Passages of the Narrative in the *Quran*

The *Quran* contains as a conglomerate passages from different sources:

- The text of Islamic redactors and commentators of the *Quran*
- (latest passages, beginning and ending). Not in other traditions
- This part is in most Islamic readings interpreted as the *vox dei*
- The narratives taken from the *Genesis* (*Bible* and *Torah*) or previous sources
- New passages exclusively composed in the *Quran* for Islam and mission

A The Introduction

Traditionally in Islamic belief this part is understood as a part of the prophetic words. When we look at the contents it is an abstract introduction to the narrative clearly to distinguish from the narrative leading to the assumption that the text in the beginning and end that mentions a book (*kitab*) was written by Islamic redactors and commentators of the *Quran*; the form of a book the *Quran* became after the pieces of Muhammad's narrative were collected. Another source for the framing introduction and end is the *vox dei*. Jim Stokes stated that "hence in the Quran the story of Joseph is framed by the Voice of God speaking to Muhammad. That Voice defines the story's nature and meaning. It opens by affirming that the Arabic Qur'án is itself but a sign of "the Manifest Book"."[22] But why would a *vox dei* send down a whole book in spoken words? Verse one and the following two verses seem to talk from different perspectives. The first means the book and the second is related to the *Quran* not mentioning its form. The mentioning of the *kitab* is in a standard phrase in many beginning of suras used. Stoke also interpretes the end of the sura as a dialogue, words of god directed to Muhammad: "At the end of the sura, speaking again to Muhammad, God once more affirms that the story is meant as a gift to bring understanding."[23]

الر تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ {1}

012.001
YUSUFALI: A.L.R. These are the symbols (or Verses) of the perspicuous Book.
PICKTHAL: Alif. Lam. Ra. These are verse of the Scripture that maketh plain.
SHAKIR: Alif Lam Ra. These are the verses of the Book that makes (things) manifest.

At least with the advent of Islam in 622 C.E. the story of Joseph must have found an Arabic translation.[24] The *Bible* is in many places of the *Quran* mentioned as 'the book'. When we read the introduction of the sura we can interpret it as a comment on a translation made into Arabic in order to make the contents understandable for Arabs- thus *quran* here simply means 'Arabic recitation' or 'recitation in Arabic'. Men who remembered Muhammad's teaching were called reciters or *qurra*', a word derived from the same root as the word *Quran*. They

[22] Stokes, Jim. "The Story of Joseph in Five Religious Traditions". In: World Order, 28:3 (Spring 1997), 35-46. Bahai Library. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://bahai-library.com/articles/stokes.joseph1.html>
[23] Stokes, Jim. "The Story of Joseph in Five Religious Traditions". In: World Order, 28:3 (Spring 1997), 35-46. Bahai Library. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://bahai-library.com/articles/stokes.joseph1.html>
[24] http://bible.ort.org/books/searchd2.asp. Arabic versions of the the narrative are known:
The story of Joseph in Arabic Verse: The Leeds Arabic Manuscript 347. Ed. with a Transl. and Notes by R. Y. Ebied and M. J. L. Young. Leiden : Brill, 1975 (Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society : Suppl. ; 3)

were against Uthman in AH 25 forced Uthman to release the Quran in an authorized version.[25]

} 2إِنَّا أنزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ {
نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَـذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِن كُنتَ مِن

012.002
YUSUFALI: We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, in order that ye may learn wisdom.
PICKTHAL: Lo! We have revealed it, a Lecture in Arabic, that ye may understand.
SHAKIR: Surely We have revealed it-- an Arabic Quran-- that you may understand.

قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ {3}
إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ

012.003
YUSUFALI: We do relate unto thee the most beautiful of stories, in that We reveal to thee this (portion of the) Qur'an: before this, thou too was among those who knew it not.
PICKTHAL: We narrate unto thee (Muhammad) the best of narratives in that We have inspired in thee this Qur'an, though aforetime thou wast of the heedless.
SHAKIR: We narrate to you the best of narratives, by Our revealing to you this Quran, though before this you were certainly one of those who did not know.

B The Narrative

The passages containing the term *allah* are changed in order to converse the old material for a new religion. This change we find all over the narrative of the sura, but intensively in the last narrative passage containing a prayer to *allah*. Text passages included exclusively in the *Quran* refer to the religion of *allah*. Also the name *allah* is exchanged in the Quranic narrative.

آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ {66}
وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لاَ تَدْخُلُواْ مِن بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَادْخُلُواْ مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنكُم
مِّنَ اللّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلاَّ لِلّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

012.066
YUSUFALI: (Jacob) said: "Never will I send him with you until ye swear a solemn oath to me, in Allah's name, that ye will be sure to bring him back to me unless ye are yourselves hemmed in (and made powerless). And when they had sworn their solemn oath, he said: "Over all that we say, be Allah the witness and guardian!"
PICKTHAL: He said: I will not send him with you till ye give me an undertaking in the name of Allah that ye will bring him back to me, unless ye are surrounded. And when they gave him their undertaking he said: Allah is the Warden over what we say.
SHAKIR: He said: I will by no means send him with you until you give me a firm covenant in Allah's name that you will most certainly bring him back to me, unless you are completely

[25] Morad, Sharon. Summary of the Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. Edited by Ibn Warraq (Prometheus Books: Amherst, New York. 1998) Part Two: Chapter Twelve: The Sources of Islam (pp. 227-292). The Muslim-Christian Debate Website. [July 2, 2007] . <http://debate.org.uk/topics/books/origins-koran.html>

surrounded. And when they gave him their covenant, he said: Allah is the One in Whom trust is placed as regards what we say.

In several parts of the Quranic version the belief in *allah* is the plot of the narratives section. So in the story of the banquet of the ladies:

هَـذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَـذَا إِلاَّ مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ {31}
قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَّنِي فِيهِ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدتُّهُ عَن نَّفْسِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا

012.031
YUSUFALI: When she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them: she gave each of them a knife: and she said (to Joseph), "Come out before them." When they saw him, they did extol him, and (in their amazement) cut their hands: they said, "Allah preserve us! no mortal is this! this is none other than a noble angel!"
PICKTHAL: And when she heard of their sly talk, she sent to them and prepared for them a cushioned couch (to lie on at the feast) and gave to every one of them a knife and said (to Joseph): Come out unto them! And when they saw him they exalted him and cut their hands, exclaiming: Allah Blameless! This is no a human being. This is not other than some gracious angel.
SHAKIR: So when she heard of their sly talk she sent for them and prepared for them a repast, and gave each of them a knife, and said (to Yusuf): Come forth to them. So when they saw him, they deemed him great, and cut their hands (in amazement), and said: Remote is Allah (from inperfection); this is not a mortal; this is but a noble angel.

Also this passages refers directly to the belief in *allah* empazising monotheism:

يَا صَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ أَأَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ {39}
مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِهِ إِلاَّ أَسْمَاء سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنتُمْ وَآبَآؤُكُم مَّا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلْطَانٍ
إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلاَّ لِلّهِ أَمَرَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُواْ إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ

012.039
YUSUFALI: "O my two companions of the prison! (I ask you): are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One Allah, Supreme and Irresistible?
PICKTHAL: O my fellow-prisoners! Are divers lords better, or Allah the One, Almighty?
SHAKIR: O my two mates of the prison! are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Supreme?

The narative of the sura ends with a prayer to *allah*:

أنتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنُيَا وَالآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ {101}
ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنبَاء الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُواْ أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ

012.101
YUSUFALI: "O my Lord! Thou hast indeed bestowed on me some power, and taught me something of the interpretation of dreams and events,- O Thou Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my Protector in this world and in the Hereafter. Take Thou my soul (at death) as one submitting to Thy will (as a Muslim), and unite me with the righteous."
PICKTHAL: O my Lord! Thou hast given me (something) of sovereignty and hast taught me (something) of the interpretation of events - Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art

my Protecting Guardian in the world and the Hereafter. Make me to die muslim (unto Thee), and join me to the righteous.
SHAKIR: My Lord! Thou hast given me of the kingdom and taught me of the interpretation of sayings: Originator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my guardian in this world and the hereafter; make me die a muslim and join me with the good.

C The Closing Part

The final passage is exclusively related to belief (012.102-012.111):

تَعْقِلُونَ {109}
حَتَّى إِذَا اسْتَيْأَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوا جَاءهُمْ نَصْرُنَا فَنُجِّيَ مَن نَّشَاء وَلاَ

012.109
YUSUFALI: Nor did We send before thee (as messengers) any but men, whom we did inspire,- (men) living in human habitations. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? But the home of the hereafter is best, for those who do right. Will ye not then understand?
PICKTHAL: We sent not before thee (any messengers) save men whom We inspired from among the folk of the townships - Have they not travelled in the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them? And verily the abode of the Hereafter, for those who ward off (evil), is best. Have ye then no sense?
SHAKIR: And We have not sent before you but men from (among) the people of the towns, to whom We sent revelations. Have they not then travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those before them? And certainly the abode of the hereafter is best for those who guard (against evil); do you not then understand?

يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ {110}
لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُوْلِي الأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَـكِن تَصْدِيقَ

012.110
YUSUFALI: (Respite will be granted) until, when the messengers give up hope (of their people) and (come to) think that they were treated as liars, there reaches them Our help, and those whom We will are delivered into safety. But never will be warded off our punishment from those who are in sin
PICKTHAL: Till, when the messengers despaired and thought that they were denied, then came unto them Our help, and whom We would was saved. And Our wrath cannot be warded from the guilty.
SHAKIR: Until when the messengers despaired and the people became sure that they were indeed told a lie, Our help came to them and whom We pleased was delivered; and Our punishment is not averted from the guilty people.

الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ {111}

012.111
YUSUFALI: There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it,- a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe.

PICKTHAL: In their history verily there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (Scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for folk who believe.
SHAKIR: In their histories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding. It is not a narrative which could be forged, but a verification of what is before it and a distinct explanation of all things and a guide and a mercy to a people who believe.

This last part mentions stories of messengers and these messengers are considered to be liars. This part is not related to the story of Joseph; it is an abstract text about the punishment of non-believers. One interpretation is that this last part -like the beginning- was written in later time after the death of Muhammad when the recitors of the *Quran* obviously had different versions of the *Quran.* If we read the text as a non-prophetic text, it is an appeal regarding messengers that travelled across the lands telling lies. The appeal now is the authorized version of the *Quran* as a book. The story of Joseph serves here as allegory for the missionary character of Joseph in the promotion of faith in *allah*. At this point the tradition of the story has lost any historicity when placed in polytheistic Egypt. Reading the text as self-reference to the time after the death of Muhammad the beginning and end serve for the authorization of the *Quran* as a book vs the oral traditions that caused disputes among early Muslims and forced a unified version. At the time of Muhammad we cannot consider Muslims as *ahl-al kitab*. At that time no book version of the *Quran* existed.

IV Conclusions

The Traditions of the Narrative

The relation between the literary sources *Genesis* and the *Quran* is problematic. We must assume a predominant oral tradition of the narrative itself before the upcoming of the *Genesis* text and also a continously existing narrative tradition until Muhammad's time.
We must differentiate between three tracks of oral tradition:

1. The Jewish oral tradition of the narrative
2. The Christian oral tradition of the narrative prior to the Bible
3. The oral and literal tradition of the words of Muhammad

Oldest Narrative:	Genesis Hebrew Bible/ Hebrew Legends
Tradition:	Genesis Bible
Tradition:	Quran

The story is a historical narrative of the Hebrews is placed in the Egyptian empire. As an account of Egyptian history it is assumed that it was related to the time of the foreign Semitic invadors, the Hyksos. Here Jospeh would stand *pars pro toto* for a whole folk. The story in the *Bible* stands for forgiveness. The story in the *Quran* finds its culmination in the prayer and thus has a religious emphasis on the religion of *allah*. Stokes stated that "the story of Joseph [...] holds a no less significant place in the literature and teachings of Christianity, Islam, the Bábí religion, and the Bahá'í Faith; and it had analogues in ancient Egyptian literature and Zoroastrian texts as well."[26]

[26] Stokes, Jim. "The Story of Joseph in Five Religious Traditions". In: World Order, 28:3 (Spring 1997), 35-46. Bahai Library. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://bahai-library.com/articles/stokes.joseph1.html>

The Quranic Tradition

1. The *Quran* sura is not homogenous in terms of its form, time, and tradition.
   It contains earlier narrative and later descriptive parts.
   The earlier parts are taken from the Jewish narrative oral history and presented as revealed word of Muhammad. In fact Muhammad stands here in an oral tradition of shared Jewish narratives.
   The beginning and ending of the sura are later written. They have the character of an introductory comment including positive critical values of the narrative itself.
   Thus, they reflect the sura on a meta-level.
2. Text passages included exclusively in the *Quran* refer to the religion of *allah*.
   Also the name *allah* is exchanged in the Quranic narrative.
3. The dominance of Jewish narrative elements refers to the oral tradition of this narrative in Jewish culture at the time of Muhammad who was illiterate.
4. The text of the *Quran* omits all Jewish cultural contents.
5. As a narrative the story shows no signs of a prophetic *vox dei* text
   The miracles of the text are im general in the narrative the capacity of the interpretation of dreams and the meeting of the lost son.
   These features we find in other Middle East narratives.
6. The Quranic narrative changes the text in order to make it appear as a part of a new religion with syncretistic methods.
7. The *Bible* text cannot be considered as a direct Vorlage of the *Quran.*

The identification of the *Quran* with a book is a relatively new association. We have reason to assume that the term *kitab* itself here can be understood as a later editorial functional term for the first editorial works on a book. In the text of the *Quran* itself the term *kitab* is related to the *Bible* and term Arabic *quran* can be understood as an Arabic recitation, which implies the linguistic shift to the Arabic language of an oral tradition becoming subject to recitation. As a consequence to cultural differences and the roots and the adequate presentation of non-Arabic cultural contents in revisionism resulted in changes of the story where considered necessary by redactors even after the time of Muhammad. After this time Muslims saw the necessity of written texts in order to distingish themselves from other groups and to ensure unity among Muslims. The first and last part of the sura Jusuf demonstrates these efforts, while the story itself was changed to the historical and cultural needs .

V Editions Used

New International Version (English version), Arabic, Hebrew, and Septaginta Verson: International Bible Society. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.bibleserver.com/index.php>

Quran. Al-Islam. [July 2, 2007].
<http://www.al-islam.org/quran/>

Quran in Translations. University of Southern California. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/012.qmt.html#012.004>

Quran. Arabic and Transkription. Sacred Texts Edition. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/uq/012.htm>

Genesis. The Hebrew Bible. [July 2, 2007] .
<http://bible.ort.org/books/searchd2.asp>