

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Fruits of the Garden:
Myth within Jewish and Islamic Scriptures

by

Ali Adel Fares

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

CALGARY, ALBERTA

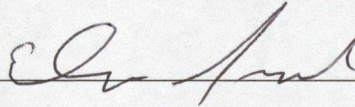
MAY, 2011

© Ali Adel Fares 2011

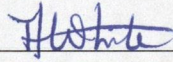
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES


The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Fruits of the Garden: Myth within Jewish and Islamic Scriptures" submitted by Ali Adel Fares in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.



Supervisor, Eliezer Segal [Department of Religious Studies]



Anne White [Department of Religious Studies]



Reyes Bertolin Cebrian [Department of Greek and Roman Studies]

20 May 2011

Date

Abstract

This thesis seeks to expand on scholarship pertaining to the Bible and the Qur'an in relation to the term "myth". By drawing on previous academic scholarship pertaining to the term "myth", a concise outline of the characteristics of myth relevant to scriptural studies is provided. By providing this outline, further discussions on the nature of myth with regards to scriptures are made possible. After engaging contentious elements that have historically surrounded scriptural studies in relation to myth, this thesis engages the aforementioned scriptures in light of myth. This thesis uses the creation narratives as found in the Bible and the Qur'an to demonstrate how and why myth was used by the authors of these scriptures. This is accomplished by resituating these texts within the environmental milieus in which they were created, revealing that the authors of the Bible and the Qur'an were addressing the needs of their respective emerging communities.

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Methodology and Chapter Summary.....	4
Thesis.....	7
CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF MYTH.....	8
The Etymology of Myth.....	9
Anthropological Perspectives of Myth.....	11
Psychological Perspectives of Myth.....	17
Conclusion.....	24
CHAPTER 2: THE BIBLE AND MYTH.....	30
Contrasting Views of Myth in the Bible.....	30
The Creation of Humanity: Mythopoeic Purpose.....	37
Conclusion.....	46
CHAPTER 3: THE QUR'AN AND MYTH.....	50
Going Beyond the Boundaries – The Study of Myth within Islamic Studies.....	50
Redefining the Boundaries – The Present State of Islamic Studies and Myth.....	54
Engaging the Qur'an – Mythopoesis and the Qur'an.....	58
Conclusion.....	72
CONCLUSIONS.....	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	79

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between myth and religion has been and continues to be a sensitive topic. This is due to the notion that if something is regarded as mythic, the implication is, that it is inherently fanciful or false to some degree. As such, the Abrahamic scriptures and myth have been considered separate entities up until, most notably, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when scholarship on myth peaked as a result of European interactions with foreign peoples from various nations during the European colonial expansions of the Victorian era. As scholarship advanced theories on myth, social scientists re-examined myth with regard to the Abrahamic scriptures. The conclusions drawn from these investigations have been disparate at best, with the various schools of thought presenting arguments based on their respective understandings of myth; as a result, the Abrahamic scriptures have been characterized as being both mythic and non-mythic.

The problem of categorizing scriptures as being mythic or not rests on the definition of myth being employed; therefore, this thesis will provide an outline of the characteristics of myth that are relevant to the study of scripture. As the subject of the history of myth is too vast a topic to be analyzed within the framework of this thesis, only major developments within the evolution of scholarly understandings of myth will be presented in support of this outline.

Eminent scholars of religion, such as Yehezkel Kaufmann and Michael Fishbane, have thoroughly examined the Hebrew Bible with regard to myth. The scholarship produced by these individuals has provided diametrically opposing views as to whether or not the Bible is a mythic text. Whereas Kaufmann argues that “[t]he Bible shows

absolutely no apprehension of the real character of mythological religion,”¹ Fishbane states “that the categories of monotheism² and myth are not mutually exclusive or incompatible.”³

One of the aims of this thesis is to provide an appreciation of the significance of the opposing views of myth as it relates to the Bible, as presented by Kaufmann and Fishbane. This will allow for a more detailed study on how and why myth is used within Biblical narratives. This will be accomplished by drawing on the creation narratives of the Sumerians of Mesopotamia⁴ and those found in Genesis 1 and 2 of the Torah. A close reading of these texts will show that the Bible’s creation narratives sharply contrast with the Sumerian creation narratives. The authors of the Genesis creation narratives employ myth in response to the myths of the surrounding peoples, the Sumerians of the fourth century B.C.E in this case; however, they do so by pushing these myths through a monotheistic filter, thus producing narratives which were harmonious with Israelite worldviews.

Kaufmann and Fishbane are among the numerous scholars who have taken command of myth as it relates to the Bible; therefore, taking into consideration the vast amount of academic scholarship that has gone into Biblical studies in relation to myth, it is surprising to find that academia has largely neglected myth as it relates to the Qur’an as a text in and of itself. This is surprising in that Qur’anic narratives have much in common

¹ Yehezkel Kaufmann, “The Bible and Mythological Polytheism,” trans. Moshe Greenberg, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70, no. 3 (Sept. 1951): 179–180.

² In this context, Fishbane’s use of monotheism is synonymous with the narratives of the Old Testament.

³ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 16.

with Biblical ones. However, upon further review, the outcome of previous scholarship pertaining to the Qur'an and myth has yielded negative consequences for those engaging in this subject matter.

Aaron W. Hughes is a scholar of Judaism and Islam; his contributions to the study of Qur'an and myth are notable. Hughes's article "The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and Early Tafsîr" is just one example of his numerous contributions to the study at hand. In addition to presenting scholarship on myth as it relates to the Qur'an, Hughes also brings to light the many issues that have plagued Qur'anic studies, most notably, those which have been termed the apologetic and orientalist approaches.⁵ To overcome the polarized approaches that have been characteristic of Islamic studies, Hughes refers to Steven Wasserstrom, who argues that Qur'anic studies ought to shift from the apologetic and orientalist approaches to an approach that looks at the symbiotic relationships between the Qur'an and its influencing factors.⁶ Through the use of this approach, Hughes examines the Qur'an and its relationship to myth and mythopoesis; he argues that the Qur'an "absorbs, transforms, and subsequently erase[s] previous near eastern narratives"⁷ in order to "destroy [...] its web of signification with other texts."⁸

This thesis will build upon the scholarship produced by Hughes by juxtaposing the creation narratives involving Adam present in the Qur'an to those present in both the Bible and midrashim. This thesis will argue that in addition to absorbing, transforming,

⁴ Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963).

⁵ Aaron W. Hughes, "The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and Early Tafsîr," *Studies in Religion* 32, no. 3 (Sept. 2003): 261–279.

⁶ Steven Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 172.

⁷ Hughes, "The Stranger," 261.

and erasing existing narratives, the Qur'an also preserved narratives in a recognizable form in place of erasing them; the Qur'an does this in hopes of becoming more appealing to potential converts who would have already been familiar with that which had been absorbed and transformed.

By producing an outline of the characteristics of myth relevant to Biblical and Qur'anic studies, this thesis will demonstrate that both the Bible and the Qur'an contain mythic narratives. The question of how and why either of these texts would employ myth within their scriptures will be explored by analyzing the creation narratives present in each of these texts.⁹ I will argue that the Bible employs myth in response to the cultural milieu which encircled the Israelites at the time of the authorship of Genesis, whereas the Qur'an employs myth to entice potential converts by presenting that which would have already been familiar to them, but in an Islamicized medium.

Methodology and Chapter Summary

Aside from demonstrating that the Bible and Qur'an are mythical texts, the primary questions that this thesis aims to answer are how and why the aforementioned scriptures utilized myth within their respective narratives. In seeking these answers, I employ three methodological approaches: the history of religions approach, the comparative approach, and the exegetical approach.

⁸ Ibid., 272.

⁹ Although sacred texts belonging to the Christian faith could have been included in this discussion, I have purposefully avoided doing so due to the breadth of such an endeavour; therefore, with the exception of one instance, myth as it relates to the Christian tradition goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

The history of religions method will allow me to demonstrate the progression of scholarly perspectives of myth, culminating in a contemporary understanding of myth relevant to both Biblical and Qur'anic studies. Furthermore, it will allow for an understanding of the various historical factors which influenced the formation of the Bible and the Qur'an within their respective time periods.

Since this thesis will be paralleling the creation narratives of various traditions, the comparative approach naturally applies to the research at hand. This method will also highlight the results that are garnered from the exegetical approach.

The exegetical approach will allow for a critical analysis of the creation narratives belonging to the Sumerians and Israelites, demonstrating that the writings of certain Biblical narratives were in actuality a response to the religious milieu that encircled the authors of the Bible.

The exegetical approach will also be utilized when examining the Qur'an's creation narratives, specifically those involving Adam. By critically analyzing the creation narratives present in the Qur'an, I hope to demonstrate that the author(s) of the Qur'an were creating myths that were familiar to potential converts to Islam, thus easing the transition from one faith to another. This will become evident through a close reading of the Qur'anic creation narratives in light of the creation narratives present in both the Bible and midrashic materials.

In Chapter One, I will give a brief overview of the major developments in the progression of scholarly understandings of myth from the time period of the ancient Greeks to the present. This overview on the progression of myth will examine the contributions of Walter Burkert, E. B. Tylor, and Sigmund Freud, among others. The

results of this inquiry will culminate in an outline of the characteristics of myth relevant to Biblical and Qur'anic studies.

Chapter Two will present the opposing views on the status of the Hebrew Bible in relation to myth. Yehezkel Kaufmann's minimalistic stance on the relationship between the Bible and myth will be presented first, followed by Michael Fishbane's pro-mythic stance. Kaufmann's and Fishbane's contributions will then be examined in light of the creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2, alongside the fourth-millennium-B.C.E. creation narrative belonging to the Sumerians of Mesopotamia. I will argue that the creation narratives of Genesis came about as a response to their cultural surroundings.

Chapter Three will begin by providing contemporary perspectives on the state of Qur'anic studies as it relates to myth, and will do so from within the sphere of academia. This will be followed by a brief examination of the methods that have been applied to Qur'anic studies and the results of such endeavours. Based on these findings, suggested improvements in scholarly approaches to Qur'anic studies will be provided. These improvements will be exemplified through the scholarly contributions of Aaron W. Hughes and his article "The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and Early Tafsîr."¹⁰ His contributions will allow for a study of the Qur'an that shifts the focus of Qur'anic origins from that of plagiarism to that of symbiosis with other traditions, the former being characteristic of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship. I will then examine the relationship between the Qur'an and myth by analyzing the creation narratives involving Adam present in the Qur'an alongside those which are present in both the Genesis narratives of the Bible and those found in rabbinic sources. This thesis

will argue that the Qur'an's utilization of Judaic writings was an attempt at bringing these two traditions together in hopes of easing the conversion process for the Jews of Arabia.

Thesis

By briefly drawing on the history of scholarly understandings of myth, I will provide a contemporary outline of the characteristics of myth; this will demonstrate that both the Bible and the Qur'an are mythic in nature; furthermore, this will allow for a study aimed at answering the questions of how and why the author(s) of the aforementioned scriptures would have utilized myth within their narratives.

¹⁰ Hughes, "The Stranger."

CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF MYTH

[T]heories of myth are theories of some much larger domain, with myth a mere subset. For example, anthropological theories of myth are theories of culture *applied* to the case of myth. Psychological theories of myth are theories of the mind. Sociological theories of myth are theories of society. There are no theories of myth itself, for there is no discipline of myth in itself. Myth is not like literature, which, so it has or had traditionally been claimed must be studied as literature rather than as history, sociology or something else nonliterary. There is no study of myth as myth.¹¹

At first glance, Robert A. Segal's theory on myth seems to be quite sound, as "there is no study of myth as myth," only myths as subsets of some other subject;¹² however, a problem arises when one looks at myth as a subset within religious studies.¹³ The problem arises due to the fact that religious studies incorporates the anthropological, psychological, and sociological approaches, among others, in its methodologies; as such, myth cannot simply be a subset within religious studies. When one examines myth within religious studies, one must look at myth relative to the case at hand and approach it using the appropriate methodology(ies).

One of the aims of this thesis is to determine the function of myth within the Torah and the Qur'an; as such, myth will be explored within this chapter by elaborating on how contemporary understandings of myth came to be. Therefore, a discourse on the major developments on the study of scholarly understandings of myth within the various

¹¹ Robert A. Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ James Samuel Preus states that "the naturalistic approach [to Religious Studies] ... takes theological interpretations seriously as part of the religious data but not of their explanation; for... explanatory entities (such as 'transcendence' or innate religious instincts) must not be multiplied beyond necessity. The naturalistic approach is at once more modest and more ambitious than the religious one: more modest because it is content to investigate the causes, motivations, meanings, and impact of religious phenomena without pronouncing on their cosmic significance for human destiny; ambitious, in that the study of religion strives to explain religion and to integrate its understanding into the other elements of

academic disciplines, relative to the study of religion, throughout the history of academia, will be surveyed and elaborated on. This will culminate in an outline of the major characteristics of myth.

The Etymology of Myth

To begin with, myth derives from the Greek word *mythos* (μῦθος), which to the Ancient Greeks meant a story or a plot; by extension, a *mythologos* was a storyteller, the stories told by the *mythologos* were not necessarily true nor false, but simply stories.¹⁴ Many of these stories, especially those of the Greek pantheon, were taken as historical happenings that shaped and influenced the functioning of the civilizations that believed in them; this is supported by the literatures and archaeological remnants of this era.¹⁵ However, the intellectual inquiries of the sophists went beyond what would become the euhemeristic theory which stated that myths were the product of actual events altered through time. Travels between Greece and Egypt brought to the surface the origins of a number of Greek gods, demonstrating that many of the deities were once native to the lands of Egypt;¹⁶ therefore, as the sophistic enlightenment pushed forward, the significance of the stories of the pantheon declined among some of the influential intelligentsia who, in light

culture to which it is related.” James Samuel Preus, *Explaining religion: criticism and theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 211.

¹⁴ Russell T. McCutcheon, “Myth,” in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Cassell, 2000), 191.

¹⁵ Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 12–17.

¹⁶ Helen Morales, *Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14–15.

of their greater understanding of the deities, re-categorized the term *mythos* to mean a fabulous or implausible story rooted in fiction.¹⁷

Walter Burkert's analysis of word myth within the context of ancient Greek thought presents this term in a contrasting light relative to earlier notions regarding its meaning. Within the framework of narratives, both oral and written, Burkert states that myth

is nonfactual storytelling... as contrasted with *lógos*: *lógos*, from *légein*, 'to put together,' is assembling single bits of evidence, of verifiable facts: *lógon didónai*, to render account in front of a critical and suspicious audience; *mýthos* is telling a tale while disclaiming responsibility: *ouk emòs ho mýthos*, this is not my tale, but I have heard it elsewhere. Just by disregarding the question of truth [/history] one may enjoy myth.¹⁸

However, Burkert also holds that the myths were still significant to the reader or listener in that many of the narratives still espoused societal elements which were "important, serious, [and] even sacred... This meant looking for a supposedly original, 'real' meaning as against the apparent absurdity or frivolousness of the tale."¹⁹ Hence, following the sophistic enlightenment, the term *mythos* served the purpose of elucidating the deeper meanings entangled within the myth itself – meanings whose purpose it was to possibly teach lessons, to better humanity, or to let us better understand the world around us.

As we have seen, the ancient Greeks understood the term *mythos* as being synonymous with the term *story*; however, the value of the story was dependent upon which perspective was being presented. The sophistic enlightenment, very much a precursor to the eighteenth-century enlightenment, relied heavily on the use of reason and

¹⁷ McCutcheon, 191.

¹⁸ Walter Burkert. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

logic to scrutinize previously accepted *stories*; this brought about a shift in the meaning of the word *mythos*, which prior to the enlightenment of the ancients meant story regardless of truth value. Subsequent to this movement, the term *mythos* still meant story, but it also implied that it was a story which portrayed morals or teachings of some sort, rather than relaying actual events. It became a term whose historicity was almost always in question or in doubt due to the fantastic natures of these stories. The stigma associated with the term *myth* came about due to the successive shifts in meaning regarding its nature; this is still evident in today's understanding of the word *myth*, as history and myth seldom complement each other. Evidence of this shift in meaning can be seen in the titles of contemporary literature, such as Bruce Lawrence's *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*,²⁰ John Shelby Spong's *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?: A Bishop Rethinks the Origins of Christianity*,²¹ or Scott O. Lilienfeld's *50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology: Shattering Widespread Misconceptions about Human Behavior*.²² In reference to these titles, myth is equated with falsehood.²³ Would the meanings of these titles be altered if one were to replace the word "Myth" with lies, fiction, or deceptions, respectively? Certainly not. The authors' use of myth is that of perceived truth in the guise of actual truth.

²⁰ Bruce Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

²¹ John Shelby Spong, *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?: A Bishop Rethinks the Origins of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994).

²² Scott O. Lilienfeld, et al., *50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology: Shattering Widespread Misconceptions about Human Behavior* (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

²³ McCutcheon, 191.

Anthropological Perspectives of Myth

Proceeding to the nineteenth century, we find a revival in the study of myth, albeit in the name of science rather than philosophy. As colonial expansion reached its peak during the Victorian era, social scientists of all varieties rushed to explain the nature of the seemingly savage peoples that the missionaries, travelers, and colonial officials were encountering and writing about. Anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists, among others, sought the cause of this savagery. The overwhelming conclusion was that the savages were in such a state due to their primitive nature. For pioneers such as Sir James George Frazer (d. 1941) and E. B. Tylor (d. 1917), who describe the primitives as rational, yet “working in a mental condition of intense and inveterate ignorance,” the primitive nature is such due to the savage’s inability or lack of desire to move away from the myths of their ancestors.²⁴ Tylor argues that

myth arose in the savage condition prevalent in remote ages among the whole human race, that it remains comparatively unchanged among the modern rude tribes who have departed least from these primitive conditions, while higher and later grades of civilization, partly by retaining its actual principles, and partly by carrying on its inherited results in the form of ancestral tradition, continued it not merely in toleration but in honour.²⁵

Tylor also holds that humans, while in their “savage condition,” developed myths as a mechanism to rationalize the regularities that occurred in their natural world; therefore, the use of myth for the primitives functioned in the same manner that science

²⁴ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom. Vol. I: Third American, from the Second English Edition* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1889), 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 283–284.

did in Tylor's time.²⁶ Tylor argues that myth is an irrelevant form of science, since modern science "scientifically" explains that which myth once did. For example, "according to myth, the rain god ... collects rain in buckets and then chooses to empty the buckets on some spot below. According to science, meteorological processes cause rain. One cannot stack the mythic account atop the scientific one because the rain god, rather than utilizing meteorological processes, acts in place of them."²⁷ Hence, for Tylor, myth and science, though seeking the same outcome, are incompatible with one another.²⁸

Like Tylor, Frazer understands that myth originated in the savageness of humanity, but goes further in arguing that myth was not only a mechanism to rationalize the natural world – the theoretical – but was also a mechanism that sought to control the natural world through ritual, hence Frazer's theories on myth-ritualism. Frazer proposes that primitives sought control of nature through enacting their myths. Frazer argues that primitives understood nature, in the form of the seasons, livestock, and vegetations, especially that of the crops, as being manifest in their god via the tribal leaders; therefore, the success of a crop or the health of the livestock was dependant on the health of the leader whose body housed their god.²⁹ Frazer states that

primitive peoples, as we have seen, sometimes believe that their safety and even that of the world is bound up with the life of one of these god-men or human incarnations of the divinity. Naturally, therefore, they take the utmost care of his life, out of a regard for their own. But no amount of care and precaution will prevent the man-god from growing old and feeble and

²⁶ Edward B. Tylor, "The Philosophy of Religion among the Lower Races of Mankind," *The Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* 4 (1870): 373.

²⁷ Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

²⁹ James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, Abridged ed.* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950, [c1922]), 309.

at last dying ... if the course of nature is dependent on the man-god's life, what catastrophes may not be expected from the gradual enfeeblement of his powers and their final extinction in death? There is only one way of averting these dangers. The man-god must be killed as soon as he shows symptoms that his powers are beginning to fail, and his soul must be transferred to a vigorous successor before it has been seriously impaired by the threatened decay.³⁰

Frazer's understanding of myth is rooted in the cyclical narratives of the death and rebirth of the gods. With the death of the god comes the change in a season and the end of a crop; when that god experiences rebirth, the season changes once again and the crops re-emerge.³¹ For example, Frazer presents the case of the Shilluk of the White Nile; he states that the Shilluk

believe ... that the king's life or spirit is so sympathetically bound up with the prosperity of the whole country, that if he fell ill or grew senile the cattle would sicken and cease to multiply, the crops would rot in the fields, and men would perish of widespread disease. Hence, in their opinion, the only way of averting these calamities is to put the king to death while he is still hale and hearty, in order that the divine spirit which he has inherited from his predecessors may be transmitted in turn by him to his successor while it is still in full vigour and has not yet been impaired by the weakness of disease and old age.³²

Andrew Lang (d. 1912),³³ William Robertson Smith (d. 1894),³⁴ and Marcel Mauss (d. 1950),³⁵ among others who contributed to and utilized the contributions of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 312-314.

³³ David Black, "Andrew Lang: Master of Fairyland," *Nexus: The Canadian Student Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1988): 26.

³⁴ Robert Ackerman, "Frazer on Myth and Ritual," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 1 (1975): 118.

³⁵ Wendy James and Nick Allen, eds. *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute: Methodology and History in Anthropology*, Vol. I (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998), 7.

Taylor and Frazer, all understood myth as an outgrowth of the primitive *man*,³⁶ an aspect that the modern *man* shed through cultural evolution.³⁷ Characteristic of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship was that the primitives stood in sharp contrast to the cultured European colonialists, in that the conquerors acted by means of reason, science, and the desire to progress, while the primitives were seen as relying on myth, ritual, and superstition, which resulted in a static cultural evolutionary process.³⁸ Frazer demonstrates this best by drawing on the example of King Ergamenes, a third-century-B.C.E. ruler who broke from the tribe's system of thought. As king, Ergamenes understood that his fate lay in the hands of the priests; however, his "Greek education ... emancipated him from the superstitions of his countrymen, Ergamenes ventured to disregard the command of the priests, and, entering the Golden Temple with a body of soldiers, put the priests to the sword."³⁹

One of the problems that arise out of the scholarly contributions of social scientists such as Tylor, Frazer, and the like, is that they argue that savageness came about as a result of primitiveness. This is problematic in that many ancient or "primitive" cultures were in fact quite advanced. One need only look at the ancient Egyptians. As members of one of the most mythically rich cultures in the world during their times, the ancient Egyptians were quite advanced scientifically, most notably in architecture and mathematics. Moreover, the re-examination of 5000-year-old Egyptian vases indicates

³⁶ I have italicized the term "man" to retain the original language that was used by these scholars. Moreover, by italicizing the term "man," I hope to convey the lack of gender-neutral language that ought to have been present.

³⁷ Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 70.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

³⁹ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 310.

that the ancient Egyptians were also advanced in electrochemistry, a science that did not emerge in Europe until the early nineteenth century.⁴⁰ There are many other examples of primitive cultures exhibiting great sophistication; William R. Corliss's *Ancient Man: A Handbook of Puzzling Artifacts*⁴¹ provides details of many advanced civilizations that were scientifically sophisticated, yet both Tylor and Frazer classify them as primitive. Since the savage peoples that Tylor and Frazer describe did not resemble the modern and civilized Europeans, they were quick to classify them as primitive, and consequently inferior.

It is also interesting to note that Tylor “opposes those who read myth symbolically, poetically, or metaphorically – for him, interchangeable terms.”⁴² Tylor argues this point in support of his claim that myth, for the savage, was a form of primitive science; therefore, the symbolic, poetic, or metaphoric approaches to myth become invalid because they address the theoretical, rather than the practical. This literal understanding of myth inaccurately represents the whole genre of myth, in that various cultures developed their myths for their own purposes, be it science or allegory, which may have included symbolic, poetic, or metaphoric readings.

An issue that Frazer does not address is what would become of the savages if the man-god or king were to die unexpectedly.⁴³ Would the seasons not progress? Surely, following three editions of his *magnum opus* and the publishing of various other works, such a thought must have crossed Frazer's mind, but addressing such a conundrum would

⁴⁰ William R. Corliss, *Ancient Man: A Handbook of Puzzling Artifacts* (Glen Arm, MD: Sourcebook Project, 1978), 443.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, 19.

⁴³ Ibid., 66.

have forced Frazer to admit that myths may not have been as structured as he makes them out to be. Furthermore, Frazer, like Tylor, holds that the myths of the savages functioned as science. Therefore, Frazer's avoidance in addressing or explaining what would occur if the man-god were to die unexpectedly, would imply that he did not want to deal with the notion that myths may not have been the counterpart to science, as this would suggest that myths functioned as an aspect of the cultural heritage of the peoples examined.

Frazer's theories are broad, in that they emerge from various roots yet yield a single sprout; here, the roots are represented by the various tribes, and the sprout is the killing of the king. This becomes evident when Frazer describes the death rituals associated with the rulers of various African tribes; when the kings of Bunyoro, Gingiro, Kibanga, and Sofala show any sign(s) of physical or mental weakness, they are killed, for the good of the people.⁴⁴ Frazer argues that this occurs due to the primitives' beliefs in age-old myths which dictate the functioning of their societies.⁴⁵

Going beyond Tylor and Frazer's shortcomings in defining the myths of humanity, these two scholars do contribute to contemporary understandings of myth. Tylor recognized that the function of myth was an attempt by the primitives to understand the physical and mental world that surrounded them. Myths were produced in order to make sense of "life and death, sleep and waking, swoons and illness, dreams and visions,"⁴⁶ as well as the "sun and stars, trees and rivers, winds and clouds."⁴⁷

Through Frazer's numerous examples of myth-ritualism, one can see that those who adhered to their myths did so with great passion. Individuals do not simply kill their

⁴⁴ Ibid., 315.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 309.

leaders out of ritual; the mythic backgrounds to these rituals are so central to these cultures that their leaders are killed, oftentimes brutally.

Psychological Perspectives of Myth

For Sigmund Freud and the school of psychoanalysis that followed him, myth went beyond the civilized/savage dichotomy created by his predecessors, in that aspects of the universal and primitive society remained prevalent in the civilized and contemporary society of Freud, albeit repressed and in the psyche of society. Freud argues that “the maturation of the individual and the evolution of a species from the savage to the civilized state”⁴⁸ is an analogy for the relationship between the development of the unconscious and that of myth.⁴⁹ Freud states that

religious phenomena [including myth], are to be understood only on the model of the neurotic symptoms of the individual, which are so familiar to us, as a return of long-forgotten important happenings in the primeval history of the human family, that they owe their obsessive character to that very origin and therefore derive their effect on mankind from the historical truth they contain.⁵⁰

Freud believed that myth, along with moral law, social order, art, and religion was an expression of the collective neurosis of humanity, the onset of which, according to one of his theories, was the killing of the primordial father, a condition he termed the

⁴⁶ Tylor, “The Philosophy of Religion,” 373.

⁴⁷ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 285.

⁴⁸ Eric Csapo, *Theories of Mythology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 93.

⁴⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1961), 44–45.

⁵⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1967), 71.

“Oedipus complex.”⁵¹ Freud roots his theory of the Oedipus complex in the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, in which Oedipus, albeit unknowingly, kills his father and sleeps with his mother. Freud recognizes that Oedipus is a victim of fate, but at the same time argues that he inherited the urge to kill his father and sleep with his mother, as do all males.⁵² Freud’s use of Oedipus demonstrates the universality of human desires to fulfill that which is latent within the psyche. That humans do not act out these desires is a result of maturation; furthermore, that myths are not taken seriously in modern times is a result of humanity progressing from the savage state to the civilized state. Freud reaches this conclusion by paralleling the savage condition of humanity to the oedipal stage of children. Freud argues that just as children progress out of their oedipal desires into maturation via repression, so too did the savage progress into the civilized condition via the same mechanism.⁵³

Though much of Freud’s work is discredited by contemporary scholarship, it has nonetheless contributed to further developments, most notably by his protégé Carl Jung. Whereas Freud rooted the human neurosis of myth in the primordial sexual conflicts of our ancestors, Jung preferred to understand it as a condition of the collective unconscious, which emerged in the forms of archetypes, dreams, and symbols; it is an inherited aspect of humanity tucked beneath the already present and personal subconscious.⁵⁴ Jung describes the collective unconscious as

⁵¹ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey (London and New York: Routledge and Paul, 1950), 182.

⁵² Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 127.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Carl G. Jung, *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious*, in *Encountering Jung: Jung on Mythology*, ed. by Robert A. Segal (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 57–59.

a part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition. While the personal unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness, and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity. Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of *complexes*, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of *archetypes*.⁵⁵

For Jung, the emergence of myth in the form of archetypes, dreams, and symbols represented archaic truths about humanity's origins and the human need to internalize the world around them.⁵⁶ Jung states that

mythologists have always helped themselves out with solar, lunar, meteorological, vegetal, and other ideas of the kind. The fact that myths are first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul is something they have absolutely refused to see until now. Primitive man is not much interested in objective explanations of the obvious, but he has an imperative need or rather, his unconscious mind has an irresistible urge-to assimilate all outer sense experiences to inner, psychic events. It is not enough for the primitive to see the sun rise and set; this external observation must at the same time be a psychic happening ... All the mythologised processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the mind which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection – that is, mirrored in the events of nature.⁵⁷

Jung's understanding of myth brings us back to ancient Greek thought on the term myth as presented by Burkert; however, Jung emphasizes the soul's desire for meaning, which was attained through making sense of humanity's myths stored in our collective

⁵⁵ Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Vol. 9, Part 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Herbert Read (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969), 42.

⁵⁶ Robert H. Hopcke, *A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999), 24–27.

⁵⁷ Jung, *The Archetypes*, 5–6.

unconscious, rather than the use of fabulous narratives to impart deeper meanings. Moreover, unlike Freud, Jung believed that the individual ought to tap into the collective unconscious to attain this self-realization; this is to be accomplished through the use of the personal unconscious.⁵⁸ When the collective unconscious becomes manifest in the personal unconscious, one attains self-realization; the meanings of the myths of old become manifest within the individual.⁵⁹

Both Freud and Jung believe that the psyche stores personal memories, as well as those memories which were “brought with him [/her] at birth, fragments of phylogenetic origin, an archaic heritage”;⁶⁰ however, Freud’s attempt at explaining how such memories are retained and passed down through seemingly endless generations lacks the scientific integrity that he claims to use. Rather, he supports his claim by stating,

We must conclude that the mental residue of those primeval times has become a heritage which, with each new generation, needs only to be awakened, not to be re-acquired. We may think here of the example of speech symbolism, which certainly seems to be inborn. It originates in the time of speech development, and it is familiar to all children without their having been specially instructed. It is the same in all peoples in spite of the differences in language. What we may still lack in certainty we may acquire from other results of psychoanalytic investigations. We learn that our children in a number of significant relationships do not react as their own experiences would lead us to expect, but instinctively, like animals; this is explicable only by phylogenetic inheritance.⁶¹

Freud’s attempt at explaining the Oedipus complex by tracing it back to a conditioned aspect of humanity, such as speech symbolism, is fundamentally flawed, in that Freud never articulates that Oedipus’s inherited desires were ever directed at his

⁵⁸ Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, Vol. 8, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Herbert Read (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969), 59–60.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 125.

⁶¹ Ibid.

adoptive parents. Rather, Oedipus flees from his fate (his adoptive parents) only to unintentionally fulfill the oracle's prophecies. Oedipus's killing of his father is the killing of a stranger, and his marriage to his mother is nothing more than a marriage which fulfills his duties of becoming a new king.

Furthermore, Freud argues that the repetition of history engrains aspects of primitive humanity's actions into the unconscious; here, Freud cites Frazer's *Golden Bough* as evidence that humanity continually evokes primordial happenings by reenacting these events. However, Freud's use of a flawed approach, Frazer's in this case, weakens his theory further; the use of the law of similarity requires that the objects that are being grouped are actually similar.

Jung, on the other hand, argues that "the concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere."⁶² Jung claims that the theory of archetypes is not a new one; he points out that Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (d. 1939) recognized the archetype as "représentations collectives," that Henri Hubert (d. 1927) and Marcel Mauss recognized it as "categories of the imagination," and that Adolf Bastian (d. 1905) referred to them as "elementary" or "primordial thoughts."⁶³ Like Freud, Jung asserts that his theory of archetypes is sound because previous theorists have articulated similar thoughts on the subject. Jung claims that his theory on archetypes is a form of empirical science; however, he does little to demonstrate this other than to

⁶² Jung, *The Archetypes*, 42.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

say that if there exists in the unconscious universal forms, and they are exhibited through the common instincts and actions of humanity, then the theory of archetypes is sound.⁶⁴

Weston La Barre, one of Jung's harshest critics, accuses Jung of using false psychology in order to fulfill his aims. La Barre states that

Carl Jung's studies in folklore are methodologically ... reprehensible ...⁶⁵ for they are based upon a demonstrably false psychology. Jung's "archetypes" repeat the errors of the Universalgedanken formulation; but while he does in theory recognize ethnographic difference, his racial mysticism pretends that archetypal folk-symbolisms are inherited phylogenetically. It has been abundantly demonstrated that these, like the rest of culture, are ontologically "inherited" (socially, not biologically) through the socialization process. Whereas the folklorist laboriously and inductively constructs a motif-index, and has an ethnographically-sophisticated caution about finding relationships not resting firmly on geographical contiguities or historical continuities, Jung would deductively range over all time and space with the dreambook of absolute archetypal symbology, and rediscover eternally only what is in the book.⁶⁶

La Barre's criticism of Jung's use of archetypes is valid, in that Jung reduces cultural archetypes in a manner that universalizes the archetype. La Barre rightly points out that

⁶⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁵ La Barre also criticizes Frazer's *Golden Bough* for assimilating various cultural phenomena, which span both time and geography, into similar events which represent an ideal form of Frazer's thoughts on myth.

⁶⁶ Weston La Barre, "Folklore and Psychology," *Journal of American Folklore* 61, no. 242 (1948): 383. The following is La Barre's footnote which is attached to the cited text of this footnote "Two examples will suffice of the inadequacies of this Jungian tradition. J. Layard, in his *The Lady of the Hare: Being a Study of the Healing Power of Dreams* (London, 1944), begins with a case of a patient, and then makes a survey of the mythology of the hare in a variety of cultures. The assumption is that this procedure is relevant in terms of Jungian archetypes. In actual clinical practice the unconscious symbolisms of the patient are frequently idiot, monad, individual, and *out of step* with the cultural consensus; more than this, the cross-cultural relevance of symbolism of the hare is assumed rather than proven. In 'Lycanthropy as a Psychic Mechanism' (JAR, 58 ('94), 310-316), Nandor Fodor brews a potpourri of dreams and myths in the Freudian-Jungian tradition, and ends up with a mysticism of the psychic at the cellular level inconsistent even in its own terms: how can the female with XX-XX chromosomes, have a repressed male source of conflict at the cellular level? Jungian mysticism, undisciplined by the stubborn specificities of ethnographic fact, is predestined to such nonsense."

specific symbols, for example, have specific meanings for those who employ them, and that geography, time, and culture also influence the meanings of these symbols.⁶⁷

Both Freud and Jung's approaches to the study of myth contain flaws; however, their theories do provide important elements which contribute to scholarly understandings of myth. Both Freud and Jung posit that myths can be traced back to primordial times and that through the unconscious, they survive within contemporary society. It has been demonstrated that the mechanisms by which myth has been passed on from generation to generation is inadequately defended by both Freud and Jung. However, one can deduce that myths speak to both the individual's and group's issues at hand; history has shown that myths do address these concerns regionally, although not as inclusively as both Freud and Jung would have us believe.

The fact that Freud places myth within the psyche of the individual reveals that myths function as mental articulations that tell how individuals and groups ought to act in relation to their environments, which are oftentimes less than ideal. Furthermore, Freud demonstrates that myths present certain motifs that are present in the human mind; that he describes these motifs as a form of neurosis should not take away from the idea that they are present in the psyche.

For Jung, understanding the myths of the unconscious leads the individual to self-realization. Unlike the anthropologists before him who theorized that myths functioned in order to make sense of the natural world surrounding the individual, Jung proposed that myths aided in the individual's quest for enlightenment; one's goal was not to understand

⁶⁷ La Barre, 383.

the functioning of nature, but to understand how nature was projected within the individual. The result of this is self-realization.

Conclusion

The discussion relating to myth could continue on, including the views of individuals such as philologist Friedrich Max Müller, who explains myth as referring to meteorological or cosmological phenomena;⁶⁸ anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who, working via structuralism, sees myth as a mode of communication in which aspects of the myth act as words in a sentence in order to reveal the greater meaning;⁶⁹ or literary theorist Northrop Frye, who, relying on individuals such as Frazer and Müller, argued that all genres of literature take their form from myth.⁷⁰ The list of theorists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Emile Durkheim, and Mircea Eliade, to name a few, and their theories could continue into volumes, as has been arduously accomplished by Robert A. Segal's *Myth: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*.⁷¹ However, this brief survey of influential theorists and their thoughts on myth has been provided to demonstrate that myth is a multi-faceted entity, and that it is a concept that has evolved and continues to evolve. The aim of this discourse has been to demonstrate that contemporary understandings of myth are rooted in theories that have been built upon, some of which may have not always been sound. For example, Tylor posits that myth

⁶⁸ Friedrich Max Müller, *Comparative Mythology: An Essay* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1909).

⁶⁹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropology and Myth: Lectures 1951–1982*, trans. Roy Willis (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

⁷⁰ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁷¹ Robert A. Segal, *Myth: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vols. 1–4, (London: Routledge, 2007).

functions in a manner that sought to understand natural occurrences. Jung builds upon Tylor's theories by seeking to understand why the "savage" sought this understanding.

To be able to examine the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an relative to myth, a contemporary, yet fluid, outline of the characteristics of myth ought to be provided. Since myth does not belong exclusively to any one of the disciplines noted, an outline of its characteristics should avoid the rigidity of adhering to a single approach; moreover, it should encompass aspects of the various approaches since myth, as has been demonstrated, is an entity that undeniably falls within the categories of various academic disciplines.

The etymology of myth tells us that myths were first and foremost stories; however, since the nature of many of these stories centered on gods, heroes, and extraordinary creatures, their significance declined with the progression of the sophistic enlightenment. Burkert's analysis of the term *myth* recast its value in meaning, rather than that of logic, reason, science, and historicity. This allowed the myth to function inside and or outside the realms of time and space. Tylor's study on primitive/*savage* cultures demonstrates that myth also served the function of explaining the natural world that surrounded the primitives. Frazer's approach to the study of myth through ritual exemplified how cultures sought control of nature in order to achieve cultural goals; these rituals demonstrate that the myths were weighty, in that they accomplished something significant for those who believed in them. Freud's understanding of myth evokes in the adherent a psychic function that molds the actions of the individual, which are relayed in moral and religious actions. Jung presents myth as a condition of the collective

unconscious, which, when revealed to the personal conscious, allows the individual to attain self-knowledge or self-realization.

To summarize, myths are stories with a wide range of fantasticality, which are about gods, heroes, and extraordinary creatures; the stories can take place inside and or outside the realms of time and space; the functions of these stories are weighty, in that they accomplish something significant for those who believe in them, oftentimes tenaciously; whether these stories are factual, fictitious, or a mixture of the two is left for the individual or group to decide, rendering logic, reason, science, and historicity secondary with regard to relevance.⁷² Depending on one's theoretical approach or motive, aspects of this outline of the characteristics of myth can either be emphasized or deemed less significant, but cannot be removed altogether.⁷³

The aforementioned characteristics of myth do not lend themselves well to cultures or traditions that see themselves as being primarily rooted in history; yet, when one examines the Bible, or the Qur'an for that matter, one can see that certain narratives, such as the accounts of creation, definitely fall within the parameters of the

⁷² Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, 4–6.

⁷³ It is of interest to note that Clifford Geertz's insightful attempt to produce characteristics for a broader understanding of the word "culture," derived from Clyde Kluckhohn's book *Mirror for Man*, resulted in eleven aspects which implicitly overlap with some of the aforementioned characteristics of myth provided. This can be rationalized in that cultures oftentimes produce their own myths, or keep alive the myths of their ancestors, regardless of their sources. Based on Kluckhohn's work, Geertz states that cultures are: "(1) 'the total way of life of a people'; (2) 'the social legacy the individual acquires from his group'; (3) 'a way of thinking, feeling, and believing'; (4) 'an abstraction from behavior'; (5) a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave; (6) a 'storehouse of pooled learning'; (7) 'a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems'; (8) 'learned behavior'; (9) a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior; (10) 'a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men'; (11) 'a precipitate of history'; and turning, perhaps in desperation, to similes, as a map, as a sieve, and as a matrix." Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), 4–5. As can be seen, myth, like culture, is an entity which continually evolves with the progression of time. Robert N. Bellah, "Religious Evolution," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 29, 1964, pp. 358–374.

characteristics of myth that have been provided. For example, in the Bible there is a heavenly court in which a supreme, lone, and eternal deity⁷⁴ interacts with his creations. According to the Bible, God's creations consist of angels⁷⁵ (including seraphim⁷⁶ and cherubim⁷⁷), beasts⁷⁸, humanity⁷⁹, a tree of life, and a tree of knowledge of good and evil.⁸⁰ A closer reading of the Book of Job⁸¹ affords the reader a glimpse into God's heavenly court. In this book of the Old Testament,⁸² we are told that

The day came when the members of the court of heaven took their places in the presence of the Lord, and Satan was there among them. The Lord asked him where he had been. "Ranging over the earth," he said, "from end to end." Then the Lord asked Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? You will find no one like him on earth, a man of blameless and upright life, who fears God and sets his face against wrongdoing." Satan answered the Lord, "Has not Job good reason to be God-fearing? Have you not hedged him round on every side with your protection, him and his family and all his possessions? Whatever he does you have blessed, and

⁷⁴ Genesis 1:1.

⁷⁵ Job 1:6–12.

⁷⁶ Isaiah 6:1–3 "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

⁷⁷ Genesis 3:23–24 "So the Lord God banished him [Adam] from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life."

⁷⁸ Psalm 74:13–14 "It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert."

⁷⁹ Genesis 1:26–27 "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

⁸⁰ Genesis 2:8–9 "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

⁸¹ Although the Book of Job is a much later text relative to the Genesis creation narratives, this story exudes the characteristics of myth outlined. Either of the creation narratives as well as other episodes from within the Bible could have been chosen to demonstrate that the stories of the Old Testament function within the parameters of myth outlined. However, the selected verses from the story of Job as found in the Bible present the mythic elements in an intricate and highly structured manner.

⁸² The Qur'anic narratives which reveal the story of Job (*Ayoub*) are quite similar to that which is found in the Bible.

his herds have increased beyond measure. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and then he will curse you to your face.” Then the Lord said to Satan, “So be it. All that he has is in your hands; only Job himself you must not touch.” And Satan left the Lord’s presence.⁸³

These verses reveal a hierarchical order among the angels within the heavenly court.⁸⁴

Moreover, the conversation between God and Satan reveals the active role that God takes in the lives of humans. This becomes evident when Satan posits that Job is “blameless and upright”⁸⁵ due to God’s blessing of all that Job does. God does not deny this; rather, God leaves Job at the mercy of Satan in order to demonstrate to Satan that Job will remain righteous in the face of the calamities that Satan imposes upon him.⁸⁶ The nature of God’s heavenly court as depicted in the Book of Job, and elsewhere, reflects that which has been characterized as myth. This is evident, in that this narrative is fantastical in nature and in that it involves a God, an extraordinary creature (Satan), and a hero (Job). This story takes place both inside and outside the realms of time and space. This story accomplishes something for those who believe in the narrative, namely, that one ought to remain faithful in the face of calamities; therefore, whether these stories are factual, fictitious, or a mixture of the two becomes secondary with regard to logic, reason, science, and historicity.

Like the Biblical narratives, a number of the Qur’anic narratives also exhibit that which has been characterized as myth. For instance, the Qur’an also describes a sole

⁸³ Job 1:6–12.

⁸⁴ Job 1:6.

⁸⁵ Job 1:8.

⁸⁶ Job 1:9–12.

deity, God/*Allah*, who interacts with its creations; these creations include angels,⁸⁷ *jinn*,⁸⁸ and the members of humanity,⁸⁹ who will ultimately be destined to Paradise or to Hell. Paradise is described as containing rivers of water, milk, and honey,⁹⁰ among other desirable entities and features, while Hell is described as a place with furiously blazing fires that do not cease afflicting those who inhabit it.⁹¹

Based on the characteristics of myth outlined, it is evident that certain narratives within the Bible and the Qur'an are mythic in nature. The aim of the following chapters will be to determine how and why myth is utilized by the author(s) of the Bible and the Qur'an. Before seeking the answers to these questions, a brief discussion on the opposing views of the nature of myth within the Bible will be presented.

⁸⁷ Qur'an 35:1 "Praise be to Allah Who created (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels Messengers with wings— two, or three, or four (pairs): He adds to Creation as He pleases: for Allah has power over all things."

⁸⁸ Qur'an 15:26–27 "We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape; and the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind."

⁸⁹ Qur'an 4:1 "O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;—fear Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights) and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you."

⁹⁰ Qur'an 47:15 "[Such as] the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible: rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear. In it there are for them all kinds of fruits, and Grace from their Lord. (Can those in such Bliss) be compared to such as shall dwell forever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels (to pieces)?"

⁹¹ Qur'an 92:14–16 "Therefore do I warn you of a Fire blazing fiercely; none shall reach it but those most unfortunate ones."

CHAPTER 2: THE BIBLE AND MYTH

Contrasting Views of Myth in the Bible

Aside from being a text that dictates the laws of the Jewish people, the Bible is a scripture that relates narratives which reveal the origins of humanity and its near demise,⁹² preserves the poetry of the Israelite people, provides narratives that reveal the guidelines for ethical behavior, and tells of the historical accounts of a people who date back almost 4000 years, to the Patriarch Abraham. Furthermore, the observances of *Pesach* and *Sukkot*,⁹³ among other Jewish holidays, are all a testament to the faith that the Jews have in the historicity of the Israelite people as presented in the Bible. However, the question of the historicity of these narratives is not of relevance to this study; rather, the question that ought to be addressed is whether or not these narratives reflect that which has been characterized as myth, as these holidays are rooted in Biblical narratives that transcend the ordinary.

Yehezkel Kaufmann (d. 1963), an influential and distinguished scholar of Biblical studies, argues that

When we examine Biblical literature ... we are met by a startling phenomenon[;] the Bible shows absolutely no apprehension of the real character of mythological religion. On this point there is uniformity regardless of source, book, or period. Nowhere in Biblical literature is there revealed a true grasp of the essentials of heathenism.⁹⁴

Although Kaufmann's statement portrays the Israelite religion as ignorant of myth, he does concede that foreign influences with mythic tinges are scattered throughout

⁹² This is a reference to the Biblical account of the Great Flood as recorded in Genesis 6:1–9:17.

⁹³ The following biblical verses refer to the holidays noted: *Pesach*: Exodus 12, Leviticus 23:4–8. *Sukkot*: Leviticus 23:33–44.

⁹⁴ Kaufmann, "The Bible and Mythological Polytheism," 179–180. Kaufmann equates heathenism and paganism with mythological religions in contrast to the monotheistic Abrahamic traditions.

the Jewish scriptures; however, he argues that these occurrences are rare.⁹⁵ In an effort to separate Judaism from the actions of the Israelites who absorbed the practices of the heathens, Kaufmann distinguishes between the pure aspects of the Jewish monotheistic religion and accepted practices (i.e., the scriptures and religious rituals) from the “vulgar superstition[s] of the sort that the ignorant level of monotheistic peoples practice ... to this day”; practices which involve the “belief in the virtue of idols, amulets, spells, and pagan rites.”⁹⁶ Kaufmann is likely responding to individuals such as Frazer, who portrays the rituals, practices, and superstitions of the Israelite people as being somehow indicative of the Jewish tradition in and of itself.⁹⁷

Kaufmann continues on to argue that the supposed myths of the Bible are not myths at all; this is because the narratives contained within the Bible lack the essential characteristics of myth. Kaufmann posits that the creation of the Israelite religion was such a radical shift from the polytheistic pagan religions, which were prevalent during and before its formation, that to incorporate aspects from its neighbouring pagan traditions would have had a counter-effect on what this movement was trying to accomplish, which was primarily to establish a monotheistic religion in which the god was the controller, rather than the controlled.⁹⁸ Although Kaufmann admits that the creation of the monotheistic Israelite tradition did not occur in a vacuum, he does argue

⁹⁵ Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 60.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁹⁷ James George Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion Legend and Law*. v.3 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1918), 446–447.

⁹⁸ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 223–226.

that the “monotheistic world view [of the Israelites] had no antecedents in paganism”;⁹⁹ rather, the “Israelite religion developed organically, internally.”¹⁰⁰

In support of this argument, Kaufmann provides three characteristics which distinguish the Israelite religion from its mythic and polytheistic counterparts. Firstly, YHWH acts independently as the sole divinity; all other entities in the Bible, including the angels, beasts, and creatures, are subservient to him.¹⁰¹ Secondly, Kaufmann argues that “every mythical narrative belongs to the store of the Biblical writers’ own religion, and is presented as a true story.”¹⁰² Finally, Kaufmann asserts that “no mythological matter is adduced with derogatory or polemical intent ... The struggle with idolatry is not a struggle against idolatrous myth.”¹⁰³

Kaufmann demonstrates the three elements which separate the Israelite religion from that of its contemporary and earlier traditions by drawing on the Exodus narrative. When YHWH speaks to Moses in the form of the burning bush, we are, for the first time in history, introduced to a deity who has sent forth an apostle to redeem a people.¹⁰⁴ This deity’s relationship with humanity is traced back to the Hebrew Patriarchs who include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, among others. It is through this relationship that the singularity of the deity is deduced.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the narratives of Exodus draw on the history of the aforementioned Hebrews.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰¹ Kaufmann, “The Bible and Mythological Polytheism,” 181.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 182.

¹⁰⁴ Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 224.

¹⁰⁵ Genesis 1:1 states that God created the heavens and the earth. This is followed by a detailed account of the proceeding creations. There is never any allusion to the presence of any other deities. However, Isaiah 43:10 clearly depicts God as a single entity; it states “Before me no god was formed, nor

Prior to YHWH speaking to Moses, Moses is completely unaware of the holiness of his environment and of his forthcoming mission. Therefore, Kaufmann argues that the emergence of the prophetic Moses brought with him a tradition that had been unheard of prior to him, and that “every feature of the biblical Moses bespeaks a pioneer.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, “the theophany of the bush has no roots in any existent cult, Kenite or Midianite, nor [do] the Hebrew people know of the sanctity of the place or name of the God who manifested himself there. Moses is the first to discover both.”¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the ignorance of Moses prior to the theophany is evidence that “he must be considered the initiator of a religious revolution ... [and so too] he must be considered the creator of an original idea.”¹⁰⁸ For Kaufmann, the narratives involving Moses demonstrate that the Israelite religion was formed from within its own environment.

Following the exodus out of Egypt, the Israelites begin an apostasy/redemption relationship with YHWH. Aaron’s moulding of the golden bull-calf sets forth this relationship.¹⁰⁹ However, Kaufmann argues that the Israelite worship of idols in the Bible is not akin to the idol worship of its pagan counterpart. The golden calf that Aaron moulds has no relationship to other deities of the surrounding traditions, as is often the case with pagan deities.¹¹⁰ Kaufmann also points out that the Israelites created one god in the form of a golden calf, as opposed to a plethora of gods, which would have been

shall there be any after me.” Isaiah 44:24 then alludes back to the book of Genesis, in which it states that God spread out the heavens and the earth.

¹⁰⁶ Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 224.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 227.

¹⁰⁹ Exodus 32:2–6.

¹¹⁰ Kaufmann, “The Bible and Mythological Polytheism,” 184.

characteristic of mythic religion.¹¹¹ Moreover, YHWH never battles any other deity, as the Israelites did not recognize those that existed among the pagans. Rather, YHWH's confrontations are with the idolaters within the tribes of Israel. Through this example, Kaufmann demonstrates that "no mythological matter is adduced with derogatory or polemical intent ... The struggle with idolatry is not a struggle against idolatrous myth."¹¹²

Kaufmann categorizes the mythic-type narratives of the Bible, namely Genesis 1–11 as "mythic" only insofar as they resemble the myths of the heathens. He denies that the myths of the Bible are actually myths, due to the fact that the motifs which are prevalent in pagan myths, as noted previously, are nowhere to be found in the Bible.¹¹³ For Kaufmann, there exists a great contrast between the religion of the Israelites and that of the mythic pagan traditions which coexisted with them; Kaufmann concludes that

the biblical religious idea, visible in the earliest strata, permeating even the "magical" legends, is of a supernal God, above every cosmic law, fate, and compulsion; unborn, unbegetting, knowing no desire, independent of matter and its forces; a God who does not fight other divinities or powers of impurity; who does not sacrifice, divine, prophesy, or practice sorcery; who does not sin and needs no expiation; a God who does not celebrate festivals of his life. An unfettered divine will transcending all being—this is the mark of biblical religion and that which sets it apart from all the religions of the earth.¹¹⁴

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the eminent Jewish studies scholar Michael Fishbane argues

that the categories of monotheism and myth are not mutually exclusive or incompatible; but rather, the evidence shows that the nature and content of biblical and rabbinic myth were shaped by the topics and concerns of the

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 181

¹¹⁴ Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 121.

different periods of monotheistic religion reflected in Hebrew Scripture, the Midrash, and the book of Zohar.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, Fishbane holds that the authors of the Jewish texts would have understood their writings as being sacred, renouncing any notion that their writings were anything but divinely true; thus, nullifying the myth-history distortions that modern scholars habitually superimpose upon them.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the mythic aspects of the Bible were part of the Israelites' writing genre; therefore, the Israelites were referring to and recording that which had been transmitted to them from generations past in a manner that was suitable to the contexts of their discourses. Take, for instance, the reference to God's hand being withheld in his bosom in a time of oppression and tyranny;¹¹⁷ the Psalmist is alluding to God's "outstretched arm,"¹¹⁸ which freed the Jews from the bondage of the Egyptians centuries earlier. There is little doubt that the author of the Psalms is referring to the exodus of the Israelite people, and, from the Psalmist's perspective, there is equally little doubt that God had an active role in this momentous event in Israelite history.¹¹⁹ Through this example, Fishbane shows that "myth and history are complexly interfused in ancient Israelite thought."¹²⁰ Furthermore, Fishbane demonstrates, in concurrence with Kaufmann, that the narratives of the Bible draw on earlier materials from within the Israelite tradition.

¹¹⁵ Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 16. Fishbane's grouping together of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Midrashim, and the book of Zohar, texts which span thousands of years, is problematic. The environmental milieu of the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures was quite different from that of the author(s) of the Zohar, a text that is believed to have been written in medieval Spain; as such, each of these texts ought to have been addressed in and of themselves, rather than as a single grouping of texts.

¹¹⁶ Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 41.

¹¹⁷ Psalm 74:11.

¹¹⁸ Exodus 6:6

¹¹⁹ Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 40–41.

The differences of opinion on the nature of myth in the Bible between Kaufmann and Fishbane are not ones which are rooted in terminology. Both Kaufmann and Fishbane clearly understand what is meant by the term *myth*; however, their application of the term in reference to the Bible is what separates their conclusions regarding myth in the Bible. Both Kaufmann and Fishbane recognize that the authors of the Bible did not understand myth as it pertained to their history and would not have likely appreciated the differences between myth and history as it related to their narratives; however, Fishbane holds that myth was still an integral aspect of the Israelites' writings, whereas Kaufmann does not.

For Fishbane, the emergence of myth within the Israelite tradition came about as a result of the environment in which the Israelite tradition blossomed. He strongly credits the pagan atmosphere that the Israelites were saturated in for influencing the writings that are preserved in the Bible.¹²¹ For this reason, among others, Fishbane categorically “dismisses any understanding of Israelite religion that avers that monotheism, by definition, signifies the absence of myth.”¹²² To demonstrate this point, Fishbane brings to the surface the parallels between biblical narratives and those of the Near East. Fishbane states,

The many-headed creatures of the deep (the *tanninim* and Leviathan) suggest some beastly aspect—comparable to the seven-headed sea dragon pictured on a third-millennium seal impression from Akkad. A similar image occurs in a Canaanite myth depicting Ba'al's victory over the sea god Yam, which refers to the smashing of Lotan (a dialectal variant of the Hebrew name *livyatan*, Leviathan) and the defeat of a monster with seven heads. What is more, in this same text the serpent Lotan is described as both “slant” and “twisted” (*brḥ* and *‘qlḥ*)—apostrophes exactly like those

¹²⁰ Ibid., 65.

¹²¹ Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 40.

¹²² Pamela Barmash, review of *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, by Michael Fishbane, *The Association for Jewish Studies* 31, no. 3 (2007), 363.

used of Leviathan in Isa. 27: 1 (who is called both *bariah* and *'aqalaṭon*); and the verb that is used to describe the smashing (*tmḥṣ*) of Lotan is identical to that used in Job 26: 12 (*maḥatz*) when it depicts the defeat of the sea monster Rahab. Such battle scenes also recall the account of the lord Marduk's battle against Ti'amat in Babylonian mythology, where we learn that "He smashed (her) skull with his merciless staff" (*ina mittišu la padi ulatti muḥḥa*; *Enuma elish* IV. 130).

All these cross-references and shared depictions suggest that ancient Israel drew upon a bundle of mythic traditions that circulated throughout the Syro-Palestinian region, and used them in order to depict battles against sea dragons—albeit for its own purposes and in its own ways.¹²³

The Creation of Humanity: Mythopoeic Purpose

To demonstrate one example of why the Israelites used the myths of its neighbours, we will look at the creation narratives as found in Genesis. In the Bible there are two accounts presented describing the creation of humanity; they are found in Genesis 1 and 2.

In the first creation narrative, after creating the heavens and the earth, God creates vegetation, the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and other living creatures of the earth.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters....¹²⁴ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so ...¹²⁵ And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good ...¹²⁶ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth

¹²³ Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 40–41.

¹²⁴ Genesis 1:1–2.

¹²⁵ Genesis 1:11.

¹²⁶ Genesis 1:20–21.

living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so.¹²⁷

Though it is not stated who came first, or if they were created at the same time, or even as one being – as Phyllis Tribble hypothesizes¹²⁸ – God then creates both man and woman in his image, and they are given dominion over all the creatures of the earth. Finally, they are told to “be fruitful and multiply.”¹²⁹

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.¹³⁰

In the second creation narrative, God creates man from the dust of the ground, followed by the animals of the field and the birds of the sky to be man’s helpers. God places man in the midst of the Garden of Eden and states that he “may freely eat of every tree of the garden,” with the stipulation that “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”¹³¹

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and

¹²⁷ Genesis 1:24.

¹²⁸ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 106.

¹²⁹ Genesis 1:28.

¹³⁰ Genesis 1:26–31.

¹³¹ Genesis 2:16–17.

there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ...¹³² The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”¹³³

Due to the creatures not being sufficient as helpers or partners for man, God removes a rib from man and creates woman.¹³⁴ The woman is tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit by a serpent whom we are told is “more crafty than any other wild animal” that God had created.¹³⁵ Both man and woman eat of the forbidden fruit and are exiled from the Garden of Eden, whereas the serpent is condemned to a life of crawling on its belly and being cursed among all animals and creatures.¹³⁶

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner ...”¹³⁷ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed ...¹³⁸

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may

¹³² Genesis 2:4–9.

¹³³ Genesis 2:15–16.

¹³⁴ Genesis 2:21.

¹³⁵ Genesis 3:1.

¹³⁶ Genesis 3.

¹³⁷ Genesis 2:18.

¹³⁸ Genesis 2:21–25.

eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to the man he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it', cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all who live. And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

Then the Lord God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever"—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the Garden of Eden

he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.¹³⁹

As is the case with Genesis 1–3, there are also numerous other creation narratives belonging to peoples and cultures which span vast times and locales, which also seek to explain the origins of humanity and its purpose on earth. One of the most notable examples of this is the discovery of the fourth-millennium-B.C.E. Mesopotamian tablets in which the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is recorded. In 1853, while excavating for Assyrian artefacts, Hormuzd Rassam discovered the Sumerian tablets which contained the *Epic of Gilgamesh*;¹⁴⁰ seventeen years later, George Smith published its first translation.¹⁴¹ Samuel Noah Kramer (d. 1990), one of the leading scholars in Sumerian history, describes the Sumerians as

a non-Semitic, non-Indo-European people who flourished in southern Babylonia from the beginning of the fourth to the end of the third millennium B.C. During this long stretch of time the Sumerians, whose racial and linguistic affiliations are still unclassifiable, represented the dominant cultural group of the entire Near East.¹⁴²

Since Smith's publication in 1871, biblical scholars have continually paralleled biblical narratives to those found during Rassam's excavations. The narratives of Gilgamesh are often contrasted to the Genesis accounts involving the creation (Genesis 2:4–4:2) and the flood (Genesis 6:1–11:26), where "Enkidu is paralleled to Adam, Utnapishtim to Noah and Dilmun, the land at the mouth of the rivers, to Eden."¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Genesis 3.

¹⁴⁰ Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History*, 5–6.

¹⁴¹ W. Muss-Arnolt, "The Chaldean Account of the Deluge," *The Biblical World* 3, no 2 (1894): 109, 114.

¹⁴² Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.*, revised edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), 69–70.

¹⁴³ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, 3rd ed. (New York: Paulist Press, c2006), 21.

Another group of Sumerian tablets¹⁴⁴ that deal with the creation of humanity, found in the same locale, remains less familiar to those outside the field of Near Eastern studies and its affiliated specialties. The reason for the lack of familiarity with regards to these tablets is that a complete translation of what was available was only published in the late 1940s.¹⁴⁵ Kramer describes his monumental discovery that led to the first intelligible reading of this narrative. Kramer states that

the composition narrating the creation of man has been found inscribed on two duplicating tablets: one is a Nippur tablet in the University Museum; the other is in the Louvre, which acquired it from an antique dealer. The Louvre tablet and the greater part of the University Museum tablet had been copied and published by 1934, yet the contents remained largely unintelligible, primarily owing to the fact that the University Museum tablet, which is better preserved than the Louvre fragment, arrived in Philadelphia, some four or five decades ago, broken into four parts. By 1919 two of the pieces had already been recognized and joined; these were copied and published by Stephen Langdon. In 1934 Edward Chiera published the third piece, but he failed to recognize that it joined the two pieces published by Langdon in 1919. I realized this fact a decade or so later while trying to piece together the text of the myth for my *Sumerian Mythology*. At that time I identified in the University Museum tablet collection the fourth – and still unpublished – fragment of the tablet, which actually joins the three published pieces. It was now possible for the first time to arrange the contents of the myth in their proper order and to prepare at least a tentative interpretation of the myth, although the text was still difficult, obscure, and far from complete.¹⁴⁶

The Sumerian creation myth of humanity, which Kramer published, involves a pantheon of deities, all of whom stem from the primordial mother goddess, Nammu. This

¹⁴⁴ In order to avoid confusion, I would like to make it clear that the Sumerian tablets mentioned here are not those which deal with the Epic of Gilgamesh.

¹⁴⁵ Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Man's Recorded History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 106. Relatively little research has been carried out on this Sumerian creation narrative; therefore, this thesis aims to account for the purpose and function of myth within the Hebrew Bible by approaching it through this Sumerian account.

¹⁴⁶ Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 105–106.

pantheon of gods lived and toiled much as humans do, through the tilling of fields and the caring for crops.

after the gods had been forced to ... their food
 ... for their own dining halls,
 the great gods labor,
 the young gods carry baskets,
 the gods dig canals,
 heave up their dirt *harali*,¹⁴⁷
 the gods grind away,
 grumble about their life.¹⁴⁸

Nammu, perceiving the plight of her offspring, seeks the wisdom of Enki, the cleverest of the deities.¹⁴⁹ She requests Enki, her son and spouse to “[f]ashion servants for the gods who will assume their tasks.”¹⁵⁰ Enki instructs his mother to “take a handful of clay from the bottom of the earth, just above the surface of the watery abyss, and shape it to the form of a heart.”¹⁵¹ After some fashioning of this clay, humanity is created for the purpose of doing the arduous work of the gods.

Nammu, primeval mother,
 who had given birth to all the great gods,
 carried the wailing of the gods – to her son:
 “You who are lying about,
 you who are sleeping,
 you who will not stir from your sleep:
 the gods – my handiwork – are beating their ...
 Rise up my son, from your bed,
 practice your skill perceptively.
 Create servants(?) for the gods:
 Let them throw their baskets away.”
 Enki, at the word of his mother, rose up from his bed.
 The god, once he examined a fattened holy kid ...,

¹⁴⁷ The word *harali* is obscure and its meaning is uncertain.

¹⁴⁸ Samuel Noah Kramer and John Maier, *The Myths of Enki, the Crafty God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 32.

¹⁴⁹ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* (New York: The Viking Press Inc., 1969), 107–108.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

the cunning (and) perceptive one,
 the one who guides the seeker,
 the skilled one who fashions the form of things.
 turned out the *sigensigdu*,
 Enki had them stand at his side, looks at them intently.
 After Enki, form-fashioner, had, by himself,
 put sense in their head,
 he says to his mother, Nammu:
 “My mother, the creature whose name you fixed – it exists.
 The corvée of the gods has been forced on it.
 [...]

My mother, you decree its fate.
 Let Ninmah force upon it the corvée of the gods.”¹⁵²

Each city in this realm has its own garden belonging to an individual deity; these gardens would now be kept by the sweat of humankind. Following this feat, Enki invites Nammu and the pantheon of gods to a great feast. With great elation “they praise ... him fulsomely for his invention of a race that would serve as slaves, to work diligently the farms from which they would now derive the rich fats and nourishment of sacrifice forever.”¹⁵³ During this celebration Ninmah, Nammu’s daughter, and Enki engage in a friendly war of wits. Enki outsmarts Ninmah, who then, out of jealousy, wrathfully exiles him to the great abyss.¹⁵⁴

Enki looked on their ... work with favour. Their hearts rejoiced.
 He set up a feast for his mother Nammu and Ninmah.
 [...]

All the great gods exalt him:
 “O lord of deep insight: who else is given your insight!
 O Enki, great noble: who can do what you do!
 You – like a fathering father – are the one who takes care of
 the *me*, the ... of all the lands.”
 Enki and Ninmah drink plenty of beer; their hearts race.
 Ninmah says to Enki:
 “On the form of a man, good or bad,

¹⁵² Kramer, *Myths of Enki*, 32–33.

¹⁵³ Campbell, 109.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 110–111.

I will decree a fate that is good or bad,
as I feel like it."

Enki answers Ninmah:

"The fate that comes to you, whether it is good or bad – I
will counter."

Ninmah took the clay that covers the *abzu*.

The first one she made into a man who when reaching could
not bend his rigid[?] hands.

Enki, seeing the first man, who when reaching could not
bend his rigid[?] hands,

decreed fate for him, named him a servant of the king.

The second [...]

The sixth she made into something without a phallus or a
vulva on his body.

Enki, seeing something without a phallus or a vulva on his
body,

to serve the one Enlil had called by name over the great
earth

[...]

The great lord Enki says to Ninmah:

"For every one you have formed, I have decreed their fate,
have given them bread.

Now I will make some for you-and you decree the fate
of the newborn!"

Enki made a form with a head ... a mouth(?) in its
center(?).

Says to Ninmah:

"The phallus-made semen poured into the woman's womb had
made that woman give birth in her womb."

Ninmah ... stood by at its birth.

That woman brought forth ... a mouth(?) in its center(?).

The second one he made into an *umul* – its head sick, and sick
its ... -place,

sick its eyes, sick its neck,

breath at an end, ribs shaky, lungs sick, heart sick, bowels
sick.

The hand that supported(?) his head could not put bread in
its mouth, its splintered[?] spine in pain,
shoulders drooping, feet shaky, it could not walk(?) to(?)
the field.

Enki says to Ninmah:

"For every one you formed, I decreed its fate,
have given it bread.

Now you decree the fate of the one I formed.

Give him bread."

Ninmah, when she saw *umul*, turned to him.
 She approaches *umul*, questions him – but he cannot speak.
 She brought him bread to eat.
 He cannot reach for it.
 He cannot....
 Having stood up, he cannot sit down,
 cannot lie down,
 cannot build a house,
 cannot eat bread.”
 Ninmah answers Enki:
 “The one you made is neither alive nor dead.
 It cannot lift a thing.”
 Enki answers Ninmah:
 “For the man with the rigid hands, I decreed his fate,
 gave him bread;”
 [...]

[Ninmah replies] “my city attacked,
 my house destroyed,
 my son taken captive.
 And here I am a refugee,
 one who had fled the Ekur.
 And now I have not freed myself from your hand.”¹⁵⁵
 Henceforth thou shalt dwell neither in heaven nor on earth.¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

The Genesis and Sumerian narratives provide contrasting origins of the human race and their purposes on earth. Whereas the Sumerian narrative is heavily entrenched in common mythic rhetoric, the Hebrew counterpart is much less extravagant in this regard. It is for this reason, among others, that Kaufmann astutely denies that the authors of the Hebrew Bible understood the essence of myth. Kaufmann views the writing of the Genesis narratives as a pivotal moment in the Israelite tradition; here, the Israelites markedly, and likely intentionally, move away from any pagan theme or motif in revealing their monotheistic world views. YHWH is the independent and sole cosmic

¹⁵⁵ Kramer, *Myths of Enki*, 33–36.

deity who creates the universe and sets it into a natural motion. His first creations are depicted as being wholly monotheistic, due in part to their direct experiences with God, however, they are not always fully obedient.¹⁵⁷ Kaufmann depicts the creation narratives as being unique, in that they tell of a God that created for humanity an entire world. Furthermore, God sustains his beloved creations by placing them in the heart of a paradise-like garden over which they were to have dominion. God tells man that he is also to have power over all the animals and creatures of the earth. God's only restriction placed upon the members of humanity was that they not eat of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. Humanity transgresses against God by not adhering to his command and, as a result, humanity is exiled from Eden, separating God from his ungrateful image-likened creatures.¹⁵⁸

Kaufmann posits that "[t]he religious divisions between Israel and the pagan world [did] not arise ... from a plurality of gods, or a struggle between two opposing divine realms," but that it rests in the notion that "[t]he pagan world is without God," leaving them to produce myths of gods represented in forms of idols, rituals, narratives, and so on.¹⁵⁹

On the surface, the creation narratives of Genesis read amythically relative to the Mesopotamian accounts; however, for over a century, the Genesis narratives have been read in light of Mesopotamian accounts of creation with scholars drawing on "the many similar sequences of action and style shared between them."¹⁶⁰ Fishbane argues that

¹⁵⁶ Campbell, 111.

¹⁵⁷ Kaufman, *The Religion of Israel*, 292.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 292–293.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 295.

¹⁶⁰ Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 34.

a mythic topic ... from a certain cultural sphere, like the ancient Near East, should be assumed to have that same literary effect or value ... in all its various occurrences unless there is a marked reason for thinking otherwise. On this basis, we should not assume two different mental universes when we come across a similar image in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and biblical literature. Rather, following the principle of parsimony, one should start with the assumption that the topic conveys a similar content if it bears the same or similar imagery in the same or similar contexts.¹⁶¹

Fishbane supports this argument by convincingly drawing parallels between the gods smelling the savoury sacrifices after the flood in the *Gilgamesh* epic to “the post-diluvian scene found in Genesis 8:21” in which “‘YHWH smell[s] the sweet-smelling aroma’ of Noah’s huge sacrifice of birds and animals.”¹⁶² Following this scene, the heroes of both narratives are blessed by their respective God and gods who allude to expressing regret for their actions as they state that another flood will never cover the earth. The purposes of these narratives are similar to both groups; yet they express contrasting theologies based on their religious perspectives.

In light of Fishbane’s argument, when one visualizes the Sumerian creation narrative next to the Israelite one, it becomes evident that the two narratives share many common aspects, but in inverted form. Whereas the Sumerian myth involves a pantheon of gods, the Israelite one involves a single deity; whereas the world is created for the gods in the Sumerian myth, it is created for humans in the Israelite tradition; whereas the purpose of humanity is to sustain the gods in the Sumerian myth, YHWH originally sets out to sustain humanity by planting a garden in Eden; whereas the natural world is imposed upon humanity in the Sumerian myth, humanity is meant to have dominance

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁶² Ibid., 17–18.

over it in the Israelite tradition; whereas the gods are responsible for humanity's misfortune in the Sumerian myth, humankind is responsible for their own misfortune in the Israelite tradition; whereas a god is exiled from the divine realm in the Sumerian myth, humanity is sent out of the garden in the Israelite tradition; and finally, whereas humanity is the subject of ungratefulness in the Sumerian myth, YHWH is the victim of ungratefulness in the Israelite tradition.

It is clear that the motifs present in the Sumerian creation myth has been inverted and recast in a monotheistic image, leading to the conclusion, in contrast to Kaufmann's views, that the early Israelites clearly understood and comprehended myth. By inverting and recasting the Sumerian myth of the creation of humanity, the Israelites were able to present an alternative narrative that fit into the Israelite worldview. By holding onto this worldview, all vestiges of polytheism were removed from their creation narratives to produce a less mythic and wholly monotheistic narrative.¹⁶³ The myths of the Israelites are clearly rooted in the myths of their neighbouring communities and cultures; this is exemplified by the creation narratives examined. Although the theological perspectives of the Sumerian and Israelite traditions clash regarding their perspectives of the universe, the literary effects of their creation narratives seek to reveal the origins of existence and humanity's position within the framework of the universe through narratives that are characteristic of myth.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 16–22.

CHAPTER 3: THE QUR'AN AND MYTH

Going Beyond the Boundaries – The Study of Myth within Islamic Studies

A great number of Muslims regard their religious scriptures as relaying historical events in addition to legal and ethical guidelines. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that many Islamic scholars criticize the notion that the Qur'an is a text which brims with myth. However, unlike many affiliated with Biblical studies, both Islamic scholars and Muslims have historically been very critical of those who situate the Qur'anic narratives within the realm of myth. Moreover, to argue that the Qur'an was influenced by surrounding traditions, or to analyze it as anything other than a revealed scripture from God, has often resulted in aggressive responses from Muslims within academia. For this reason, among others, critical studies of the Qur'an have fallen behind relative to Biblical studies. This chapter will examine the present state of Qur'anic studies in relation to myth, as well as present the effects of engaging in such studies. This chapter will then proceed in examining the relationship between the Qur'an and myth.

There are a number of scholars specializing in Islam who have overcome the stigma associated with critically examining the Qur'an in a manner that veers from orthodox Islamic thought. For example, Muhammad Ahmad Khalafallah's Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of Arabic Language and Literature within the Faculty of Arts at Fu'ad al-Awwal University (now Cairo University) in 1947 caused outrage throughout the Muslim world, especially within Egypt.¹⁶⁵ His thesis, titled "*Al-Fann al-Qasasi Fi al-Qur'an al-Karim*" (The Art of Narrative in the Qur'an) analyzed the Qur'an

¹⁶⁵ Nasr Abu-Zayd, "The Dilemma of the Literary Approach to the Qur'an," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 23, (2003): 8.

through the use of the literary approach. Among Khalafallah's arguments, one of the principle points of his thesis is that the narratives in the Qur'an that relay the stories of the prophets should not always be understood as being historically accurate; rather, one should primarily understand them as providing religious values.¹⁶⁶ One of Khalafallah's methods of understanding the religious values present in the Qur'an was through the lens of myth.¹⁶⁷ Khalafallah's thesis was rejected by the university, which justified its decision based on the following points:

- (1) A literary text is a composition of human imagination while the Qur'an represents the word of God that should not be compared to any human discourse.
- (2) To deal with the Qur'an as a work of literary art, *fann*, is to suggest that it is written by Muhammad.
- (3) Furthermore, claiming that the stories of the Qur'an do not present actual historical facts, as the literary approach suggests, is committing the greatest blasphemy that mounts to apostasy. It places the Qur'an in a lower position than a book of history.
- (4) More insulting to the Qur'an from the point of view of the traditional dogma is to claim that its language and structure is historically determined and culturally formed. It could be easily interpreted to mean that the Qur'an is a human text.¹⁶⁸

When the media became privy to this story, a letter of protest against Khalafallah and his supervisor was sent to the King of Egypt:

[c]opies were also sent to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Education, the Rector of the University, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and the Rector of al-Azhar, arguing for submitting both Khalafallah and his professor al-Khuli to an urgent court investigation for their crime against the Qur'an. The decision to make such an appeal was taken during a joint meeting on October 11, 1947, at the Society of Muslim Youth (*Jam'iyyat al-shubban al-Muslimin*) headquarters. The letter was endorsed by the General Union of the Islamic Organizations that includes the Muslim Brothers Society, the Front of al-Azhar 'Ulama', the Society of the

¹⁶⁶ J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 68.

¹⁶⁷ Abu-Zayd, 24.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Muslim Youth, Muhammad's Youth, the Sunnah Supporters, the Society of Shari'ah, and the Society of Good Ethics.¹⁶⁹

Khalafallah addressed his critics by stating that he would personally burn his thesis if it could be proven that he wrote "anything contradictory to Islam as expressed in the Qur'an."¹⁷⁰

The editor of the Muslim Society newspaper responded with the following:

If the passages quoted from the thesis are true, it is not sufficient for the author to burn it by his own hand in public where all the students and the professors of the university are present. He should also repent and announce his return back to Islam. If the author is married he has to renew his marriage contract. It is not enough to burn the thesis ... But most of all, you have to burn the devil that filled out your heart and dictated this nonsense to you. After burning the devil in your soul, you have to seclude yourself out of the Faculty and its Ph.D. into a place, where you weep and cry for being seduced by Satan and his party continuously until God accepts your repentance.¹⁷¹

Khalafallah's thesis was never approved, although he did obtain his Ph.D. two years later with a new and less controversial thesis, titled "*Abu al-Faraj al-Asfhani wa-kitab al-Aghani*" (Abu al-Faraj al-Asfhani and the Book of Songs).¹⁷²

Surprisingly, the case of Khalafallah is mild in comparison to others, who were much less fortunate. In 1995 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, a Professor of Islamic and Arabic Studies at Cairo University was accused of apostasy and was, in accordance with Islamic law (*shari'a*), ordered to separate from his wife, though he never did. The accusations of apostasy stemmed from Abu Zayd's liberal views of the Qur'an, which included the idea

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁷² Ibid., 33.

that the Qur'an employs mythic ideas.¹⁷³ An Egyptian court declared that Abu Zayd's work was blasphemous for the following reasons:

- (1) In his books, the writer denied the actual existence of certain creatures, such as angels and *jinn*, referred to in the Qur'an.
- (2) He has described certain images in the Qur'an about heaven and hell as mythical.
- (3) He has described the text of the Holy Qur'an as a human text.
- (4) He has advocated the use of reason to explain the concepts derived from the literal reading of the text of the Qur'an in order to replace them by modern, more human, and progressive concepts.¹⁷⁴

After a call for his death by the radical Egyptian group *Egyptian Islamic Jihad*, Abu Zayd and his wife fled to Europe.¹⁷⁵

Aside from demonstrating the constraints placed on scholars dealing with Islamic studies, these examples also demonstrate that serious efforts to engage in academic discourses on the topic of the Qur'an are marred by individuals and groups who, rather than engage in dialogue, resort to the cowardly tactics of fear mongering. The discourses that seek to refute the academic contributions of individuals such as Khalafallah or Abu Zayd do not tend to go beyond the theological boundaries of Islam.¹⁷⁶ Unlike Fishbane,

¹⁷³ Fauzi M. Najjar, "Islamic Fundamentalism and the Intellectuals: The Case of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 2 (Nov. 2000): 186.

¹⁷⁴ Abu Zayd, 34.

¹⁷⁵ Najjar, 188–189. There are numerous other cases in which professors have been attacked for presenting ideas which go against orthodox Islamic thought. For example, in 1994 the Muslim novelist and Nobel Prize winner in the category of Literature, Naguib Mahfouz, was stabbed in the neck for authoring a book that recast the Qur'an in a fictitious manner; he survived this assassination attempt. In the West Bank, University of Neblus professor Suliman Bashear was thrown out of a second storey window by his own enraged students for stating that Islam, and by extension the Qur'an, developed gradually, rather than in the time period attributed to Muhammad. He, too, survived the attack carried out against him.

¹⁷⁶ Parvez Manzoor's article "Method Against Truth: Orientalism and Qur'anic Studies" is a good example of how Muslim scholars have historically attacked the scholarship of individuals who present ideas that are not in line with Islamic orthodoxy. Rather than refuting the scholarly contributions of "orientalists" in and of themselves, Manzoor attacks the methods employed instead. Quoting Ignác Goldziher, Manzoor states, "What would be left of the Gospels if the Qur'anic methods were applied to them." The answer to this question is "the Gospels." Like the Qur'an, the Gospels have also been, and continue to be dissected in much the same manner. The difference lies in the fact that Christian scholars

who writes both critically and objectively in response to the theological dogmas of Judaism, Muslim scholars tend to veer away from Qur'anic criticism in favor of an essentialist approach. Fortunately, there has been no shortage of scholars situated outside of Muslim lands who have taken on the task of engaging Qur'anic studies (although their numbers are relatively small compared to those engaged in Biblical studies); however, they, too, are not free of the threats of violence that are often associated with such endeavors.

Redefining the Boundaries – The Present State of Islamic Studies and Myth

Islamic scholar Aaron W. Hughes has long recognized that the state of Islamic studies, both in North America and abroad, has been and continues to be negatively influenced by the apologetic and essentialist approaches, “which [tend] to take at face value all that the sources [the Qur'an and *hadiths*] say”¹⁷⁷ in order sustain harmony in both personal and professional settings. Hughes states that

the regnant discourses both developed and borrowed by the academic study of Islam have largely proven to be ineffective and outmoded when it comes to explaining Islamic data ... the failure of nerve on the part of Islamicists to engage seriously reductionist and social-scientific approaches to the study of religion, their unwillingness to move beyond the safety of understanding to the messiness of explanation, has brought us to a critical crossroads. I submit that either this academic discipline can bury its head in the sand of essentialism, (e.g., “Islam is x,” “Islam is not-x”) or it can move beyond such confessionalism in favor of a much more rigorous, self-reflexive set of theoretical questions.¹⁷⁸

and most Christian societies, among other societies, embrace scholarly investigations into their scriptures and history; this is absolutely not the case with many Muslim societies and a number of their citizens.

¹⁷⁷ Hughes, “The Stranger,” 262.

¹⁷⁸ Aaron W. Hughes, *Situating Islam: The Past and Future of an Academic Discipline* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2007), 1.

This is not to imply that Hughes endorses what has become known as the orientalist approach,¹⁷⁹ which “until recently, [has] operated with an extreme, one could say virulent, hermeneutics of suspicion[, in which] the sources [i.e., the Qur’an and *hadiths*] are regarded as either chronologically dubious or spurious, and thus marginalized or completely ignored.”¹⁸⁰ Pointing out another flaw inherent in the orientalist approach, Hughes states that

rather than focus[ing] on ... Islam’s religious, cultural and intellectual encounter[s] with these other traditions, this approach, at least historically, has been obsessed with finding precursors and antecedents to anything that can prove the derivative status of Islamic phenomena. Within this context, Islam and its scripture, is regarded as a garbled version of biblical (both Jewish and Christian) stories, rabbinic *aggadot*, etc.¹⁸¹

In lieu of both the apologetic and orientalist approach, Hughes argues that scholarly investigations into the study of Islam ought to return to the methods of Abraham Geiger (d. 1847), Gustav Weil (d. 1889), Josef Horowitz (d. 1931), and Ignác Goldziher (d. 1921), who engaged in “source criticism, comparative philology, morphology, and syntax – features that are the hallmark of a social-scientific approach to other sacred scriptures.”¹⁸²

Although Hughes is accurate in describing the methodologies of the aforementioned scholars, he is generous, in that he removes them from beneath the umbrella of “orientalism.” Take, for instance, Geiger’s *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (lit. “What has Mohammed taken from Judaism?”), which is a work that seeks to demonstrate the Qur’an’s, and more specifically Muhammad’s,

¹⁷⁹ The following quote will characterize the type of orientalism that will later be referred to as “polemical orientalism.”

¹⁸⁰ Hughes, “The Stranger,” 262.

¹⁸¹ Hughes, “The Stranger,” 263.

indebtedness to the Judeo-Christian traditions. Geiger's text does not afford the Qur'an the status of a scripture; rather, as the title suggests, he treats the Qur'an as a book which was written by Muhammad; in fairness to Geiger, he also analyzed Jewish materials with the same critical approaches.¹⁸³ Hence, Geiger ought to be considered a pioneer in the field of orientalism. Although Geiger, as well as the other scholars mentioned by Hughes, did not write in a manner that was characteristic of the "polemical orientalists,"¹⁸⁴ their discourses, through no fault of their own, provided the backbone for the cynical voices that followed. It is not my intention to group Geiger, Weil, Horovitz, and Goldziher in the same category as the "polemical orientalists"; it is quite the opposite. These scholars are notable in that they were innovators with regards to Qur'anic studies. They provided scholarship that led to the emergence of what has become "polemical orientalism"; but more importantly, they also contributed to the emergence of a "pure orientalism."¹⁸⁵ Any hints of "polemical orientalism" in their writings were likely due to their innovativeness in this field.

Drawing on the contributions of Geiger, Weil, Horovitz, and Goldziher, Hughes's argument is that the methods of understanding the Qur'an should be rooted in a social-

¹⁸² Hughes, *Situating Islam*, 27.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 17.

¹⁸⁴ Here I make note of Patricia Crone and Michael Cook's book titled *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (1977), which argues that Islam emerged as a Jewish-messianic movement among the Middle Eastern Arab tribes. Among Crone and Cook's arguments is that the Jews and Arabs sought to create a unified people that would be powerful enough to recapture Jerusalem from the Christian Byzantines; according to Crone and Cook, the Qur'an was a product of this unification. Other polemical works that deny the Qur'an the status of scripture include John Wansbrough's *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (1978) and Ibn Warraq's *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* (1998). By approaching the Qur'an as a text rooted in other traditions, these scholars conclude that the Qur'an is an amalgamation of inaccurate retellings of Jewish and Christian writings. These scholars do not approach the Qur'an in and of itself.

¹⁸⁵ In contrast to "polemical orientalism," "pure orientalism" refers to a critical and objective social-scientific study of the "orient."

scientific manner, rather than either the apologetic or “polemical orientalist” approach.¹⁸⁶ Few scholars have been able to critically discuss the Qur’an and myth in a manner that goes beyond the flaws mentioned by Hughes. Rather than look at the mythical narratives of the Qur’an in and of themselves, or even in relation to other myths, these scholars have been attracted to the antecedents of the narratives instead.

Islamic scholar Angelika Neuwirth is an exception with regard to this problem. Neuwirth has been a central figure in redefining Qur’anic studies and myth. Leaving behind the cynical overtones of her predecessors, Neuwirth’s approach to the study of the Qur’an and myth has been refreshing, in that she engages this delicate area of study in a manner that reflects Hughes’s proposed approach. Her scholarly contributions to Qur’anic studies is not in line with orthodox Islamic thought; yet her clear focus on the study of the Qur’an and its traits would make it difficult for even the most zealous opponent to critically oppose her findings. Neuwirth is able to accomplish this due to the fact that she approaches the Qur’an as a text in and of itself, unlike her predecessors, who approached it as a book which they considered to be an erroneous and fragmented amalgamation of various narratives. In doing this, Neuwirth removes the problems of antecedence from her scope of study. Neuwirth states that

As long as we continue to refer in an imprecise manner to “The Book of Mohammad,” that is, if we deny the Koran the status of a holy scripture with all the attending implications, this epigonal character will make it impossible to understand Islam on equal terms. I thus do not simply want to compare traditions, but would also try to find the amalgam that made these traditions into something new.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Hughes, *Situating Islam*, 27.

¹⁸⁷ “The Koran: A Book in Many Languages – Interview with Angelika Neuwirth,” last modified 2007, accessed Jan. 19, 2011, <http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-478/_nr-573/i.html>

Neuwirth argues that the function of Qur'anic narratives is not to relay historical events, an aspect which "polemical orientalists" routinely focus on; rather, its primary function is to demonstrate how pious individuals (i.e., the prophets) act in certain situations.¹⁸⁸ For example, Neuwirth points out that

the myth of man's first transgression, the story of Adam (Genesis 1:3), in the Qur'an does not serve to initiate history as an unpredictable and ambiguous process of divine-human interaction, but rather constitutes one exemplary episode of the "anthropological constant" of human vulnerability to being seduced.¹⁸⁹

Following Adam's transgression against God's command not to eat of the forbidden fruit, Adam repents and God forgives him. This narrative serves multiple functions: primarily that one ought to avoid transgressing God's laws, and that if one does fall into error, one ought to repent.

Engaging the Qur'an – Mythopoesis and the Qur'an

Taking his cue from Geiger, Weil, Horovitz, Goldziher, and Neuwirth, Hughes examines how myth functions in the narratives of the Qur'an. His article "The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and Early Tafsîr" methodically demonstrates how the author(s) of the Qur'an drew upon previous Near Eastern narratives, as well as Talmudic sources, in order to shape the narratives of the Qur'an.

Hughes argues that "[i]n an intertextual universe, the Qur'an becomes the intertext par excellence: it is one of the few texts that is aware that it represents the

¹⁸⁸ Angelika Neuwirth, "Myths and Legends in the Qur'ân," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ân*, Vol 3, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Boston: Brill, 2003), 480.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 485.

absorption, transformation and subsequent reamalgamation of previous texts.”¹⁹⁰ To demonstrate this phenomenon, Hughes draws on chapter 18 (The Cave – *surat al-kahaf*), verses 60–82, of the Qur’an, which read:

Behold Moses said to his attendant, “I will not depart until I reach the place where the two seas meet or until I progress for many years.” Then when they reached the meeting place they forgot their fish and it took its path into the sea, burrowing. When they had gone on, he said to his attendant, “Bring us our breakfast, for we have encountered exhaustion from this our journey.” He [the attendant] said, “Did you see when we took refuge on the rock, I forgot the fish and no one but Satan made me forget to remember it; and it took its way into the sea wonderfully.” He [Moses] said, “This is what we were both seeking!” And they returned to their track, retracing their footsteps. They found a servant¹⁹¹ from among our servants, whom we had given mercy from us and we taught him knowledge directly from ourselves. Moses said to him, “Can I follow you so that you can teach me about what you have been taught, about right judgment?” And he [the servant of God] said, “You will not be able to have patience with me. How can you have understanding about that which you do not completely understand.” And he [Moses] said, “You will find me patient, if God wills, and I will not disobey you.” He said, “If you follow me do not ask me about anything until I speak to you about it.” So they proceeded until they were in a boat and he bore a hole in it. Moses said, “Did you bore a hole in it in order to drown those inside, surely you have done a strange thing!” He responded, “Did I not tell you that you would not be able to have patience with me?” ... So they proceeded until they met a young man and he [the servant of God] killed him. Moses said, “Why have you killed an innocent person, who has killed no one? This is certainly an evil thing you have done!” He said, “Did I not tell you that you would not be able to have patience with me?” ... So they proceeded until they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food but they refused them. But they found a wall there that was ready to fall down, but [the servant of God] set it up straight. Moses said, “If you had wanted, you could have taken money for this.” He responded, “This is the parting between me and you, now I will tell you the interpretation (*ta’wîl*) of that which you were not able to be patient. As for the boat, it belonged to poor

¹⁹⁰ Hughes, “The Stranger,” 265.

¹⁹¹ This “Servant of God” is never given a proper name in the Qur’an; however, Muslim exegetes have often referred to him as al-Khidr (or al-Khadir), which translates as “the green one.” He is often depicted as a mystical character. Some Muslims, especially those affiliated with Sufism, see al-Khidr as an immortal human, while others consider him to be a spirit who journeys the world teaching adepts mystical knowledge; furthermore, al-Khidr is also credited with initiating individuals into Sufi stations in which the adept is given mystical knowledge of God.

men who worked on the water and I wanted to make it unserviceable because a king who took every boat by force was after them. As for the boy, his parents were people of faith and we were afraid that he might grieve them with suppression and unbelief; so we wanted their Lord to give them in exchange a better and purer one than he and one closer in mercy. As for the wall, it belonged to two orphaned youths in the city, underneath it was a buried treasure; their father was a righteous man and your Lord wanted them to attain their [proper] age and they could bring their treasure because of the mercy of your Lord. I did not do this on my own. This is the interpretation [*ta'wîl*] of that which you were unable to have patience. (Qur'ân 18:60–82)¹⁹²

To show that the Qur'an "absorbs, transforms, and subsequently erase[s] previous near eastern narratives,"¹⁹³ Hughes brings to the surface narratives that share characteristics with the Qur'anic passage quoted above; moreover, the passages that Hughes examines present significant differences from the Qur'anic narrative as well. To demonstrate this process, Hughes presents four accounts in which a protagonist is found in comparable situations with that of Moses.

Hughes begins with an examination of tractate *Tamid* from the Babylonian Talmud; this tractate presents one of the stories attributed to Alexander the Great. In this narrative, Alexander is returning from a journey to Africa, which, to the authors, implied the ends of the earth.¹⁹⁴ Alexander sits near a well and begins to wash some salted fish; however, a sweet aroma overtakes Alexander, who comes to the conclusion that the source of the water must be from the Garden of Eden. After tracing the source of the water to a gate, Alexander requests that the doors be opened. He is not granted entry and is told that "this is the gate of the Lord."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² This translation is provided by Hughes.

¹⁹³ Hughes, "The Stranger," 261.

¹⁹⁴ Hughes, "The Stranger," 267.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Hughes's next case, which is found in the Alexander Romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes, also involves Alexander the Great. In this narrative, Alexander and his cook Andreas are searching for the waters of immortality. One day, as Andreas is washing some fish in a spring, the fish comes to life and swims off into the water; Andreas jumps in after the fish and, to his surprise, he becomes immortal. Andreas tells Alexander of the events that unfolded, and the two search in vain for this source of water.¹⁹⁶

Hughes's third and most striking case comes from Louis Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*,¹⁹⁷ a text that creates narratives through the amalgamation of previous texts. Here, Hughes brings to surface a narrative that involves the prophet Elijah, who, according to Biblical accounts, does not experience death, and his pious companion Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. Elijah grants Rabbi Joshua one wish; Rabbi Joshua requests a journey with Elijah throughout the earth. Elijah agrees, but with the stipulation that "Rabbi Joshua not ask any questions concerning his actions."¹⁹⁸ As the two carry on in their travels, Rabbi Joshua observes the paradoxical actions of Elijah; however, in keeping with his promise, Rabbi Joshua refrains from his urges to ask Elijah why it is that he is acting in such a manner. Finally, we are told that one night, Elijah and Rabbi Joshua

reached the house of a wealthy man, who did not pay his guests the courtesy of looking them in the face. Though they passed the night under his roof, he did not offer them food or drink. This rich man was desirous of having a wall repaired that had tumbled down. There was no need for him to take any steps to have it rebuilt, for, when Elijah left the house, he prayed that the wall might erect itself, and, lo! it stood upright. Rabbi Joshua was greatly amazed at this, but true to his promise he suppressed the question that rose to his lips.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 267–268.

¹⁹⁷ Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vols. 1 & 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003).

¹⁹⁸ Hughes, "The Stranger," 268.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Following several other inexplicable actions carried out by Elijah, Rabbi Joshua finally succumbs to his urges and asks Elijah why it is that he has been acting in such an odd manner. This narrative concludes with Elijah stating,

“Know, then, that if you see an evil-doer prosper, it is not unto his advantage, and if a righteous man suffers need and distress, think not God is unjust.” After these words Elijah and Rabbi Joshua separated from each other, and each went on his own way.²⁰⁰

Hughes’s last case involves a narrative taken from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In this tale, the hero, Gilgamesh, is on a quest to obtain immortality. In hopes of attaining this goal, Gilgamesh seeks the aid of the immortal Utnapishtim, who lives far away from humanity; Utnapishtim lives in a place called the Mouth of the Rivers. “In addition to his immortality, Utnapishtim is also a revealer of knowledge to the forlorn Gilgamesh. It is he who shows Gilgamesh the path to the plant which resides at the bottom of the river and that brings immortality.”²⁰¹ Gilgamesh acquires the plant which gives immortality only to have it taken from him by a serpent while he was bathing in a spring. Realizing that he had lost this plant, Gilgamesh sits at the edge of the spring with tears rolling down his face.

Hughes’s thorough analysis of the aforementioned texts demonstrates the deeper web that exists between the Qur’anic text and that of the four mentioned narratives. This analysis goes beyond the obvious parallels, such as those found in the narrative of Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. For example, Moses is completely removed from any of the parallel texts mentioned; however, the relationship between Moses and Alexander the

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 268–269.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 269.

Great is drawn out by Hughes. Hughes begins by citing a Biblical verse to show how the Qur'an establishes the link between Moses and Alexander the Great; he then, quite successfully, shows how the Qur'an "absorbs, transforms, and subsequently erase[s]" this previous Near Eastern narrative.²⁰² Hughes states that

In Exodus 34:29, "Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone/grew horns (*qaran*) because he was talking with God." Significantly, the Hebrew root of this word (*q-r-n*) is the same in Arabic. Although the name Alexander the Great never appears in the Qur'ân, he is believed to be the individual referred to as *Dhu al-Qarnayn*, the "two-horned". The Qur'ân here seems to be engaging in a clever metonymic transference. By doing this, the Qur'ân allows us to conceptualize Moses in terms of someone else, Alexander the Great. Such metonymic associations are central to the Qur'ân's mode of expression: they enable it not only to tie itself to the monotheistic heritage out of which it emerges, but also to break with it as it substitutes and recombines different characters and places.²⁰³

Hughes opposes previous views that state that the Qur'an produced such narratives by "either confus[ing] the characters through scribal error or recklessness" or by claiming "that there must be a rabbinic source upon which the Qur'ânic account is based."²⁰⁴ Instead, Hughes argues that "the Qur'ân wants to assert its authority by pointing to, and subsequently destroying, its web of signification with other texts."²⁰⁵

Through the analysis of the aforementioned texts, Hughes successfully argues that Qur'anic narratives did not likely come about in their present form due to scribal errors or recklessness; rather, as Hughes exemplifies through his presentation of the parallels between Moses and Alexander, as well as his other examples, the Qur'an intentionally reworks previous mythic narratives in order to present an Islamicized version of older

²⁰² Ibid., 261.

²⁰³ Ibid., 271

myths. In doing this, the “Qur’ân ... assert[s] its authority by pointing to, and subsequently destroying, its web of signification with other texts.”²⁰⁶

The focus of Hughes’s argument is that the Qur’an absorbs and reworks previous mythic narratives in order to erase them; however, Hughes does not directly address the many mythic narratives that exist in the Qur’an that point directly to previous texts, namely the Bible, as this is beyond the scope of his argument. There are many instances in which the Qur’an takes from previous mythic narratives in order to preserve them; however, as Hughes points out, rather than address the intertextuality that exists between these sources, scholars have, until recently, “been obsessed with finding precursors and antecedents to anything that can prove ... Islam and its scripture, is ... a garbled version of biblical (both Jewish and Christian) stories, rabbinic *aggadot*, etc.”²⁰⁷

By juxtaposing Biblical and midrashic materials against Qur’anic narratives, it will become evident that the Qur’an absorbed and transformed preexisting narratives in order to assert its authority over the previous texts by resituating the new narratives in an original manner, and thus preserve them within the pages of the Qur’an in a recognizable form. The mechanisms that allow for this will be elaborated on in the remainder of this chapter.

A brief survey of the Qur’an will reveal many literary resemblances to that of the Hebrew Bible, midrashim, and other texts. Taking into consideration the magnitude of the Qur’an’s centrality to Islam as a new religious movement, it is unlikely that the author of the Qur’an would have been careless enough to present Biblical and midrashic

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 272.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

narratives in an erroneous manner. Furthermore, the author of the Qur'an would have had access to Jewish materials,²⁰⁸ such as the Bible and midrashim, to ensure that the Qur'anic narratives did not misrepresent the Judaic materials beyond intentional theological discrepancies.²⁰⁹

The question that emerges then becomes "why would the Qur'an employ Israelite/Jewish myths, among others, within its own narratives in a manner that did not fully represent the original narratives?" The obvious answers, which stem from both the apologist's and orientalist's perspectives respectively, is that the Qur'an claims to be both a literary and religious continuation of the Abrahamic faiths;²¹⁰ therefore, one would expect narratives of the earlier prophets to be present in Islam's scripture. Furthermore, that the Islamic versions did not represent the original narratives was because the author(s) of the Qur'an were not aware of the mistakes that they were producing while authoring their scripture.²¹¹

Although the aforementioned reasons are valid, the former more so than the latter, a more analytical explanation would be that the time period in which the Qur'an was in

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 263.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 70–71.

²⁰⁹ For example, the Quran (4:157) states that Jesus was not killed, nor was he crucified; here the Qur'an is intentionally distinguishing itself from the predominate Christian view by presenting a contrasting theological perspective, one which is rooted in Christian Gnosticism, with regards to Jesus's last day on earth.

²¹⁰ Qur'an 3:2–4; 5:43–48, 75; 61:6; 62:2.

²¹¹ An example of an unintentional mistake present in the Qur'an is found in the chapter (*surat*) titled Maryam, verses 27–28 which read "Then she [Mary] brought him [Jesus] to her own folk, carrying him. They said: O Mary! Thou hast come with an amazing thing. O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot." Here the Qur'an states that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was Aaron's sister; the error that is implied is that the Qur'an is linking Mary to Aaron, whose siblings were the prophet Moses and Mary, not Mary the mother of Jesus. The centuries of separation between Mary the mother of Jesus, and Aaron have been controversial since the emergence of these verses.

development was a time in which literary thoughts on the idea of plagiarism (Ar. *saraqqa*) were shifting in the Arab world.

The dominant form of artistic expression in pre-Islamic Arabia was poetry,²¹² in which, much like today, accusations of plagiarism would have been detrimental to one's reputation. However, "the theories governing the notion of plagiarism" in the seventh century were different than today's standards; "originality was not defined by who says what first, but by the embellishment of traditional, well-known motifs."²¹³ For example, "a poet who in this way adds nuances to a hackneyed poetic conceit cannot be said to have plagiarized another poet's *ma'na* [meaning], for he has thus created a new one with its own particularities that make it distinct from the original."²¹⁴

It is hard to imagine that the author of the Qur'an would have utilized existing mythic narratives without the foresight that accusations of plagiarism would have arisen. For this reason, it becomes clear that the author of the Qur'an intentionally absorbed pre-existing Biblical and Near Eastern mythic narratives with the intentions of transforming them into unique narratives that represented the emerging Islamic worldview, while keeping them familiar enough for potential converts to recognize. An exploration of the creation narratives involving Adam in the Qur'an will exemplify this.

The events leading to and subsequent to the creation of Adam are scattered throughout the Qur'an. The three most complete forms of this narrative appear in chapters two, seven, and fifteen. Chapter two, verses 29–39, state:

²¹² W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 30.

²¹³ Aaron W. Hughes, *The Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 23.

He it is who created for you all that is on earth. Then He ascended towards the skies (heaven) and made them seven skies (heavens); and He is knower of all things. [29] And when your Lord said to the angels, "Verily, I am going to place a vicegerent (*Khalifa*) on earth" they said "Will You place therein those who will do harm therein and shed blood, while we praise and sanctify You." He (Allah) said "I know that which you do not know." [30] And He taught Adam all the names then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these if you are truthful." [31] They (the angels) said, "Glory be to You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us; verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise." [32] He said, "O Adam! Inform them of their names," and when he had informed them of their names, He (Allah) said: "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen in the skies (heavens) and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?" [33] And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam." And they prostrated except Iblis, he refused and was proud and was one of the disbelievers. [34] And We said: "O Adam! dwell you and your spouse in the Paradise and eat of the bountiful things therein, where and when you will, but do not approach this tree or you both will be of the wrong-doers." [35] Then Satan (al-Shaytan) made them slip from it (Paradise), and got them out from the state in which they were; We said: "Get you down, all, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be a dwelling place and livelihood for you, for a time." [36] Then Adam received from his Lord words, and his Lord pardoned him. Verily, He is the One Who Forgives, the Most Merciful. [37] We said: "Get down all of you from this place (Paradise), then whenever there comes to you Guidance from Me, and whoever follows My Guidance, there shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve. [38] But those who disbelieve and belie Our *ayât* (proofs, verses, signs, revelations, etc.) – such are the companions of the Fire. They shall abide therein forever." [39]²¹⁵

The overarching theme of this Qur'anic narrative resembles that which is found in the Genesis narrative, namely verses 29, 31, 35, 36, and 38. In the Qur'anic version, God creates the heavens and the earth, as well as everything that inhabits the earth. God then

²¹⁴ Margaret Larkin, "al-Jurjani," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, ed. Josef W. Meri (New York: Routledge, 2006), 427.

²¹⁵ The translation provided is my own; however, I have referred to a translation provided by Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali. Although much of their translation is true to the Arabic present in the Qur'an, they do take much liberty in providing interpretations to the text, rather than providing what is actually present in the text. Therefore, my translation has attempted to provide an accurate representation of what is actually present in the text instead of interpretations of the

teaches Adam the names of everything.²¹⁶ Adam and his wife (Eve/*Hawa*)²¹⁷ are placed in a garden and are told that they may eat freely of that which God has created; however, they are told not to approach the fruit of a specific tree. The consequence of disobeying this order is that Adam and his wife would become “wrong-doers.” Satan causes Adam and his wife to eat of the forbidden fruit. Adam, his wife, and Satan are driven out of the Garden; we are informed at this point that humanity and Satan will forever be enemies of one another. Furthermore, humanity will now have to procure its own necessities.

By reflecting on the creation narratives of Genesis as presented in Chapter Two, it becomes clear that the overall narrative of the Qur’anic account of Adam’s creation is harmonious with the Biblical accounts. Both the remaining verses and those previously mentioned conflate a number of Biblical and Jewish exegetical texts,²¹⁸ with the exception of verse 34, in order to complete the Qur’anic narrative. For example, the Qur’an 2:29 states that God created one heaven, and that out of this one heaven he transformed into seven heavens. An examination of tractate *Hagigah* of the Talmud, redacted in the early third century C.E.,²¹⁹ demonstrates that the rabbis had already developed an advanced cosmology with regard to heaven; this cosmology emerges through the creative use of various Biblical verses. The tractate reads as follows:

text. My interpretations of words that are ambiguous or that require clarification have been placed in parentheses.

²¹⁶ This aspect of the Qur’anic version is slightly different from the Biblical one. In Genesis 2:19 it is Adam who chooses the names of the animals before him.

²¹⁷ The Qur’an does not mention Eve/*Hawa* by name; she is referred to as Adam’s wife.

²¹⁸ Abraham Katsh’s *Judaism in Islam: Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and its Commentaries* methodically provides the Biblical and Talmudic sources of the second and third chapters of the Qur’an. Gerald Friedlander’s translation of the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* provides detailed annotations of this book’s sources. This is of significance due to the fact that the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* contains numerous chapters that deal with the creation narratives. An analysis of chapter XIII of the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* demonstrates that the Qur’anic narratives are closely linked to rabbinic literature.

There is a *Boraitha*²²⁰ of R. Jose which says: Woe to the creatures which see and know not what they see, which stand and know not upon what they stand. Upon what does the earth stand? Upon the pillars ... R. Jehudah said: There are two firmaments, as it is written [Deut. x. 14]: "Behold, to the Lord thy God belong the heavens and the heavens of the heavens." Resh Lakish said, they are seven, viz.: *Vilon*, *Rakia*, *Shchakim*, *Zbul*, *Maon*, *Makhon*, *Araboth*. *Vilon* serves no purpose whatever save this, that it enters in the morning, and goes forth in the evening, and renews every day the work of creation. *Rakia* is that in which are set sun and moon, stars and constellations ... *Araboth* is that in which are righteousness and judgment and grace, the treasures of life and the treasures of peace and the treasures of blessing, and the souls of the righteous and the spirits and souls which are about to be created, and the dew with which the Holy One, blessed be He, is about to quicken mortals.²²¹

Genesis Rabbah 19:7 also gives a rabbinic account of the seven heavens; in this case, the Torah ascends to the seventh heaven before descending back down.

The purpose of juxtaposing chapter 2, verses 29–39, of the Qur'an with Biblical and rabbinic works is to demonstrate that the Qur'an clearly incorporates both Biblical and rabbinic texts in presenting an Islamicized version of the creation of Adam; this is observable when one examines the common aspects that the Qur'anic narratives share with the Judaic texts. However, the Qur'an's absorption of both Biblical and rabbinic texts presents the reader with a narrative that is original to the Qur'an.

Historically, polemical orientalist have argued that the presence of Biblical and rabbinic narratives in the Qur'an equates to plagiarism and scribal error, among other

²¹⁹ H. L. Strack and G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 127.

²²⁰ *Boraitha*, *Baraita*, *Beraithot* is a term applied to rabbinic works that fall outside the category of Mishnah. "The term covers every *halakhah*, halakhic Midrash, and historical or aggadic tradition, which is "outside" (i.e., not included in) Juddah ha-Nasi's Mishnah." in Benjamin De-Vries, "Baraita, Beraithot," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 4 B, ed. Cecil Roth (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971–1972), 189.

²²¹ "Tractate Hagiga, Chapter II, Regulations Concerning Public Lectures Which are and Which are not Allowed," *Jewish Virtual Library: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*, accessed February 7, 2011, <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Talmud/hagiga2.html>>

charges; however, by resituating the Qur'an in the environment in which it was written, one can see a more sophisticated creative process taking place.

As stated, the creation narrative as found in chapter 2 of the Qur'an demonstrates that the author of the Qur'an was clearly familiar of the pre-existing narratives in circulation. However, in order to go beyond the piecing together of various mythic narratives, as well as to be able to claim the Qur'an as an original work of theology, the author's re-presentation of these mythic narratives had to go beyond that which was already in existence. The author of the Qur'an accomplishes this in two distinct ways. Firstly, after absorbing the Biblical and rabbinic writings, the author re-amalgamates these familiar narratives in a manner that is unique to the Qur'an; this has been demonstrated by the juxtaposition of chapter 2, verses 29–39, with Biblical and rabbinic texts. Secondly, new mythic elements are introduced into the narrative.

When examining chapter 2, verse 34, of the Qur'an we are introduced to a non-Jewish mythic element with regard to the creation narrative. This verse reads, "And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever."²²²

That all the angels prostrated themselves before Adam confirms that Iblis does not belong to the class of angels. This is confirmed in chapter 18 (The Cave/*surat al-kahf*), verse 50, of the Qur'an which states, "Behold! We said to the angels 'Bow down to Adam': they bowed down except Iblis. He was one of the *jinn*s, and he broke the

²²² Although this verse is unique in many regards, there are other narratives that present similar motifs. For example, Genesis Rabbah 8:5 describes two groups of angels: one group argues for the creation of humanity, while the other group opposes the creation of humanity.

Command of his Lord.”²²³ This is attested to further in that the Qur’an states that angels are stern and “flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from God, but do (precisely) what they are commanded”; Iblis clearly does not carry out God’s command, which indicates that he is not an angel.²²⁴

For pre-Islamic nomadic Arabs, the belief in *jinn*s often went beyond their belief in deities.²²⁵ They perceived them as “shadowy spirits who seldom assumed a distinct personality or name. They were associated with deserts, ruins, and other eerie places and might assume such forms as those of animals, serpents, and other creepy things. They were vaguely feared, but were not always malevolent.”²²⁶ The Qur’an states that the *jinn*s are beings created out of a fire of scorching wind, and that they were created before humanity;²²⁷ the Qur’an also states that they were created from fire free of smoke.²²⁸ Like humans, *jinn*s have free will and are described as being both believers²²⁹ and disbelievers.²³⁰

That Iblis is a *jinn* and not an angel, or a serpent for that matter, adds to the mythopoetic creativity of the Qur’an. Although *jinn*s predate the emergence of Islam,²³¹ the Qur’an’s utilization of them in the creation narrative is unique with regard to both

²²³ The preceding verse can be paralleled to negative gender-inclusive language, in which a masculine term is used to address both males and females; this case demonstrates the Arabic equivalent in which a term addresses the majority, while minority groups may be present.

²²⁴ Qur’an 66:6.

²²⁵ Watt, 153.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Qur’an 15:27.

²²⁸ Qur’an 55:15.

²²⁹ Qur’an 72:1–19, 46:29–30.

²³⁰ Qur’an 6:130, 32:13–15.

²³¹ Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 144–145. Although *jinn*s are an Arab phenomenon, belief in similar entities, such as demons, ghosts, and spirits, were almost universal among pre-modern peoples.

Biblical and rabbinic materials, as well as other traditions.²³² By including Iblis in the creation narrative, the Qur'an expands its heavenly court to include *jinn*s. Furthermore, Iblis's refusal to obey God adds dissension within God's heavenly court; this in turn adds to the mythic tone of the narrative, in that the order which existed in heaven becomes momentarily disrupted.

The Qur'an is ambiguous with regards to the "Satan"²³³ that caused Adam and his wife to transgress. We are told that Iblis would not prostrate himself before Adam; we are then told that Satan caused Adam and his wife to fall from their blissful state. The Qur'an never states that Iblis is the "Satan" that is found in this narrative; however, both the proximity of Iblis and Satan within this narrative, along with the understanding that *jinn*s can take the form of serpents, among other creatures, would indicate that Iblis is this "Satan," and that this "Satan" represents the serpent of the Genesis narrative. Although the character of Satan is a complex one in the Jewish tradition, the Hebrew Bible presents this being as subservient to God, which is not the case with regard to the Christian perspective of Satan; therefore, it is evident that the author of the Qur'an drew upon the New Testament book of Revelation,²³⁴ or some other similar Christian tradition outside of the New Testament, to establish the link between the serpent and Satan/Devil.²³⁵ By

²³² Christian scriptures and theological writings elaborate on the link between the serpent and Satan quite extensively; however, beyond stating that Revelation 12:9 clearly links the serpent to Satan, this thesis will not engage the subject matter, as it goes beyond the limits set for this thesis.

²³³ The prefix "al-" (trans. "the") indicates that the subsequent word is a proper noun; therefore "the Satan" (*al-Shaytan*, pronounced *ashaytan* as the letter "l" in the prefix "al-" is not pronounced when it appears before the letter "sheen" (ش)) as well as a number of other Arabic letters that fall under the category of *lam ashameyeh*) indicates that a specific individual adversary was responsible for Adam and his wife transgressing God, as opposed to a generic satan (*shaytan*) which can refer to either humans or *jinn*s.

²³⁴ Revelation 12:9.

²³⁵ M. D. Johnson, "Life of Adam and Eve," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1985). The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha titled The Apocalypse of Moses links Satan to the serpent of the creation narrative. In this narrative, Satan

introducing the character of Iblis, especially as a *jinn*, into the creation myth, the Qur'an takes a recognizable narrative and re-presents it in an original, yet recognizable, form.

Conclusion

A reflection on the present state of Islamic studies, more specifically within the discipline of Qur'anic studies, shows reluctance on the part of scholars to critically examine Qur'anic data. This is due in part to the resistance and consequences that scholars such as Muhammad Ahmad Khalafallah and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd have been met with when engaging the Qur'an. However, Aaron W. Hughes has argued that academia ought to overcome the stigma associated with critically engaging the Qur'an by approaching it using the methods of those who were pioneers in the field. This meant engaging in objective academic discourses, an approach exemplified by Angelika Neuwirth, while avoiding the cynical overtones that were characteristic of the twentieth-century orientalist. Hughes demonstrates this approach quite successfully in his article "The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and Early Tafsîr," in which he argues that the Qur'an "absorbs, transforms, and subsequently erase[s] previous near eastern narratives"²³⁶ in order to destroy "its web of signification with other texts."²³⁷

Since Hughes does not engage the many mythical narratives that point directly to previous Near Eastern narratives, the aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the Qur'an also absorbs, transforms, and preserves Near Eastern myths in a distinct, yet

and the serpent are two distinct entities that work together to cause humanity's fall. However, unlike the Christian tradition, Satan is an enemy of humanity, rather than being God's foe.

²³⁶ Hughes, "The Stranger," 261.

²³⁷ Ibid., 272.

recognizable form. This has been accomplished by juxtaposing the Qur'an's creation narratives to Biblical and rabbinic texts. Although many individual verses of the Qur'an overlap with Biblical and rabbinic works, taken as a whole, the Qur'an presents the creation of Adam in a unique manner.

The Qur'an's re-amalgamation of Biblical/rabbinic and pre-Islamic Arab thought concerning the creation narratives and beliefs in *jinns* produces an original Islamicized version of familiar narratives. That the Qur'an includes mention of the seven heavens, the creation narratives as found in Genesis, the incorporation of *jinns* in the heavenly court of God, and the insertion of Iblis in place of the serpent indicates that the Qur'an absorbed, transformed, and re-presented previous narratives in an original, yet recognizable, manner.

Written when Islam was emerging as a new religious movement, it is clear that the Qur'an preserves these previous narratives in order to appeal to its potential converts who would have understood the Qur'an as a literary continuation of previous revelations. The artistic reworking of these previous narratives situates the Qur'an in an environment that held literary expression in high regard. As noted, "originality was not defined by who says what first, but by the embellishment of traditional, well-known motifs."²³⁸ The author of the Qur'an was well aware of the rules that governed literary expression in the seventh century and must have been convinced that the Qur'an transcended the previous religious discourses. This is supported by the numerous challenges the Qur'an makes to

²³⁸ Hughes, *Texture*, 23.

both humanity and *jinn*²³⁹ to produce chapters or verses equal to or greater than those present in the Qur'an.²⁴⁰

Although the Qur'an is quite poetic in nature, the Qur'an's perception of itself is otherwise. The Qur'an states that it is not a work of poetry; therefore, the challenges it makes to both humanity and *jinn* to produce chapters or verses like it, would imply that the challenge is to present narratives dealing with the same subjects, but in a superior form. Here too, we find that the Qur'an is aware that it successfully, by seventh-century standards, absorbed, transformed, and re-presented previous mythic/religious narratives in a manner that surpassed the literary accomplishments of its predecessors. Whether or not the Qur'an is a superior text relative to its predecessors is a moot point; however, the Qur'an's goal in re-presenting old myths in a nuanced fashion was to attract potential converts, who would have appreciated the literary accomplishments of this book in light of their foreknowledge of previous texts, if not for the message alone.

²³⁹ The challenge for both humanity and *jinn* to produce something like the Qur'an stems from the thought that Muhammad was aided by the *jinn* in producing the Qur'an; hence, Qur'an 17:88 states, "Say: Verily, though mankind and the *jinn* should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another."

²⁴⁰ Qur'an 2:23–24, 10:38, 11:13, 17:88, 52:33–34.

CONCLUSIONS

In examining the creation narratives of the Bible and the Qur'an, I have sought to answer how and for what reasons the Bible and the Qur'an used mythic materials in presenting their respective worldviews. However, in order to proceed with this analysis, it was necessary to definitively state that both Biblical and Qur'anic narratives exhibit that which has been characterized as myth. This may seem redundant, since episodes in the Bible and the Qur'an, such as the creation narratives, the great deluge in the time of Noah, or the testing of Job's faith, as well as other narratives, all bear the hallmarks of popular conceptions of myth. However, taking these narratives into account, scholars still dispute the degree to which these narratives, as well as others, exhibit mythic elements. The history of religions approach allowed me to demonstrate the progression of scholarly perspectives of myth, which, rooted in the theories examined, culminated in a contemporary understanding of myth that is relevant to the discipline of religious studies, more specifically that of Biblical and Qur'anic studies. By applying the characteristics of myth to a sample case, the story of Job as found in the Bible and the Qur'an in this case, justification for categorizing the aforementioned scriptures as being mythic is provided.

With regard to the secondary sources that engage the primary texts, I employed literary analysis combined with a comparative approach to demonstrate the lack of scholarly agreement on the nature of myth in relation to the aforementioned scriptures. The combination of these approaches brought to light the great contrast that exists between Yehezkel Kaufmann's perspectives of myth in the Bible and that of Michael Fishbane. Whereas Fishbane methodically demonstrates the parallels that exist between Israelite narratives and the myths of the ancient near east, Kaufmann states that "when we

examine Biblical literature... we are met by a startling phenomenon; the Bible shows absolutely no apprehension of the real character of mythological religion. On this point there is uniformity regardless of source, book, or period.”²⁴¹ In response to this statement, I wanted to demonstrate that the authors of the Bible clearly had an “apprehension of the real character of mythological religion”;²⁴² in doing so, I also demonstrate how and why the Biblical narratives employed previous Near Eastern myths within their own narratives.

By means of the exegetical approach, and by drawing on the creation narratives of the Bible juxtaposed to the Sumerian creation narratives, it is evident that the authors of the Bible were clearly responding to the environmental milieu in which they were saturated. The thorough examination of the successive events that occur in each of the respective texts makes it evident that the Biblical authors re-presented the Sumerian creation narrative in a manner that represented the monotheistic worldview of the Israelites. By inverting and recasting the Sumerian creation narrative, the Genesis narrative reveals the origins of existence and humanity’s position within the framework of the universe, through narratives that are characteristic of previous myths; hence, there is a clear “apprehension of the real character of mythological religion” within the Bible.

As noted, the progress of Qur’anic studies in relation to myth is one that is lacking in general, but especially so relative to that of Biblical studies. Although great progress has been achieved through the contributions of scholars such as Angelika Neuwirth and Aaron W. Hughes, there is still much to be accomplished within this field.

²⁴¹ Kaufmann, “The Bible and Mythological Polytheism,” 179.

²⁴² Ibid.

Hughes's examination of the function of myth within Qur'anic narratives demonstrates one facet of a complex relationship. Hughes clearly demonstrates that the Qur'an successfully "absorbs, transforms, and subsequently erase[s] previous near eastern narratives"²⁴³ in order to destroy "its web of signification with other texts."²⁴⁴

Through literary analysis of the Qur'an, alongside both Biblical and midrashic texts, I build upon Hughes's argument by means of demonstrating that the Qur'an also sought to intentionally preserve previous Near Eastern myths (i.e., Biblical and midrashic myths). The Qur'an accomplishes this by absorbing elements from various sources which deal with a familiar narrative (the creation narratives as found in Genesis, as well as texts that deal with this topic); it then re-amalgamates these elements into a unique narrative that represents the emerging Islamic worldview, while at the same time remaining familiar enough to those who were associated with the previous narratives. The reason for keeping these narratives familiar is twofold. Firstly, the literary norms in the time of the Qur'an dictated that "originality was not defined by who says what first, but by the embellishment of traditional, well-known motifs";²⁴⁵ therefore, by successfully adding nuances to a familiar narrative, the Qur'an, according to seventh-century standards, elevates itself above the existing narratives. Secondly, by preserving previous Near Eastern narratives, especially those belonging to both the Jewish and Christian traditions, the conversion process, if not willingly embraced, would become more tolerable.

Although this thesis has shown that both the Bible and the Qur'an have antecedents in various other texts and traditions, how scholars decide to utilize this

²⁴³ Hughes, "The Stranger," 265.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 272.

information varies. In contrast to previous scholarly activity regarding scriptural studies, I have decided to engage these scriptures in a manner that avoids any polemical intent; rather, through various scholarly approaches, I have engaged these scriptures in order to demonstrate that the authors of these texts were motivated with purposeful intentions. It is my hope that I have clearly demonstrated how and why the authors of the respective scriptures utilized myth within their narratives.

²⁴⁵ Hughes, *The Texture*, 23.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu-Zayd, Nasr. "The Dilemma of the Literary Approach to the Qur'an." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 23 (2003): 8–47.
- Ackerman, Robert. "Frazer on Myth and Ritual." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975): 115–134.
- Barmash, Pamela. Review of *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, by Michael Fishbane. *The Association for Jewish Studies* 31 (2007): 363–365.
- Bellah, Robert N., "Religious Evolution," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 29, 1964, pp. 358–374.
- Black, David. "Andrew Lang: Master of Fairyland." *Nexus: The Canadian Student Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1988): 24–35.
- Bonnefoy, Yves. *Greek and Egyptian Mythologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Burkert, Walter. *Ancient Mystery Cults*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- _____. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*. New York: The Viking Press, 1969.
- Corliss, William R. *Ancient Man: A Handbook of Puzzling Artifacts*. Glen Arm, MD: Sourcebook Project, 1978.
- Crone, Patricia, and Michael Cook. *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Csapo, Eric. *Theories of Mythology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- De-Vrries, Benjamin. "Baraita, Beraitot," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Cecil Roth. Vol. 4 B. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971–1972.
- Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Frazer, James George. *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion Legend and Law*. Vol. 3. London: The Macmillan and Company, 1918.

- _____. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Abridged Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950, [c1922].
- Friedlander, Gerald. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism*. Trans. Katherine Jones. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
- _____. *The Future of an Illusion*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961.
- _____. *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. Trans. James Strachey. London and New York: Routledge and Paul, 1950.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism : Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973.
- Ginzberg, Louis. *Legends of the Jews*. Vols. 1 & 2. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003.
- Hopcke, Robert H. *A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999.
- Hoyland, Robert G. *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Hughes, Aaron W. *Situating Islam: The Past and Future of an Academic Discipline*. London: Equinox Publishing, 2007.
- _____. "The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and Early Tafsîr." *Studies in Religion* 32 (2003): 261–279.
- _____. *The Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Ibn Warraq. *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998.
- James, Wendy, and Nick Allen, eds. *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute: Methodology and History in Anthropology*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998.

- Jansen, J. J. G. *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974.
- Johnson, M. D. "Life of Adam and Eve," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. edited by James H. Charlesworth. Vol. 2. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1985.
- Jung, Carl G. *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious. Encountering Jung: Jung on Mythology*. Edited by Robert A. Segal. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- _____. *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Vol. 9, Part 1. Trans. R. F. C. Hull, edited by Herbert Read. New York: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- _____. *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. Vol. 8. Trans. R. F. C. Hull, edited by Herbert Read. New York: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Katsh, Abraham. *Judaism in Islam: Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and its Commentaries*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1980.
- Kaufmann, Yehezkel. "The Bible and Mythological Polytheism." Trans. Moshe Greenberg. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951): 179–197.
- _____. *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*. Trans. Moshe Greenberg. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah. *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Man's Recorded History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
- _____. *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.* Revised edition. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961.
- _____. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah, and John Maier. *The Myths of Enki, the Crafty God*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- La Barre, Weston. "Folklore and Psychology." *Journal of American Folklore* 61 (1948): 382–390.
- Larkin, Margaret. "al-Jurjani," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, edited by Josef W. Meri. New York: Routledge, 2006.

- Lawrence, Bruce. *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Anthropology and Myth: Lectures 1951–1982*. Trans. Roy Willis. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- Lilienfeld, Scott O., et al. *50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology: Shattering Widespread Misconceptions about Human Behavior*. West Sussex, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Lincoln, Bruce. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Manzoor, Parvez. "Method Against Truth: Orientalism and Qur'anic Studies," in *The Qur'an: Style and Contents*, edited by Andrew Rippin. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2001.
- Matthews, Victor H., and Don C. Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*. 3rd ed. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.
- McCutcheon, Russell T. "Myth," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon. London: Cassell, 2000.
- Morales, Helen. *Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Müller, Friedrich Max. *Comparative Mythology : An Essay*. London: Routledge and Sons, 1909.
- Muss-Arnolt, W. "The Chaldean Account of the Deluge," in *The Biblical World*. 3, no. 2 (1894): 109–118.
- Najjar, Fauzi M., "Islamic Fundamentalism and the Intellectuals: The Case of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (Nov., 2000): 177–200.
- Neuwirth, Angelika. "Myths and Legends in the Qur'ān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*. Vol. 3, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Preus, James Samuel. *Explaining religion : criticism and theory from Bodin to Freud*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Scharf, Kurt. "The Koran: A Book in Many Languages – Interview with Angelika Neuwirth." Last Modified 2007. Accessed Jan. 19, 2011.
<http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-478/_nr-573/i.html>

- Segal, Robert A. *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- _____. *Myth: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1–4. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Spong, John Shelby. *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?: A Bishop Rethinks the Origins of Christianity*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994.
- Strack, H. L., and G. Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Trans. Markus Bockmuehl. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991.
- “Tractate Hagiga, Chapter II, Regulations Concerning Public Lectures Which are and Which are not Allowed.” *Jewish Virtual Library: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*. Accessed February 7, 2011.
<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Talmud/hagiga2.html>>.
- Tribble, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*. Vol.1: Third American, from the Second English Edition. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1889.
- _____. “The Philosophy of Religion among the Lower Races of Mankind.” *The Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* 4 (1870): 369–381.
- Wansbrough, John. *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Wasserstrom, Steven. *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Watt, W. Montgomery. *Bell’s Introduction to the Qur’an*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970.