

BLOODY WRATH AND HEALING TOUCHES: JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS IN EARLY IMĀMĪ SHĪ'Ī TAFSĪR*

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Abstract

The meetings between Joseph and his brothers in Egypt are often portrayed in Qurʾān commentaries as dramatic occurrences. A few early Imāmī-Shīʿī commentaries mention a peculiar account that describes the heated clash between the brothers and Joseph following Joseph's accusation that one of them stole from him. A comparative examination shows that a second version of this tradition appears in contemporary Sunnī exegesis, and that earlier Jewish Midrashim influenced both Muslim versions. This paper will suggest that the Muslim versions consciously altered the Jewish exegetical narrative to agree with the qurʾānic one and that the Islamicized version of the tradition was adopted "back" into later Jewish exegesis. The differences between the Imāmī and Sunnī versions suggest that each community had independent access to rabbinic lore. The paper also studies elements in the Imāmī version that are absent from both the Sunnī and Jewish versions, including unusual bleeding from various organs and a golden pomegranate. Finally, it offers some preliminary observations concerning the considerations that might have led to the unique developments exhibited in the Imāmī version.

In their commentaries on Sūrat Yūsuf, two early Imāmī-Shīʿī exegetes, ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. after 307/919) and Abū Naṣr al-ʿAyyāshī (fl. ca. end of the third/ninth and beginning of fourth/tenth centuries),¹ introduce a

* This article is the expanded form of a paper by the same title which was read at the 2021 IQSA Annual Meeting and was subsequently awarded the 2021 Andrew Rippin Best Paper Prize. I would like to thank James T. Robinson, Sarah Stroumsa, Sean W. Anthony, and the anonymous reviewers for their meticulous reading of this paper and their invaluable comments. I would also like to thank the members of the Andrew Rippin Award committee for their incisive remarks.

1. See Meir Bar-Asher's remarks concerning the dating of his birth and death in al-

peculiar tradition about a conversation between Joseph and his brothers. One of Joseph's brothers becomes extremely angry during the conversation, which results in an irregular bleeding of some of his organs. Using a golden pomegranate, Joseph leads his son to use his extraordinary abilities to pacify the angry brother.

By examining the tradition, this paper wishes to contribute to the efforts of various researchers today to elucidate some of the ways in which knowledge was transmitted across communal borders in the Islamic world, often orally and through the shared Arabic language. The paper also wishes to shed more light on some of the intricate ways in which the transmission of the tradition(s) under discussion occurred; in our case, through what seems to be a conscious adaptation and adjustment of a familiar tradition that originated in rabbinic lore.² In this way, the paper wishes to argue that an intrareligious and interreligious inquiry can clarify what is otherwise a highly unusual and somewhat incoherent Imāmī exegetical tradition. Finally, the paper will show that the Muslim version of the tradition was adopted “back” into Jewish literature.

The paper begins with an examination of the tradition in the broader Muslim exegetical context, which will show that a slightly different version of the tradition appears in contemporary Sunnī exegesis as well. The paper then argues that earlier Jewish Midrashim influenced both Muslim versions and that the early Imāmī version introduces two critical additions to the tradition and that these additions are absent from both the Sunnī exegetical tradition and the Jewish one. In addition, the paper will claim that both the Sunnī and the Imāmī versions may have consciously altered the Jewish exegetical narrative(s) to fit into their exegetical and theological framework and offer some preliminary observations concerning the considerations that might have led to the unique developments exhibited in the Imāmī version.

²Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī: A Fourth/Tenth Century Shīʿī Commentary on the Qurʾān*, trans. N. Dhanji and ed. W. M. Amin (Birmingham: AMI Press, 2020), V and n. 21. Hamid Reza Fahimi Tabar gives 260–329/874–941 as the dates of his birth and death, in W. Madelung and F. Daftary (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, “al-ʿAyyāshī,” s.v. Consulted online on 11 July 2022. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-9831_isla_COM_0322.
2. On the advantages of this kind of research, see S. Stroumsa, “Whirlpool Effects and Religious Studies: A Response to Guy G. Stroumsa,” in V. Krech and M. Strinicke (eds.), *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe: Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 159–162.

1. The Tradition: The Imāmī Version

Our tradition appears in the commentary of the Imāmī scholar ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, who attributes it to the sixth Shī‘ī Imām, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765). Al-Qummī introduces the tradition in his interpretation to *Sūrat Yūsuf*, the twelfth *sūrah* in the *Qur’ān*, as follows:

فسئل الصادق عليه السلام عن قوله: (أيتها العير إنكم لسارقون) قال: ... فاجتمعوا إلى يوسف وجلودهم تقطر دماً أصفر فكانوا يجادلونه في حيسه. وكانوا ولد يعقوب إذا غضبوا خرج من ثيابهم شعر ويقطر من رؤوسهم دم أصفر... قال فرجع إخوة يوسف إلى أبيهم وتخلف يهودا فدخل على يوسف فكلمه حتى ارتفع الكلام بينه وبين يوسف وغضب وكانت على كنف يهودا شعرة فقامت الشعرة فأقبلت تقذف بالدم وكان لا يسكن حتى يمسه بعض أولاد يعقوب. قال: فكان بين يدي يوسف ابن له في يده رمانة من ذهب يلعب بها فلما رأى يوسف أن يهودا قد غضب وقامت الشعرة تقذف بالدم أخذ الرمانة من الصبي ثم دحرجها نحو يهودا وتبعها الصبي ليأخذها فوقعت يده على يهودا فذهب غضبه. قال: فارتاب يهودا ورجع الصبي بالرمانة إلى يوسف ثم ارتفع الكلام بينهما حتى غضب يهودا وقامت الشعرة تقذف بالدم فلما رأى ذلك يوسف دحرج الرمانة نحو يهودا فتبعها الصبي ليأخذها فوقعت يده على يهودا فسكن غضبه وقال: إن في البيت لمن ولده يعقوب حتى صنع ذلك ثلاث مرات.³

[Ja‘fār] al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, was asked about the meaning of the verse, “O caravan, you are robbers!” (Q 12:70). [Ja‘fār al-Ṣādiq] answered: ... And the brothers met with Joseph, and yellow blood dripped from their skin, and they argued with him regarding (Benjamin’s) confinement... When the sons of Jacob were angry, hair used to come out of their clothes, and yellow blood dripped from their heads... [Ja‘fār al-Ṣādiq] said: Joseph’s brothers returned to their father, and Judah remained [in Egypt] and came to Joseph. He spoke with Joseph until their conversation became heated. Judah became angry, and a hair on his shoulder rose and began discharging blood. He would not relax until one of Jacob’s descendants touched him. [Ja‘fār al-Ṣādiq] said: Joseph’s son was in front of him, holding a golden pomegranate with which he was playing. When Joseph saw that Judah was angry and that the hair began discharging blood, he took the pomegranate from the boy and rolled it toward Judah. The boy followed the pomegranate to grab it. His hand touched Judah, and Judah’s anger dissipated. [Ja‘fār al-Ṣādiq] said: Judah became wary, and the boy came back to Joseph with the pomegranate. Then their conversation became heated, and Judah became angry again, and the hair began discharging blood. When Joseph saw that, he rolled the pomegranate toward Judah. The boy followed the pomegranate to grab it. His hand touched Judah, and Judah’s anger subsided. Judah said: A descendant of Jacob is in this house! It was done three times.⁴

3. Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, ed. Ṭayyib al-Mūsawī al-Jazā‘irī (2 vols., Najaf: Maktabat al-Hudā, 1967), 1.349–350.

4. Unless mentioned otherwise, the Arabic translations in this paper are mine. Biblical translations are taken from the NRSV.

Abū Naṣr al-‘Ayyāshī, another prominent Imāmī exegete who wrote around the same period as al-Qummī, records a similar version of the tradition.⁵ It is likewise attributed to Ja‘far al-Šādiq, but al-‘Ayyāshī relates the tradition on the authority of Ja‘far’s disciple, the Kūfan scholar Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī.⁶ Since both versions are almost identical, and since this tradition will be cited by later prominent Twelver authors, such as al-Baḥrānī⁷ and al-Majlisī,⁸ I will name it here “the Imāmī version.”⁹ As we have seen, the Imāmī version presents a clear line of events, yet it is still highly enigmatic. In the context of this paper, I would like to highlight four questions that can be asked about this version.

The first question concerns Joseph’s reaction to his brother’s wrath: Why did Joseph try to appease his brother? The tradition tells us that when Judah’s conversation with Joseph “becomes heated” and Judah becomes angry, Joseph decides to send the boy to him. Yet, it does not explain why Joseph does not simply leave Judah in his anger.

The second question that I would like to highlight here relates to the boy’s presence. The qur’ānic story tells about Joseph and his brothers in this context; it does not, however, talk about Joseph’s son. Now, the biblical narrative does mention that Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, who will later become the fathers of two of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 48). Why, however, would the character of Joseph’s son be mentioned in

5. Abū ‘l-Naṣr Muḥammad b. Mas‘ūd al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī* (2 vols., Qom: Qism al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah, 2000), 2.356–357.

6. Al-‘Ayyāshī records this tradition twice, with minor variations, both on the authority of Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī. He also records an additional, shorter tradition, which tells that yellow blood drips from the skin of the brothers when they are angry. The shorter tradition, however, is given on the authority of al-Ḥusayn b. Abī ‘l-‘Alā’ from Ja‘far al-Šādiq. See ‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr*, 2.356–357. On Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī, see Josef van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra*, trans. J. O’Kane et al. (5 vols., Leiden: Brill, 2017–2020), 1.402–408; and Hossein Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographic Survey of Early Shi’ite Literature* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 269–271. On al-Ḥusayn b. Abī ‘l-‘Alā’, see Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, 274–275.

7. The version that al-Baḥrānī gives is quoted from ‘Ayyāshī’s *tafsīr*; see Hāshim b. Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (5 vols., Qom: Mu’assasat al-Ba’tḥah, 1997), 3.185–186.

8. The version that al-Majlisī gives is quoted from ‘Alī al-Qummī’s *tafsīr*; see Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār* (110 vols., Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1983), 12.240.

9. For a discussion on the early Imāmī exegetes, the relationship between the commentaries, and the historical circumstances in which they were created, see: Me’ir Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

the Muslim exegetical narrative? This tradition provides a rationale for the boy's presence when it tells us that Jacob's descendants had the extraordinary ability to heal each other's anger. What remains unclear is why the tradition bothers with the inclusion of the boy's character and his pacifying powers at all, when Joseph himself could have simply touched his brother.

The third question relates to the brothers' blood: Why and how do they bleed when they are angry, and why is the brothers' blood described as "yellow" (*aṣfar*), and what does the word *aṣfar* denote in this context? Finally, the fourth question concerns the golden pomegranate: No pomegranate is mentioned in the qur'ānic story in this context, so why does it suddenly appear here?

Theoretically, some elements could have been explained as a misunderstanding or mistake that occurred at some point during the transmission of the tradition; other elements could be dismissed as mere narrative embellishments. In what follows, however, I would like to show that the appearance of some of these various peculiar elements in the tradition is not accidental, and argue that they constitute familiar motifs.

2. The Sunnī Version

One way to shed light on this tradition is to examine its broader context and inquire whether the Sunnī exegetical literature from the same period in which this tradition appeared in Imāmī commentaries introduces a similar tradition. Such an examination shows that the tradition indeed appeared in contemporary Sunnī literature, with some significant variations. Note, for example, how it appears in the *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923):¹⁰

كما حدثنا ابن وكيع، قال: ثنا عمرو، عن أسباط، عن السدي، قال ... قال: وكان بنو يعقوب إذا غضبوا لم يطاقوا، فغضب روبيل، فقال: أيها الملك، والله لتتركنا أو لأصبحن صيحة لا تبقى بمصر امرأة حامل إلا ألفت ما في بطنها وقامت كل شعرة في جسد روبيل، فخرجت من ثيابه، فقال يوسف لابنه: قم إلى جنب روبيل فمسسه وكان بنو يعقوب إذا غضب أحدهم فمسسه الآخر ذهب غضبه، فمر الغلام إلى جنبه فمسسه، فذهب غضبه، فقال روبيل: من هذا؟ إن في هذا البلد لبزرا من بزر يعقوب.¹¹

10. The same tradition also appears in al-Ṭabarī's *History of the Prophets and Kings*. See al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al. (3 ser., Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 1.402. The relevant passage has also been translated by William Brinner, *The History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 3: The Children of Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 175.

11. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (26 vols., Riyadh: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 2003), 13.277–278.

As Ibn Wakīʿ told us: ʿAmr told us, from Asbāt, who said it from al-Suddī, who said ... he said: When the sons of Jacob were angry, they could not be coped with. Then Reuben became angry and said: “O king,¹² by God, you will let us be, or else I will cry out so loudly that there will not be a pregnant woman in Egypt left who will not miscarry that which is in her belly.” Every hair in Reuben’s body stood on end and protruded through his robe. Joseph then said to his son: “Go to Reuben’s side and touch him.” Whenever one of the sons of Jacob became angry, another would touch him, and his anger would subside. The boy then went to Reuben’s side, touched him, and Reuben’s anger subsided. Reuben said: “Who is this? Certainly, an offshoot of Jacob’s branch is in this land!”

The similarities between the Imāmī tradition and the one cited here from al-Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr* are evident. They share vocabulary and style and present the same line of events: Joseph and his brother, here Reuben rather than Judah, argue. Reuben becomes angry, and his hair “stood on end” and “protruded through his robe.” Here, Joseph explicitly asks his son to touch Reuben, and Reuben’s anger subsides. The tradition ends much in the same way too, with Reuben declaring that one of Jacob’s descendants is in the area.

The same version that we see by al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* appears in other tenth-century Sunnī exegetical works, such as the *tafsīr* works of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938)¹³ and Abū ʿl-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983).¹⁴ All three of these sources cite the early Kūfan exegete Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī (d. 127/745) as the source for the story.¹⁵ Furthermore, as we shall presently see, all three Sunnī versions also differ from the Imāmī

12. The word *malik* here can refer to Joseph, as some commentaries mention that the brothers did not recognize Joseph because he looked like a king. See, for example, the commentaries of Abū ʿl-Layth al-Samarqandī and al-Māwardī on Q 12:58, in al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-ʿulūm*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwad, ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, and Zakariyyā ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Nūti (3 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1993), 2.167; and al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat waʿl-ʿuyūn: Tafsīr al-Māwardī*, ed. al-Sayyid b. ʿAbd al-Maqṣūd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (6 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah and Muʿassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1992), 3.54.

13. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, ed. Asʿad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib, (10 vols., Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997), 7.2179.

14. Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-ʿulūm*, 2.172.

15. It is perhaps relevant to the current discussion that al-Suddī is sometimes said to have transmitted *isrāʾīliyyāt*; see, for example, Ibn Kathīr’s remarks on al-Suddī in his commentaries on Q 2:36 and Q 2:67, in *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Sayyid Muḥammad et al. (15 vols., al-Jizah: Muʿassasat Qurṭubah and Maktabat Awlād al-Shaykh liʿl-Turāth, 2000), 1.366 and 447–448.

version in the same ways and can thus be grouped here under the title “the Sunnī version.”¹⁶

Although the Sunnī version and the Imāmī one largely resemble one another, there are some noticeable differences in content between the version recorded by Sunnī and Imāmī exegetes in the tenth century. Specifically, the yellow blood and the golden pomegranate motifs that we have seen in the Imāmī version are absent from contemporary Sunnī versions.¹⁷ On the other hand, some elements in the Sunnī version are absent from the Imāmī version, such as the forcefulness of Reuben’s voice, its reach, and its devastating impact.

In early Imāmī exegesis, the authority of the tradition is usually the sixth Imām, Ja‘fār al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), whereas in the early Sunnī one, the exegetical authority is al-Suddī (d. 127/745). Abū ‘l-Layth al-Samarqandī, it should be noted, adduces an additional exegetical report attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās (d. ca. 68/687–688). Interestingly, while al-Suddī identifies the angry brother as Reuben, the report attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās identifies him as Judah (as is the case in the Imāmī version).

The next section of this paper will attempt to trace the origin of this tradition and argue that it did not originate in Sunnī or Imāmī circles but rather that it already appeared in an earlier Jewish midrash. Furthermore, I will claim that this Jewish Midrash can shed light on the presence of some baffling elements in the Muslim versions.

16. Various later Sunnī exegetes also adopted this version of the tradition in their works. See, for example, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1035), *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (*‘Arā’is al-majālis*), ed. ‘Abd al-Laṭif Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1971), 121; For another translation of this passage, see al-Tha‘labī, *‘Arā’is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* or: “*Lives of the prophets*,” trans. William M. Brinner (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 221; and see this tradition similarly in al-Tha‘labī’s commentary on Q 12:79 in *al-Kashf wa’l-bayān ‘an tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, ed. Šalāḥ Ba‘uthmān, Ḥasan al-Ghazālī, Zayd Mahārīsh, and Amīn Bāshah (33 vols., Jeddah: Dār al-Tafsīr, 2015), 13.104. Also see Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s commentary in *al-Durr al-manthūr fī ‘l-ṭafsīr bi’l-ma’thūr* (8 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2011), 4.506.

17. The motif of blood (but usually not yellow blood) does appear later in the Sunnī tradition. So, for example, al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) introduces the same tradition in the name of Ibn ‘Abbās, and he too identifies the angry brother as Yahūda, just as al-Samarqandī does when he gives the transmission of Ibn ‘Abbās. See Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, (24 vols., Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 2006), 11.423–425. I did not, however, find any mention of a golden pomegranate in any early medieval Sunnī version, nor did I find any reference to the brothers’ blood as “yellow.”

3. The Rabbinic Version

The Midrash to which I refer appears in *Genesis Rabbah*, a fifth century Aggadic commentary on Genesis. Most of the Midrash is dated to the Amoraic period and was probably redacted not much later than the Jerusalem Talmud, around the fourth or fifth centuries AD, although some of its units seem to be a later addition.¹⁸

Gen. Rab. 93.7, which discusses Gen 44:18, introduces the following tradition:

ד"א "ויגש אליו יהודה" (בראשית מז, יח)... אמר לו יהודה בנימין תתפוס ושלוש בבית אבא, מיד כעס יהודה ושאל בקול גדול והלך קולו ארבע מאות פרסה עד ששמע חושים בן דן וקפץ ובא אצל יהודה ושאלו שניהם וביקשה ארץ מצרים ליהפך, עליהן אמר איוב "שאגת אריה וקול שחל ושיני כפירים נתעו" (איוב ד, י) "שאגת אריה" זה יהודה דכת' "גור אריה יהודה" (בראשית מט, ט), ו"קול שחל" זה חושים בן דן, ששניהם משולים כאריה שנאמר "דן גור אריה" (דברים לג, כב), "שיני כפירים נתעו" אילו גיבורים של יוסף, שכיון שכעס יהודה נשרו שיניהם של כולם, א"ר יהושע בן לוי אף אחיו של יוסף בשעה שראו את יהודה שכעס אף הן נתמלאו חימה ובעטו בארץ ועשו אותה תלמים תלמים... כיון שראה יוסף סימנין של יהודה שהוא כועס בהן מיד נודעזע ונבהל, אמ' אוי לי שלא יהרגני, מהן סימנין שהיו בו, שלבית שילו אמ' שתי עיניו זולגות דם, ויש א' חמשה לבושים היה לבוש ונימה אחת היתה לו בליבו, וכיון שכעס היה קורע את כולו, מה עשה יוסף אותה שעה, אותו עמוד של אבן שהיה יושב עליו בעט בו ועשאו גל של צרורות, מיד תמה יהודה ואמ' זה גיבור כמותיני, באותה שעה אחז יהודה חרבו לשלפה מתערה ואינה נשלפת לו, ואמ' יהודה ודאי ירא שמים זה, לכך נאמ' "החכמה תעז לחכם" (קהלת ז, ט):¹⁹

Another thing: "Then Judah stepped up to him" (Gen 44:18) ... Judah said [to Joseph], "You would take Benjamin and yet you think there will be peace in my father's house?!" Judah was filled with wrath and cried out aloud. His voice traveled four hundred parasangs, reaching Hushim, son of Dan, who leapt to his side.²⁰ Their roar was so forceful that the land of Egypt almost overturned. The book of Job was alluding to them when it said, "The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are

18. For the dating of *Genesis Rabbah*, see H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 279. The final chapters of *Genesis Rabbah* are a later addition that includes materials of different origins. See Marc Hirschman, "The Final Chapters of *Genesis Rabbah*," in S. Kattan Gribetz, D.M. Grossberg, M. Himmelfarb, and P. Schäfer (eds.), *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 237, and see the literature he cites there.

19. *Midrash Genesis Rabbah: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, ed. J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, 2nd printing (Jerusalem: Shalem Books, 1996), 1161–1163.

20. See Joseph Witztum's comment that Hushim's quick travel might be reminiscent of Naphtali, in "Deaf Hishām and Esau's Death," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 112 (2022): 384–385, n. 32.

broken" (Job 4:10). "The roar of a lion" alludes to Judah, as it is written, "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen 49:9) and "the voice of the fierce lion" alludes to Hushim, son of Dan, since they are both referred to as lions, as it is written, "Dan is a lion's whelp" (Deut 33:22). "The teeth of the young lions are broken" alludes to the teeth of Joseph's mighty men, which fell out when Judah became angry. R. Joshua b. Levi said that when Joseph's brothers saw Judah enraged, they too were filled with wrath, stamped on the ground and made it into furrows ... When Joseph saw the signs by which he knew that Judah was angry, he trembled and panicked, thinking to himself, "Woe is me, he may kill me!" What were the signs of Judah's anger? The scholars of the Beth Shiloh²¹ said: Blood flowed from his two eyes. Some say that Judah wore five garments and had a strand of hair on his chest. When he became angry, this strand of hair pierced through all his garments. What did Joseph do at that moment? He stamped on the stone column on which he was sitting and reduced it to a heap of fragments. At this Judah was astonished and exclaimed, "He is as powerful as we are!" At that moment, Judah tried to draw his sword from its sheath, but it would not come out, whereupon he said, "This man must certainly be God fearing!"²² For that reason Scripture says, "Wisdom gives strength to the wise" (Eccl 7:19).²³

The similarities between this Midrash (hereafter Midrash A) and the Muslim versions are unmistakable:²⁴ The brothers' wrath is described as fierce; Judah's fury triggers a flow of blood from an unexpected organ²⁵ with no

21. This expression is usually understood as denoting a scholar, or the scholars, of Beth Shiloh, although it appears in several variations in the manuscripts. For several such variations, see *Midrash Genesis Rabbah*, ed. Theodor and Albeck, 1163.

22. For a discussion on the term *gibbōr* in the context of Judah's supernatural powers, see Richard G. Marks, "Dangerous Hero: Rabbinic Attitudes toward Legendary Warriors," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 54 (1983): 181–194.

23. This translation is adapted from the translation in *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. H. Freedman and M. Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1983), 862–864.

24. Variations of this Midrash, as well as of the different motifs in it, can be seen in various rabbinic sources. For example, on Judah (or Simeon)'s terrible voice, see *Midrash Tanhuma*, Va-Yiggash 5 and 6; and *Midrash Tanhuma B*, Va-Yiggash 4, 5; For the ability to stamp furrows in the ground see b. Soṭah 34b. For the idea that a person's strength is their hair, see: J.G. Fraser, *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law* (2 vols., London: Macmillan, 1918), 2.484–489. See also L. Ginzburg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols., Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, ca. 1910–1938), 2.103–110, and the notes on that chapter.

25. The word translated here as "eyes" appears in several variations in the versions of *Genesis Rabbah*. Whatever the original word meant here, by the time it was adapted into Muslim exegesis, it seems that it was already understood as relating to the organs of the body.

apparent physical trigger; a remark on the “hair” appears in the Midrash as well, along with the ability of this hair to pierce through Judah’s clothes. The Midrash clearly describes the brothers as possessing some extraordinary abilities.

Due to these similarities, it seems that the traditions are related to one another, either because both Midrash A and the Muslim versions were influenced by a mutual source, or because one of these versions influenced the other. To make things more complicated, this section, as well as 93.8 are absent from some of the earlier manuscripts of Genesis Rabbah.²⁶ This absence makes it difficult to determine how this tradition was transmitted and which version was earlier based on the dating of the manuscripts of Genesis Rabbah alone.

There are, however, several reasons to believe that the version we see in Midrash A preceded and influenced the Islamic one, and not vice versa. First, some of the motifs in Midrash A (Gen. Rab. 93.7) also appear in other sections of Genesis Rabbah. One such motif is Judah’s hair: a remark on the hair that protrudes through Judah’s clothes when he is angry appears also in Gen. Rab. 93.6. Similarly, the brothers’ unusual strength is also expressed in 93.9. Unlike Midrash A, these sections from 93.6 and 93.9 do appear in the earlier manuscripts.

Interestingly enough, the figure of Hushim, the son of Dan, already appears in b. Soṭah 13a,²⁷ which tells about his involvement in the burial of Jacob. Midrash A seems to connect him to Judah based on the biblical verses

26. For these and a few other sections that seem to be a later addition to Genesis Rabbah, see Leopold Zunz, *The Worship Sermons of the Jews, Historically Developed*, ed. Hanoch Alback (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954), 78 and n. 66 thereto, and 142 and n. 39 thereto [Hebrew]. Also see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 280. For studies concerning the early manuscripts of Genesis Rabbah, see L. M. Barth, *An Analysis of Vatican 30* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1973), 1–14, and the literature he lists there; and M. Sokoloff, *The Genizah Fragments of Bereshit Rabbah* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982) [Hebrew].

27. The question of the final redaction of the Talmud has gained much interest in research. Whatever the dating of this legend on Hushim is, however, it is highly unlikely that it did not originate in a biblical context. For a discussion on this tradition and its original Jewish roots, see Witztum, “Deaf Hishām and Esau’s Death,” 378–405 and the relevant literature in n. 31 thereto. Witztum also brings a parallel of this tradition narrated by al-Suddī and shows how it was adapted from the previous rabbinic version. On Hushim in the Bible, see Gen 46:23 and Num 26:42. On the redaction of the Talmud, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 194–197.

that relate both Hushim and Judah to lions. In b. Soṭah, however, Hushim is depicted as hard of hearing. A joint reading of his description in b. Soṭah and his description in Midrash A thus intensifies the description of Judah's miraculous cry: not only can it travel extraordinary distance, but it can also be heard by Hushim, whose hearing is normally impaired.

An examination of Midrash A can thus shed light on the first and second questions I raised above concerning Joseph's reaction to his brother's wrath and the insertion of the boy into the narrative. As mentioned above, the Muslim versions do not explain why Joseph deemed it necessary to appease his brother. The Midrash, however, gives a clear motivation for Joseph's actions: Judah's anger was so frightening that Joseph was afraid for his own life.²⁸ Admittedly, the disastrous influence of Judah's voice is echoed in the Sunnī version as well, where Judah's cry is said to have the ability to cause miscarriages across the land. It is only in the midrashic version, however, that Joseph's fear is also noted. This fear explains, at least to some extent, what compelled Joseph to feel as if he had to act immediately.²⁹

Unlike the Muslim versions, the Jewish Midrash had a compelling motivation to suggest that Joseph deemed it necessary to act: Gen 45:1 mentions that "Joseph could not control himself." Such a motivation is entirely absent

28. Also see the recent publication of Ronit Nikolsky, in which she studies emotions in this specific midrashic episode in both Genesis Rabbah and the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu. She lists there the various motivations she finds in this midrashic material for Joseph's action. R. Nikolsky, "Joseph, Judah, and the Study of Emotions in Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature," in R. Nikolsky and A. Atzmon (eds.), *Studies in the Tanhuma-Telammedenu Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 290–314.

29. For additional discussions of rabbinic literature concerning Joseph in general, see Maren Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); and idem, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990). Also see the discussion of the relationship between some midrashic material and Islamic narratives, in Shalom Goldman, *The Wives of Women/the Wives of Men: Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in Ancient Near Eastern Jewish and Islamic Folklore* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) and see Marc S. Bernstein, *Stories of Joseph: Narrative Migrations between Judaism and Islam* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006). For additional discussions in the sources of Sūrat Yūsuf, see Joseph Witztum, "Joseph among the Ishmaelites: Q 12 In Light of Syriac Sources," in Gabriel Said Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Qur'an: The Qur'an in Its Historical Context* (2 vols., Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 2.425–448; and Meir Bar-Ilan, "Sūrat Yūsuf (XII) and Some of Its Possible Jewish Sources," in A. Houtman, T. Kadari, M. Poorthuis, and V. Tohar (eds.) *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 189–210.

from the qur'ānic narrative so that Joseph's actions in the Muslim versions might seem uncalled for. While Joseph's reaction to his brother's wrath is present in the Muslim version, the trigger for this reaction seems to have been removed.

In fact, the biblical sentence that the Midrash interprets—"Then Judah went up to him" (Gen 44:18)—opens parts of the tradition in some of the Muslim versions, almost as if the Muslim versions interpret the biblical verse as well.³⁰

For those reasons, I believe it unlikely that the tradition that we see in Midrash A is influenced by the Muslim version of the tradition or that it was influenced by a source that was common to both the Jewish and Muslim versions. The version in Midrash A reflects familiar rabbinic motifs and reacts to a well-known biblical conundrum which stems from Joseph's rush to act. The commentary the Midrash provides seems to have originated in biblical exegesis as it deals with issues that are only present in the biblical narrative. It thus seems that the Muslim versions are reflecting here an earlier, rabbinic one.

One conclusion that can be drawn from comparing the midrashic version and the Muslim ones is that when the early Muslim exegetes chose to include this specific story in their works, they did so thoughtfully and "adjusted" various elements in the story to fit into their own exegetical framework. This comparison also shows that notwithstanding the differences between the Imāmī and Sunnī versions, they were in agreement in how they handled the discrepancy between the biblical and qur'ānic narratives.

4. The Muslim Version: A Merge of Midrashim

As mentioned above, Joseph's son is present in both the Sunnī and Imāmī versions of the tradition but not in the rabbinic version in Midrash A. In fact, the boy is absent from both the biblical and the qur'ānic narratives as well. Why then was he included in the Muslim versions?

I believe the inclusion of Joseph's son into the Muslim versions is related to his presence in a second Midrash (hereafter Midrash B), which appears in Gen. Rab. 93.6, at another section that interprets Gen 44:18 as well. Midrash B reads as follows:

30. Compare the appearance of this opening sentence/verse in the Hebrew version: "va-yiggash 'elav Yehudah," and the way it appears in the *tafsir* of al-Qummī: "[wa-takhallafa] Yahūdā fa-dakhala 'alā Yūsuf."

"כי כמודד כפרעה" (בראשית מד, יח) מה פרעה גוזר ואינו מקיים אף את גוזר ואין את מקיים, מה פרעה להוט אחר זכרים אף את להוט אחר זכרים, מה פרעה מלך ואת שיני לו כך אבא מלך בארץ כנען ואני שיני לו, ואם שולף אני חרבי, ממך אני מתחיל ובפרעה אני מסיים, אילו אמר מפרעה אני מתחיל וממך אני מסיים היה מניחו, כיון שאמ' ממך אני מתחיל רמו למנשה ורפש חד רפיש וזעת כל פלטיין, אמ' ווי דין רפיש מן דבית אבא.³¹

[Judah said,] "You are like Pharaoh himself" (Gen 44:18). Just as Pharaoh decrees and does not fulfill his decree, so you decree and not fulfill. As Pharaoh lusts for males, so you lust for males. As Pharaoh is a king and you are his second, so my father is a king in the land of Canaan, and I am his second. If I draw my sword, I will begin with you and finish with Pharaoh. Had Judah said he will begin with Pharaoh and finish with Joseph, Joseph would have let it go. However, since Judah said that he will begin with him, Joseph made a sign to Manasseh and the latter gave one stamp on the floor at which the whole palace trembled. [Seeing that,] Judah cried out, 'Woe! Such a stamp can only be from my father's house!'³²

The similarities between Midrash B and the Muslim versions can explain, I believe, some of the elements that are present in the Muslim versions but absent from Midrash A. First, Midrash B mentions the presence of one of Joseph's sons, Manasseh, in the same context of the meeting between Joseph and Judah.³³ Second, like in the Muslim versions, Manasseh is presented here as following his father's request in reaction to the wrath of his enraged uncle. Third, Midrash B introduces here a formulaic proclamation similar to the one we see in the Muslim version: "Such a stamp can only be from my father's house." The proclamation, again, is spoken by Joseph's brother as a reaction to Manasseh's extraordinary abilities and it, too, does not appear in Midrash A. For these reasons, I believe the tradition we see in the Muslim versions is a result of a merge between Midrash A and Midrash B.

Two additional later Midrashim might be relevant to our discussion as well. The first appears in some editions of *Genesis Rabbah*, and the second is present in later, post-qur'anic Jewish works. The first of these Midrashim belongs to Gen. Rab. 91.6 and is difficult to date since, unlike Midrash B, it is

31. *Midrash Genesis Rabbah*, ed. Theodor and Albeck, 1157–1158.

32. This translation is adapted from the translation in *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. Freedman and Simon, 860–861.

33. The insertion of Joseph's son, Manasseh, into this episode in Biblical exegesis is possibly related to his appearance in another biblical episode that concerns the meeting between Joseph and his brothers. Namely, the episode that includes the enigmatic interpreter (*melitz*), which appears in Gen 42:23. *Genesis Rabbah* 91:8, for example, identifies this interpreter as Manasseh, a fact which might explain his appearance in various other exegetical episodes that concern the meetings between the brothers.

absent from the earlier manuscripts of *Genesis Rabbah*.³⁴ Note this Midrash as it appears in later manuscripts:

באותה שעה שלח יוסף אצל פרעה ואמר לו שלח לי שבעים גבורים מאצלך שמצאתי לסטים ואני מבקש לתן עליהם כבלים באותה שעה שלח לו והיו מסתכלים אחי יוסף מה היה מבקש לעשות אמר יוסף לאותן גבורים הכניסו את זה בבית האסורין כיון שקרבו אצלו צוח בהם כיון ששמעו קולו נפלו על פניהם ונשתברו שניהם שנאמר "שאגת אריה וקול שחל ושני כפירים נתעו" (איוב ד, י) והיה מנשה יושב לפני אביו אמר לו אביו קום אתה מיד עמד מנשה והכהו מכה אחת והכניסו בבית האסורים.³⁵

Joseph then sent to Pharaoh with the request, "Send me seventy of your mighty men (*gibbōrim*), for I have found robbers and wish to put them in chains." When he sent them, Joseph's brethren looked to see what he would do. "Throw this man into prison," Joseph ordered them. But as they approached him, he (Simeon) cried out aloud at them. On hearing his voice they fell on their faces and their teeth were broken, as Scripture says, "The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken" (Job 4:10). At that moment, Manasseh was sitting before his father, and his father said to him, "Stand up." Immediately Manasseh stood up, gave him one blow, and threw him into prison.³⁶

When this Midrash (hereafter Midrash C) is incorporated in *Genesis Rabbah*, it appears a couple of sections before the previous rabbinic Midrashim on Joseph and Judah, which I connected with the Muslim versions. While Midrashim A and B were associated with the biblical verse "Then Judah went up to him" (Gen 44:18), Midrash C is associated with the verse "Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt" (Gen 42:1). Interestingly, Midrash A and Midrash C both mention the same verse from Job 4 and interpret it similarly as an illustration of a cry so fierce that it can break the teeth of Joseph's mighty men. In Midrash C, however, the "roaring lion" is compared to Simeon, rather than Judah.

Midrash C refers to a previous conversation between Joseph and his brothers, held the first time the brothers come to Egypt (See Gen 42:24 for Simeon's imprisonment), as opposed to Midrash A and B, which describe the conversation that takes place on their second visit. Midrash C mentions Manasseh in a similar context of a conversation between Joseph and his brothers. Here, too, a sentiment regarding the extraordinary abilities of Jo-

34. See note 26.

35. The Theodor-Albeck edition is based on an earlier manuscript and thus does not include this Midrash; but see *The Midrash Rabbah*, ed. Avraham Steinberger et al. (Jerusalem: Machon ha-Midrash Ha-Mevo'ar, ca. 1993), 151–152.

36. This translation is adapted from *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. Freedman and Simon, 841.

seph's son is expressed: he succeeds in overcoming his uncle where seventy heroes (*gībbōrīm*) could not.

The Muslim versions also share some minor linguistic similarities with Midrash C. Namely, like in Midrash C, Joseph's command to his son to "stand up" in al-Ṭabari's account is denoted using the same root and verbal form in both Arabic and Hebrew (*qum*). Al-Qummi's account also presents a possible similarity in word choice when it describes the physical position of Joseph's son as "in front of" Joseph/his father, like in Midrash C. However, since these similarities are so minor and refer to commonly used words, and since Midrash C might be late, it is difficult to determine whether it could have influenced the Muslim versions and it is possible that an opposite process has taken place.³⁷

The second Midrash that might be relevant to this discussion appears in a relatively late, post-qur'anic, Midrash, *Sefer Ha-Yashar*³⁸ (hereafter Midrash D) and reads as follows:

ויירא יוסף מאוד מפני אחיו ומפני פרעה ויבקש יוסף עלילה להוודע אל אחיו, פן יחריבו את כל מצרים. ויצו יוסף את מנשה בנו, וילך מנשה ויגש לפני יהודה וישם את ידו על כתפיו וחמת יהודה שכבה. ויאמר יהודה אל אחיו: אל יאמר איש מכם כי מעשה נער מצרי זה, כי אם מעשה בית אבי זה.³⁹

Joseph feared his brothers and Pharaoh terribly and sought an excuse to let his brothers know who he was so that they would not destroy all of Egypt. Joseph commanded his son Manasseh to go to Judah. Manasseh went in front of Judah and placed his hand on his shoulder, and Judah's wrath subsided.

37. Interestingly enough, this proclamation element in the story also appears in another relatively late Midrash—*Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*. Note *Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*'s following narrative in Parashat Va-Yiggash:

והיה מנשה בן יוסף יושב לפניו אל"ל אביו קום אתה מיד קם מנשה והכהו מכה אחת הכניסו בבית האסורים ונתן עליו כבל אמר שמעון לאחיו אתם אומרים מכה של מצרים הוא זה אינה אלא של בית אבא. We are presented in *Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* with the same episode of Manasseh and Simeon that we see in Midrash C in *Genesis Rabbah*. Here, however, the episode ends with Simeon's proclamation: "This is not a strike made by an Egyptian, but by of our father's descendants," the same proclamation we see in Midrash B. For a discussion on the possible relations between *Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* and Islamic literature, see Marc Bregman's argument that this Midrash does not exhibit any Islamic influence, in Marc Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 183.

38. *Sefer ha-Yashar*, ed. J. Dan (Jerusalem: Mōsad Biyāliq, 2005), 239–240. For the dating of *Sefer ha-Yashar*, see Starck and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 339.

39. *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 239–240. Also note a variation of this version in *Midrash ha-Gadol*, ed. M. Margulies (Jerusalem: Mōsad ha-Rav ḳuḳ, ca. 1975–1978), 758.

Judah said to his brothers: “You cannot say that this is the act of an Egyptians boy, but this is the act of someone from my father’s house.”⁴⁰

As can be seen in this passage, the version of the story that appears in Midrash D is parallel to the one in the Muslim sources.⁴¹ Like the Muslim versions, Joseph sends his son here to go to Judah, and when Manasseh touches him, Judah’s wrath subsides. Following this occurrence, Judah further proclaims that whoever touched him cannot have been Egyptian but rather that he must have been one of his father’s descendants. This proclamation also matches what we find in Midrash B and in the Muslim versions. Joseph’s decision to send Manasseh and Manasseh’s touch and impact are all absent from the earlier rabbinic Midrashim A and B we mentioned above, but present in the Muslim versions.

A closer examination will show that the version in Midrash D is in fact much more similar to the Sunnī version than the Imāmī one; like the Sunnī tradition, it mentions Joseph’s explicit order to his son, and similar to it, it does not refer to a rolling pomegranate made of gold. Since Midrash D appears in relatively late Jewish works, it might be impossible to determine which version, the Muslim one or the one in Midrash D, is earlier, at least not based on chronology alone. In what follows, however, I would like to argue that there is reason to believe that in this specific case, Midrash D was indeed influenced by the Muslim version and not vice versa.

5. Joseph’s Son

So far, I have argued that different Midrashim that appear in Genesis Rabbah (Midrash A and Midrash B, and perhaps also Midrash C) were combined into the one version we can see in the Muslim sources. Such a process could have taken place in various ways, orally or otherwise, it could have been done unconsciously, and there might not have been a specific reason for this occurrence. As I claimed before, however, I believe there is ground to argue that this merge might have been a deliberate one and that it was made in an attempt to conform to the qur’ānic narrative.

40. This translation is adapted from the translation in *The Book of Jasher: Referred to in Joshua and Second Samuel* (New York: M. M. Noah & A. S. Gould, 1840), 173–174.

41. In fact, already Abraham Geiger noticed the resemblance between some of the Yūsuf-related episodes in Muslim exegetical literature and Sefer ha-Yashar. See: A. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam: A Prize Essay* (Madras: M.D.C.S.P.C.K Press, 1898), 111–118.

Let us examine what we know: Joseph's son is absent from both the biblical and qur'ānic narratives. Yet, he appears in Jewish exegetical literature, which can be explained, at least partially, by the presence of the enigmatic "interpreter" who is present in one conversation between Joseph and his brothers in Egypt in the biblical text.⁴²

Why, however, would the Muslim exegetes choose to include Joseph's son into the exegetical narrative as well? A simple answer could be that they did not really consciously choose to do so as much as simply integrate a narrative known to them from the Jewish sources. Such an explanation, however, is insufficient in my opinion. First, in both Imāmī and Sunnī versions, Joseph's son plays a role which is different from the one he plays in biblical exegesis; he is sent to his uncle to bring peace, not violence. Midrash D, the only version in which the boy appears in the same context as the one we see in the Muslim versions, is relatively late. Second, there are reasons to argue that the integration of the boy was triggered by exegetical considerations.

One possible reason for this integration is related to the discrepancies between the qur'ānic narrative and the biblical one; in the biblical text, the tension between Joseph and Judah is immediately resolved by Joseph's revealing to his brothers that he is their brother.⁴³ Correspondingly, in Midrash A, Joseph's revelation is enough to soothe his brother's wrath, and their conflict is resolved.

Unlike the case of Midrash A, the early Muslim exegetes had to conform to the qur'ānic narrative. In the Qur'ān, Joseph does not immediately reveal himself after his conversation with his brother but instead waits until their next meeting to do so. I believe this suspension is crucial in understanding the Muslim exegetical need to introduce an additional character: Joseph could not have simply revealed himself to appease his brother's wrath, since in the Qur'ān, he does not do so until a later moment in the plot. The Muslim exegetical tradition thus needed to replace Joseph with another figure who could pacify Judah/Reuben without exposing Joseph's identity.

It is possible, then, that the early Muslim exegetes were aware of the Midrashim, wrote the boy into this part of the plot, and by that solved, consciously or unconsciously, the discrepancy between a narrative that originated in the midrash and the one known from the Qur'ān. If this speculation is correct, we should also conclude that the version in Midrash D

42. See note 33.

43. "Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him; and he cried out, 'Send everyone away from me.' So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers" (Gen 45:1).

is relatively late and that it was influenced by a Muslim adaptation of the earlier Jewish Midrashim. Such “roundtrips” of motifs are not uncommon in exegetical literature;⁴⁴ here, it seems that a narrative that originated in rabbinic literature might have “traveled” to Muslim exegetical works and returned to later Jewish exegesis dressed in a new Islamicized garb.⁴⁵

6. A Golden Pomegranate

Both the Sunnī and Imāmī versions of the story thus exhibit the same merged version of traditions. Notwithstanding this similarity between the two Muslim versions, they are far from being identical. As mentioned above, the Sunnī version exhibits some similarities with the rabbinic version that are absent from the Imāmī version, such as the forcefulness of Reuben’s voice, its reach, and its devastating abilities. On the other hand, the Imāmī version shows awareness of the motif of the bleeding that exists in the rabbinic version but is absent from the early Sunnī one.

Unlike the Midrash, the Imāmī version describes this blood as *aṣfar*, which I translated here as yellow. I have not found any mention of blood being described as such in a similar context in Jewish literature. Perhaps this choice of color was influenced by the belief that anger is related to yellow bile which was widespread in tenth-century medical theory, in which case this expression could perhaps be understood here as “yellow bile” or “bilious blood.”⁴⁶ Whatever the blood denotes here, however, the fact that it appears in the early Imāmī version but is absent from the early Sunnī one

44. For such roundtrips journeys in the Joseph narratives see: Marc Bernstein, *Stories of Joseph: Narrative Migrations between Judaism and Islam* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006). For a similar discussion in the context of the Jewish and Islamic Abrahamic narratives, see Shari L. Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For journeys of motifs in the context of the Haman-Esther narratives also see Adam J. Silverstein, *Veiling Esther, Unveiling Her Story: The Reception of a Biblical Book in Islamic Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

45. Geiger believed that the opposite process of transmission had occurred with various Joseph-related narratives and that the Qur’ān was the one to borrow the narrative that appears in Sefer ha-Yashar (like Midrash D) and not vice versa. See Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, 112–118. This opinion, however, has been rejected due to the late dating of Sefer ha-Yashar and the various elements in it that seem to have been borrowed from Qur’ānic lore, see M Grünbaum, “Zu ‘Jussuf und Suleicha’,” *ZDMG* 43 (1889): 8, and see more recently Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather*, 260.

46. For the use of the word *aṣfar* to translate the medical concept of yellow bile into Arabic see P. E. Pormann, *Hippocratic Commentaries in the Greek, Latin and*

suggests that, notwithstanding their similarities, the early Sunnī and Imāmī traditions chose to adopt different parts of the version we see in Midrash A.

The Imāmī version also seems to have inserted an additional sub-narrative to the story, which is absent from both the Sunnī version and the rabbinic one. Namely, the narrative of the golden pomegranate. This sub-narrative within the Imāmī version is odd; we already know that it did not develop in the context of the biblical narrative since it is absent from all Jewish versions, and it is unclear how and why it developed in the Islamic context.

The pomegranate in general is an omnipresent motif in medieval texts, and in Imāmī literature as well.⁴⁷ More importantly, pomegranates also appear in various contexts of the story of Joseph, especially in the retellings the story of Joseph and Zulaykhā.⁴⁸ Pomegranates that are made of gold, however, are not a common motif, certainly not golden pomegranates that are being used for play or for rolling.⁴⁹

There is, however, another notable Shī'ī tradition about a boy and a golden pomegranate that should be noted here. This tradition tells about the eleventh Imām, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/874; called by his *kunya*h “Abū Muḥammad” in this text). Abū Muḥammad is introduced with his son, the twelfth Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī (“Occultation” in 260/874), called “the

Arabic Traditions: Selected Papers from the XVth Colloque Hippocratique, Manchester (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 315.

47. Pomegranates seem to hold a special status in several qur'ānic verses (Q 6:99, 6:141, 55:68). They also hold a unique place in some Imāmī traditions. One of the most prominent traditions about ʿAlī narrates that the Prophet Muḥammad split a pomegranate in half and gave one half to ʿAlī, an act which symbolized their sharing of knowledge (*ḥadīth al-rummānatayn*). See this tradition, for example, in Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasam al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* (Tehran: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī, 1983), 313–315. For various other traditions on the merits of pomegranates, see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 63.154–166.

48. E.g., Jāmī, *Yūsuf and Zulaykhā*, trans. Ralph T. H. Griffith (London: Trübner, 1882), 42 and 82.

49. Golden pomegranates do appear occasionally in decorative contexts. See, for example, their description in relation to certain weapons in Herodotus (*Hist.* VII. 41). Pomegranates and golden bells also appear in the description of the priestly garments in Exod 39:24–26. Another possibility that should be considered is that the motif of the pomegranate here originated in a context in which another similar golden fruit appeared. Golden apples, for example, are a more frequent motif in various narratives. The verse “golden apples in silver settings” (Prov 25:11) appears in the same context of Joseph's conversation with Judah in Gen. Rab. 93:3.

boy.” This tradition appears in various Shī‘ī texts.⁵⁰ Note the way it appears in Ibn Bābawayh’s (d. 381/991) *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni‘mah*:⁵¹

قال سعد: فما شبيته وجهه مولانا أبي محمد عليه السلام حين غشنا نور وجهه إلا بيدر قد استوفى من ليلائه أربعا بعد عشر، وعلى فخذ الأيمن غلام يناسب المشتري في الخلق والمنظر، على رأسه فرق بين وفرتين كأنه ألف بين واوين، وبين يدي مولانا رمانة ذهبية تلمع بدائع نقوشها وسط غرائب الفصوص المركبة عليها، قد كان أهداها إليه بعض رؤساء أهل البصرة، ويده قلم إذا أراد أن يسطر به على البياض شيئا قبض الغلام على أصابعه، فكان مولانا يدحرج الرمانة بين يديه ويشغله بردها كيلا يصده عن كتابة ما أراد.⁵²

Sa‘d [b. ‘Abdallāh]⁵³ said: When we visited our master Abū Muḥammad,⁵⁴ upon him peace, his face was like the full moon when it is on its fourteenth day. A boy sat on his right thigh, looking like Jupiter in his countenance and appearance. There was a parting in the boy’s hair,⁵⁵ like an *alif* between two *wāws*. Our master (Abū Muḥammad) had a golden pomegranate in front of him. Its extraordinary engravings gleamed in the center of the wonderful gems that were set in it. The pomegranate was given to him by one of the leaders of Basra. In his hand, he held a pen. When he wanted to write something down with it, the boy grasped his fingers, so our leader rolled the pomegranate in front of him and kept the boy busy fetching it so that he will be able to write what he wanted in his book.

This tradition (hereafter: “the Distraction tradition”) presents a very different father-and-son pair. Here, the father is al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, and his son is Muḥammad al-Mahdī, while in our Imāmī version the father is Joseph and the boy is Joseph’s son. The pomegranate is also used for different goals. While in the distraction tradition, it seems to be used to distract the boy, in our Imāmī version the pomegranate is used to cause the boy to touch Joseph’s brother. The pomegranate in the distraction tradition is used to

50. See, for example, Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā’il al-imāmah* (Tehran: Mu’assasat al-Ba‘thah, 1992), 509; and see Sa‘d al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī, *al-Maqālāt wa’l-firaq*, ed. Muḥammad Jawād Mashkūr (Tehran: Maṭba‘ah Ḥaydariyyah, 1963), *dāl-wāw*; and al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 52.80–81.

51. I would like to thank Elon Harvey for his assistance in tracing this tradition.

52. Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni‘mah*, ed. Ḥusayn al-A‘lamī (2 vols., Beirut and Lebanon: Mu’assasat al-A‘lamī li’l-Maṭbū‘āt, 1991), 2.417–418.

53. Sa‘d b. ‘Abdallāh al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī (d. ca. 299/912), a well-known Imāmī *muḥaddith*.

54. For some historical background, see Ethan Kohlberg, “From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-‘ashariyya,” *BSOAS* 39 (1976): 521–534. For more details about the twelfth Imām, see J.G.J. ter Haar, “Muḥammad al-Ḳā‘im,” *EI2*, s.v. (1993).

55. The term *wafrah* describes a specific way of styling one’s hair.

distance the boy from his father, while in our Imāmī version it is used to bring the boy closer to Joseph's brother.

Nevertheless, the similarities between the traditions are also unmistakable. In both texts, the traditions speak about two prominent historical religious leaders, an Imām and a prophet, and their respective sons. In both traditions the father "rolls" a pomegranate made of gold to influence his son to do something. In both traditions the son himself also possesses some extraordinary abilities.

The similar wording in the traditions is also evident: in both traditions, the boy is not mentioned by name but described as a *ghulām* (in the distraction tradition) or a *ṣabiyy* (in our Imāmī version). The item that the father uses is a golden pomegranate, either *rummānah dhahabiyyah* or *rummānah min dhahab*, which is, as indicated above, a relatively irregular item. Moreover, this golden pomegranate is not used as an ornament of some sort but for the strange purpose of rolling, which is denoted in both traditions by the same quadrilateral verb *daḥraja*.

The comparison between these two traditions shows that the trope of a rolling golden pomegranate which is used by a royal family is a recurrent one. Since this trope seems to be absent from the early Sunnī tradition, it seems that it might have been a Shī'ī trope (although it might have originated outside of Shī'ī circles). It is interesting to note here that the existence of these two golden pomegranate traditions also forms, intentionally or unintentionally, a link between Joseph and al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, and between Joseph's son and Muḥammad al-Mahdī. A joint reading of the traditions can thus create the impression that the golden pomegranate is some kind of artifact of providence, transmitted through the generations from the past prophets to the Imāms. Such a reading would also fit with the Twelver view that the Imāms are the rightful heirs of the past prophets. This view is sometimes supported in Twelver writings by the claim that the Imāms inherited various extraordinary objects that originally belonged to the prophet Muḥammad or to one of the great past prophets, passed down to ʿAlī and his descendants through the Prophet's inheritance.⁵⁶

Of course, such a possible literary connection between both pomegranate traditions does not entirely explain their relation to one another and much remains unknown. However, since the possession of such inherited objects was a symbol of authority and a mark of the rightful heirs of the

56. Objects that are sometimes mentioned in this context include, among others, the *tābūt* (the Ark), the famous sword *Dhū'l-Fiqār*, the Black Stone, the ring of Solomon, and the staff of Moses. See Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shī'a Tradition," *JSAI* 1 (1979): 46–48, 51, 61–62.

Prophet, it is not without reason that the golden pomegranate served a similar purpose. Likewise, the entire midrashic subject matter of Joseph's family and their fantastic abilities might have especially appealed to the Imāmi exegetes, who were highly concerned with familial connections and dynastic claims.⁵⁷ The question of the motivation to include the pomegranate sub-narrative remains, however, unanswered; the narrative does not seem to be lacking without it and other than its parallel in another Imāmi tradition there does not seem to be anything particularly Shi'i about it.

It is possible, although there is no way to determine if this is the case here, that a need to make the plot more coherent influenced the insertion of this sub-narrative. The fact that Joseph speaks with his son might have been problematic for the Muslim exegete. If, as has been claimed above, the Muslim exegetes were indeed concerned about Joseph exposing his identity at this point in the plot, they might have also deemed it necessary for Joseph to not publicly ask his son to touch Judah. Since we are not told if Judah was in a position to hear the exchange between Joseph and his son, we could have concluded that Judah heard the command spoken by Joseph.

Had Judah heard Joseph's command, however, it would not have been clear why Judah was astonished by the fact that his wrath subsided, or why he exclaimed that one of Jacob's descendants is in the house. It would further be unclear how Joseph's identity, or at least his son's identity, remained hidden if Judah actually heard such a conversation between Joseph and his son. One way to solve this discrepancy is to adjust the narrative in such a way that removes Joseph's explicit command, as well as make it possible for Judah not to notice that the boy was the one to touch him. If the boy did not directly approach him with the intention of touching him, we can, for example, imagine that Judah remained unaware when the boy who played at his feet touched him. Such a motivation to clarify the plot, however, is a general exegetical concern which could have been shared by both Imāmi

57. See Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors," 41–65, and his discussion there about the Shi'i preoccupation with traditions that concern the prophets of Banū Isrā'īl, as well as the twelve fathers of the tribes of Israel, as pre-figuring its own Imāmi heroes. Also see there Rubin's remarks regarding the doctrine of *nūr Muḥammad* in this context, as well as his assertion that there were two different positions towards Judeo-Christian models within the early Shi'ah. In addition, see Ethan Kohlberg, *In Praise of the Few: Studies in Shi'i Thought and History*, ed. Amin Ehteshami (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 169–173 and Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam: Abū Ja'far ibn Qiba al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imāmite Shi'ite Thought* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1993), 3–6.

and Sunnī exegetes, and it is unclear why the former would deem it necessary to solve such a problem while the latter would not.

Another point that might be interesting in this context is that, deliberately or not, this sub-narrative also aligns with a tendency in early Shiʿī exegesis to physically distance Joseph and Benjamin from the rest of the ten brothers. In fact, both the Sunnī tradition on the brothers and the Imāmī one seem to wish to differentiate between the ten paternal half-brothers of Joseph, and Benjamin, who is Joseph's full brother.⁵⁸ According to most Muslim commentators, Benjamin is Jacob's youngest son and was seemingly not present at the episode in which the brothers threw Joseph into the well. Benjamin is usually described as faultless; he does not partake in his brothers' misdeeds, and often it is also unclear if he is even aware that his brothers lied concerning Joseph.⁵⁹ The Sunnī traditions, however, are more reserved in the description of the brothers as evil-doers than the Imāmī traditions.

So, for example, there is an episode in Sunnī Benjamin-related traditions, which speaks about the separation of Benjamin from the rest of his brothers during mealtime.⁶⁰ Note how this episode appears in the *tafsīr* of Abū 'l-Layth al-Samarqandī:

ويقال لما كان عند الطعام أمر كل اثنين ليأكلا في قصعة واحدة وبقي بنيامين وحده فبكى، وقال لو كان أخي في الأحياء لأكلت معه فقتال له يوسف إني أنا أخوك. يعني بمنزلة أخيك.⁶¹

It is said that during mealtime, Joseph commanded for each pair of brothers to eat from the same bowl, but Benjamin was left by himself and cried. Benjamin said, "Were my brother still among the living, I would have eaten with him." Joseph said to him [then], "I am your brother," meaning, I am like your brother.

58. Benjamin is one of Jacob's sons and the father of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. According to the biblical story, Benjamin and Joseph were the only sons of Jacob to have been born to Rachel (Gen 30:23–24 and Gen 35:16–18).

59. See, for example, al-Samarqandī and al-Zamakhsarī on Q 12:69, in al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-ʿulūm*, 2.170; and Abū 'l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsarī, *Tafsīr al-kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa-ʿuyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, ed. Khalīl Ma'mūn Shihā (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2009), 523–524.

60. This tradition is perhaps reminiscent of the biblical narrative that appears in Gen 43:34, according to which Joseph serves Benjamin a portion that is five times larger than any of the portions he serves to the rest of the brothers.

61. Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-ʿulūm*, 2.170.

This specific version of the tradition also appears in various other prominent Sunnī commentaries.⁶² The tradition presents the sitting arrangement of Joseph's brothers during their second visit to Egypt and physically separates Joseph and Benjamin from the rest of the brothers.⁶³

This physical separation, however, is not explicitly attributed in the Sunnī traditions to the previous evildoing of the ten brothers and thus does not necessarily indicate a wish to separate the righteous brothers from the unrighteous ones.⁶⁴ In fact, it is not clear what the actual ethical position of the ten brothers is in these earlier Sunnī traditions. Indeed, it seems the ten brothers could not have been perceived as entirely wicked since the earlier Sunnī traditions believed them to be prophets (although the point in which they actually became prophets is controversial).⁶⁵

We can compare this mealtime tradition to the same episode as it appears in the *tafsīr* of al-Qummī:

62. See, for example, the commentaries of al-Zamakhsharī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Q 12:69, in al-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 523–524; and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb: al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (32 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 18.181.

63. This motif of the organization of the brothers in pairs appears in several other traditions in this context. So, for example, another prominent tradition tells that Joseph gave each pair of brothers a bed to sleep in during the night, and when Benjamin remained alone, Joseph suggested he would sleep in his own bed. Among others, this tradition is present in the commentaries of al-Ṭabarī and al-Samarqandī on Q 12:69, in al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 13.241; and al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'ulūm*, 2.170.

64. Various other exegetical conundrums might have triggered this separation, among others the need to isolate Joseph and Benjamin so that Joseph will be able to secretly reveal his identity to Benjamin alone.

65. This belief that Joseph's brothers were prophets as well is often said to be based on a reading of a part of Q 12:6, "Your Lord will choose you, and teach you the interpretation of events, and complete His blessing (*ni'mah*) upon you and upon the House of Jacob." The word *ni'mah* here was understood by numerous early Sunnī commentators as meaning prophethood, thus denoting that all of Jacob's children were prophets, not only Joseph. For such interpretations, see the commentaries on this verse of al-Samarqandī, al-Māwardī, and al-Zamakhsharī, in al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'ulūm*, 2.150; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa'l-'uyūn*, 3.8; and al-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 505. Different understandings can be found in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and al-Ṭabarī on the same verse. The former seems to believe that the brothers became prophets at a later point in time, see al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 18.92; and al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 13.16. Also see al-Qurṭubī's commentary on Q 12:10 and Ibn Kathīr's commentary on Q 12:7 for some later reservations concerning the prophethood of the brothers, in al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 11.265; and Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 8.16.

فخرجوا وخرج معهم بنيامين وكان لا يؤاكلهم ولا يجالسهم ولا يكلمهم فلما وافوا مصر ودخلوا على يوسف وسلموا فنظر يوسف إلى أخيه فعرفه فجلس منهم بالبعد، فقال يوسف أنت أخوهم؟ قال: نعم، قال: فلم لا تجلس معهم؟ قال: لأنهم أخرجوا أخي من أبي وأمي ثم رجعوا ولم يردوه وزعموا أن الذئب أكله فأليت على نفسي ألا أجتمع معهم على أمر ما دمت حياً.⁶⁶

The [brothers] left, and Benjamin left with them. He did not eat in their company, sit in their company, or converse with them. When they arrived in Egypt and came to Joseph and greeted him, Joseph looked at his brother (Benjamin) and recognized him. Benjamin was sitting at a distance from them. Joseph asked [Benjamin], “Are you their brother?” Benjamin said, “Yes.” Joseph asked, “Why do you not sit with them?” Benjamin said, “Because they took my full-brother, and then they came back without him and claimed that a wolf devoured him. I swore that I will not be in their company for as long as I live.”

Various later Twelver exegetical works cited this version of the mealtime episode,⁶⁷ and it became a standard element in the Twelver readings of Joseph’s story. The Imāmī version, as we can see, is much more forceful concerning the separation of Joseph and Benjamin from the other ten brothers.

Here, Benjamin seems to place the responsibility for his brother’s disappearance on his half-brothers, and his dislike of them is clearly stated. Unlike the Sunnī description of this episode, Benjamin deliberately chooses not to sit with his brothers. Benjamin’s physical distance from them is thus explicitly described as related to their compromised morality. Al-‘Ayyashī even narrates the opinion of Ja‘fār al-Ṣādiq concerning the brothers in a similar context.⁶⁸ According to this narration, al-Ṣādiq vehemently stated that Joseph’s brothers were not prophets, a statement that was also then adopted by later Twelver commentators.⁶⁹

The troubling ethical character of the ten brothers thus seems to have been a more prominent problem for the early Imāmī exegetes than it was for the Sunnī ones. This problem seems to have led to a tendency among the Imāmī exegetes to physically distance Joseph and Benjamin from the rest of the brothers. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, it is interesting to note that this tendency aligns with the appearance of the pomegranate

66. Al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, 348.

67. Note, for example, this tradition in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 12.238; and al-Bahrānī, *al-Burhān*, 3.186.

68. Interestingly, al-‘Ayyashī’s version of the mealtime episode resembles the Sunnī one more than it resembles al-Qummī’s in this context. See al-‘Ayyashī, *Tafsīr*, 2.351–352.

69. Al-‘Ayyashī, *Tafsīr*, 2.366; and see the adoption of this opinion in later works, among others in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 12.316.

sub-narrative; the pomegranate enables Joseph to not directly tell his son to touch Judah, and the son to not deliberately touch him. The boy does end up touching Judah; yet, the intentionality of the act, at least on the boy's part, is stripped away.⁷⁰

Conclusion

This paper focused on a tradition concerning Joseph and one of his brothers that frequently appears in Sunnī and Twelver Muslim exegetical literature. I have examined its tenth-century appearance in Sunnī and Imāmī exegesis and argued that the Muslim versions of the tradition resulted from a merge between two earlier Midrashim, Midrash A and Midrash B, and possibly a merge of Midrash C as well.

Whether or not the merged version that appears in Muslim commentaries was made by someone who knew the specific text of Genesis Rabbah is hard to determine. The mentioning of Asbāt, al-Suddī, and Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawāliqī as several of the early transmitters of the Muslim versions of the tradition suggests a second/eighth century Kufan context for the entrance of this tradition into Muslim exegetical literature.⁷¹ The merge of the Midrashim could have also occurred around their time; however, it is also possible that they were already merged at an earlier period. In either case, as I have argued in the paper, I believe that a narrative similar to the one that appears in the Midrash was known to the Muslim exegetes, and that the merge has been made in an attempt to reconcile such a narrative with the narrative that appears in the Qurʾān.

That medieval Muslim exegesis shows awareness of rabbinic literature is mostly a well-established assumption in research today. In that respect, this paper only wishes to add to the growing knowledge on the relationship between the two corpora. It is, I believe, impossible to understand the appearance of our Imāmī tradition without an examination of both the Sunnī

70. Touch in general is a charged subject in Shīʿī literature. See, for example, a discussion on the relation between touch and healing in Imāmī Shīʿism in Kohlberg, *In Praise of the Few*, 391–393.

71. For a discussion on the Jewish community in Kufa and Iraq during the Islamic period, see: Moshe Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Strassler (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 511–512. Also see Goitein's estimation concerning the demography of the Jews in the Islamic lands, in S. D. Goitein, "Jewish Society and Institutions under Islam," *Journal of World History* 2 (1968): 170–184, 173; and see Bernard Lewis's acceptance of Goitein's estimation, in B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 67–68.

and the Jewish exegetical literature. It is possible that an even broader investigation into the literature of other contemporary communities might sharpen our current understanding of the development of this tradition.

It remains unclear if any of the Muslim versions, the Imāmī or the Sunnī, is earlier than the other since both exhibit knowledge of different elements that appear in the Midrash.⁷² This study has argued that although the early Imāmī exegetes shared much with their Sunnī contemporaries, they also seem to have had a separate set of exegetical motivations. Moreover, the early Imāmī exegetes seem to have had independent access to some rabbinic lore, unmediated by Sunnī exegesis. Hopefully, the study of other traditions with a similar transmission history will help us to better understand the relationships between the Imāmī, Sunnī, and Jewish communities of that period.

The specific ways in which both the Sunnī and the Imāmī versions adapted the rabbinic materials indicate that these adaptations were, at least to an extent, conscious ones; in both Muslim versions, it seems that the appearance of the boy might point to an attempt to harmonize a specific discrepancy between the Qur'ānic text and a tradition that originated in the Midrash. As for Midrash D, I believe it is a later version that seems to have been influenced by the Sunnī adaptation of the tradition. Midrash D exhibits the same merge of Midrashim we see in the Muslim versions and gives Manasseh the role of pacifying Judah.

Finally, I hope this paper will contribute to the efforts to identify some of the reasons that led early Muslim exegetes in the integration and adaptation of certain traditions. Such conscious adaptations as the ones we have seen in the Muslim versions force us to direct more of our efforts toward the study of exegetical motivations. Not all exegetical choices represent a process of careful reasoning; nevertheless, here and elsewhere, an attempt to take exegetical and theological concerns under consideration can explain the appearance of certain exegetical narratives, *topoi*, and motifs, perhaps particularly the more extraordinary ones.

72. Note, however, Uri Rubin's suggestion in this context that "the Shī'a seems to be responsible for the main flow of Judaeo-Christian motifs into the Muslim literature already since the first century A.H." in Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors," 55.

