

AN EXODUS (2:11-22) BEFORE EXODUS (6:2F): RENDERING OF TWO EVENTS IN EARLY BIBLICAL VERSIONS (MT AND ARABIC), COMPARED WITH THE QUR'ANIC (SURAH 28:14F) ACCOUNT¹

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Abstract

Exodus is the Latinised form of the Greek word, exodos (going out). Two departures of Moses are reported in the Bible. They are firstly, his fleeing from Egypt described in Exodus 2:11-22, and secondly, his departure as member of a mass exodus (Ex. 6:2f). The focus in the article will be on the events leading to his initial leaving of Egypt, and his eventual sojourn in the country of Midian (Ex. 2:11-22). However, it will be shown that certain expressions in Ex. 2:11-22 also feature in the later description of the exodus proper (e.g., Exodus 18 and Numbers 20). Furthermore, parallels will be drawn between the narrations of events in Ex. 2:11-22 and the Qur'anic surah 28:14-28. Similarities will be pointed out, but also differences relating to the imbedding, structure, and theology of the respective accounts. Finally, affinities between the Biblical exodus of Moses and the later hijra of Muhammad will be indicated. As source text for Ex. 2:11-22, the Masoretic version (Leningrad manuscript) will be used. In addition, reference will be made to two 13th century Arabic manuscripts (Sinai Arab 2 and 4) where there is a direct correspondence between their readings and those of the 7th century Qur'anic Arabic text (e.g., Ex. 2:17 and surah 28:24).

Keywords: Exodus 2:11-22; Surah 28:14-28; Sinai Arab 2; Sinai Arab 4; Moses; Qur'an

Introduction

In this article attention will be given to the fleeing of Moses from Pharaoh (Ex. 2:15) as prelude to the eventual departure of Israel from Egypt commencing from Succoth (Ex. 12:3 and 13:20).

The focus will be on Ex. 2:11-22 which describes the commencement of Moses' public life (2:11), two encounters in which he was involved (2:11-14), his leaving Egypt (2:15), his sojourn in Midian featuring events at a well (2:15f), and his stay at the home of Reuel (2:21-22).

¹ This article is an adapted version of a paper read on 11 September 2020 at a virtual congress, organised by the Department of Old Testament and Hebrew Literature of the Faculty of Theology, Pretoria University. The theme of the congress was: Exodus motifs in the Old Testament and Hebrew literature.

Kernel occurrences in the narration will be discerned as well as their imbedding in the immediate and greater context of the exodus. Motives in Moses' former exodus that are related to the later exodus, will be identified.

The Biblical description of the early life of Moses will then be paralleled to the Qur'anic version (7th century CE) in surah 28:14-28. Similarities will be shown, but also the main differences.

Also, in the Arabic tradition, cursory attention will be given to two 10th century Arabic Bible manuscripts – Sinai Arab 2 and 4. Both use Syriac versions of the Old Testament as source text.² They afford the opportunity to juxtapose Biblical Arabic with Qur'anic Arabic where there is a close affinity in the presentation of events in the two traditions,

Biblical version (Ex. 2:11-22)

Events

The announcement of the commencement of Moses' public life, is introduced in Masoretic Text (MT) by the statement that he "went out" (2:11) towards a specific destination, namely "his brothers", and observed "their burdens", interpreted as "slavery" and "humiliation" by Sinai Arab 2 and 4, respectively. A specific context is hereby created for the next communication, "And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew". The rendering of LXX is, "having noticed their distress, he sees an Egyptian man smiting a certain Hebrew" (Brenton 1844).

Moses responds in a deliberate way (2:12). He makes sure that the coast is clear, and then retaliates in kind by beating the Egyptian. In both cases, the Egyptian hitting (participle) the Hebrew, and Moses' act of hitting (narrative perfect) the Egyptian, MT uses the causative formation of the verb *nākāh*. However, similar actions need not produce similar results.³ The fate of the Hebrew after having been beaten is not known, but for the Egyptian, death ensues. This leaves Moses with the problem of hiding the corpse. He does it by burying the dead person in the sand.

Disposing of the cadaver solves Moses' dilemma, but not that of Jewish exegetes seeking to explain the reason for Moses' behaviour. The Egyptian's beating of the Hebrew, expressed by means of a participle, is for example interpreted as a prolonged torturing in the Midrash to Exodus (*Midrash Rabbah, Shemot* 1:28). Alternatively, the Egyptian is pictured as not only hitting the Hebrew, but also portrayed as previously having had immoral relations with his victim's wife (Rashi⁴).

Having disposed of the deceased Egyptian, Moses is also pictured in Ex. 2:13 as approaching and attempting to intervene between two Hebrews. What he encounters, is one Hebrew hitting another. Upon being questioned by Moses, the aggressor (2:14) responds by accusing Moses of being a murderous person, regarding himself as self-

² Due to their use of Syriac as source text, the two manuscripts are also known as ArabSyr 2 and 4 respectively. According to Vollandt (2015:64), "ArabSyr2 is particularly valuable for the text-critical study of the Peshitta Pentateuch, because it appears to be based on an ancient Vorlage with close affinities to manuscript 5b1 in the standard Leiden edition." Despite being a later rendering of the Pentateuch than ArabSyr4, "it completely supplanted" the latter (Vollandt 2015:66).

³ Dozeman (2009:87; cf. Makujina 2012:457) proposes in his commentary on Exodus that *nākāh* denotes a fatal assault in both cases (Ex. 2:11-12 and Ex. 2:13 – the Hebrew striking a Hebrew). However, contextual considerations rule out this theory.

⁴ Acronym for the Torah commentator Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040 – 1105).

appointed ruler and judge who solves disputes by putting to death the one deemed to be in the wrong. "Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian," he asks.

The apprehension of the accuser, expressed by way of a question, functions as a turning point in the Moses narrative. A series of events ensue. Moses fears that his offensive act has become common knowledge; Pharaoh seeks revenge (2:15); and Moses goes into exile.

No information is provided regarding the distance and time of his flight. Moses is simply pictured as settling in Midian and seating himself at a well. There he observes how small cattle are watered by filling troughs with water drawn from the well. First, he notices seven girls (2:16), next local shepherds who do not await their turn, but drive the women away (2:17). However, Moses intervenes; he comes to the girls' rescue and waters the flock.

The next scene is at their father, Reuel's, house (2:18). Reuel questions the girls, is informed of what happened (2:19), and lets the girls invite Moses to dine (2:20). Moses accepts the invitation as well as an offer by Reuel to reside at his house (2:21). Moses eventually becomes a son-in-law of Reuel through marriage to his daughter Zipporah. Out of the wedlock a son is born, who is named Gershom.

Kernel occurrences

Viewing Ex. 2:11-22 from a structural point of view, researchers have alleged that the accounts consist of separate components linked together. In-between editorial comments have also been identified, for example the announcement of Pharaoh's wrath and Moses' fleeing in 2:15. Seen as a whole, the narrative of the Egyptian episodes appears to be an independent unit, followed by the recounting of the sojourn of Moses in Midian. The description of the sojourn ends with the mention of the birth of Moses and Zipporah's son, Gershom. No mention is made of the second son, Eliezer, referred to in Ex. 18:4b. According to Biblical tradition, Moses chose the name Gershom, saying (2:22), "I have become an alien in a foreign land." Seen from a different perspective, information about the stay in Midian can be regarded as an aetiological saga, providing additional elucidation of the name Gershom. It may even be argued that the exposition of the sojourn in Midian is the older account, with the Egyptian episodes secondarily annexed to it (Schmidt 1988:88).⁵

Imbedding

The said two sections are only loosely connected to the preceding and following texts in Exodus. Immediately preceding 2:11-22, is the depiction of Moses as infant, and following it, is the burning bush episode. The compiler links 2:11-22 to 2:1-10 by mentioning the maturing of Moses and a general specifying of time, "in those days".

However, in terms of context, the Egyptian narration rather seems to be a continuation of the forced labour described in 1:11f. According to Joel S. Baden (2012:152), who categorises 2:11-22 as belonging to the Jahwist strand of Pentateuch, it is this situation in which Moses grew up and to which he responds. Reference to the Israelites' desperate circumstances is also made in the verses following 2:11-22.

⁵ Knauf (1988:126), however, argues that Moses' stay in Midian and his marriage is a secondary narrative linked to the primary account in 2:11-15.

According to 2:23, they “groaned in their slavery” and “cried for help”. The next verse (2:24) mentions God taking notice of their suffering, and remembering his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Similar statements are also found in Ex. 6:5, where the account of the actual exodus commences.

As regards the exodus motif, there are several statements in Ex. 2:11-22 that can be related to the train of events that constitute the exodus proper in the later narrative.

Moses is introduced in Ex. 2:11 as “going out” to observe the fate of “his brothers”, which reminds one of the “going out” (MT: *šē’t*; LXX: *exodos*) of Israel from Egypt mentioned in Ps. 113[4]:1. Furthermore, it may be surmised that Moses observing the fate of the oppressed Hebrews is an indication of the coming salvation of the brethren of Moses. The clause *wayyar’ bē-siblōtām* (And he [Moses] looked upon hard labour (/slavery)⁶ in Ex. 2:11 possibly anticipates the reference to slavery (*hā-‘ābōdāh*) in Ex. 2:23 and the positive divine response in Ex. 2:25 (Polak 2018:43). The latter verse states, “And God looked [*wayyar’*] and took heed [*wayyēda*]”. Lexical correspondence may also be found in the use of *nākāh* in Ex. 2:12 and Num. 20:11. Ex. 2:12 states, “And he [Moses] struck the Egyptian”, and in Num. 20:11, “And he [Moses] struck the rock” (*wa-yak ha-sela*]). By striking the rock, Moses was, in fact, disobeying the command of the Lord who had ordered Moses and his brother Aaron to speak to the rock (Num. 20:8). Angry at the people, Moses thus openly rebelled against the Lord, while in Ex. 2:12, his deed implied revolting against Pharaoh and his regime (Burnside, 2010). The consequences were respectively to be barred from the Promised Land (Num. 20:12), and to be forced to leave Egypt.

Contra parallelism is also evident when Num. 12:3 is compared to Ex. 2:12 (cf. Von Rad 1975:295). The Moses pictured in Ex. 2:12 is a harsh person, “He struck the Egyptian”; while Num. 12:3 speaks in the strongest terms about Moses’ meekness (*‘ānāw*): “Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.” Within the context of the revolt of his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron, Moses is pictured as mild, forgiving, and mediatory. In dealing with the Egyptian, however, he is merciless.

In attempting to mediate between the two quarrelling Hebrews (Ex. 2:13), the person believed to be in the wrong is sceptical and hostile. He strongly disputes Moses’ right to act or mediate as ruler and judge. Ironically, however, Moses was destined to become the supreme judge (Ex.18:14) and ruler of the Israelites who later had the authority to appoint local rulers or officials (Ex. 18:21) who, in turn, had to act as judges (18:25; cf. Carol Meyers 2011).

Within the Midian frame, Reuel, the father-in-law of Moses, is repeatedly mentioned in later traditions compiled in the book of Exodus (Schmidt 1988:86). He is, however, called by different names, namely Jitro (3:1 and 18:1-12) as well as Jeter (4:18). Furthermore, in Num. 10:29 he is called Hobab, and in Judg. 1:16 he is referred to as the Kenite. In Ex. 18:1-12 the father-in-law is reported to have provided Moses with advice to delegate the functions of ruler and judge to able men among his co-Israelites. The same chapter mentions Zipporah, wife of Moses, and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. According to 18:2, Moses sent her and her sons to her father, possibly with the news that the Lord had blessed his mission (cf.18:1).

⁶ “Hard work/slavery”: cf. the discussion in the previous subsection, *Events*.

Qur'anic version (surah 28:14-28)

Moses in the Qur'an

The Qur'an records the preaching of the Prophet Muhammad, proclaimed as revelations of Allah. The Qur'an contains several Old and New Testament traditions extant in oral format in Arabia at the beginning of the 7th century. Prominent among the traditions are those pertaining to Moses, who is mentioned 137 times in the Qur'an, compared to Abraham 69 times, Noah 43 times and Jesus 25 times (Wheeler 2006:248). The manner in which Biblical traditions are mentioned in the Qur'an, is that selected portions relevant to the Qur'anic message at that point, are referred to. Only a few traditions are recounted relatively unsegmented in a sequence that resembles the applicable Biblical version. Among them is the Qur'anic retelling of Ex. 2:11-22 in surah 28:14-28.

Events

The Qur'anic version commences by referring to the maturing of Moses, gifted with wisdom and knowledge (Q. 28:14). It then recounts how he enters the town with the people unaware of his coming. Finding two men fighting, Moses strikes and inadvertently kills one man who was a member of a faction hostile to his own. Regarding what had happened as the work of Satan (Q. 2:15), Moses prays for forgiveness and receives it (28:16). Moses then pledges not ever to be the accomplice of criminals (Q. 28:17). The next day Moses, apprehensively entering the city again, hears a call for help from the same person he assisted the previous day. He reprimands the person for being a *ghāwī* ("troublemaker"; cf. Abdel Haleem 2015), but nevertheless intervenes in the quarrel, intending to strike the adversary. However, before doing so, Moses is told: "Do you want to kill me as you killed the person yesterday" (Q. 28:19). Moses is, furthermore, accused of being a tyrant with no intention to do justice (Q. 28:20).

Then appears on the scene a man from the other side of town, introducing himself as a reliable advisor. His advice to Moses is to flee because the authorities are conspiring to kill him (Q. 28:21). Sensing danger, Moses leaves the town. He prays for protection, and heads towards Midian, expressing the wish that Allah will guide him on the right path (Q. 28:22). The focus of the narrative subsequently moves to the "water of Midian", possibly a well where people had to wait their turn to water their cattle. Among them he finds two women who are holding back their flock. Their explanation is that they are waiting until the other shepherds have driven away their flock. As reason for the situation, they mention that their father is an old man (Q. 28:23). In response, Moses waters their flock for them, and then he retreats to the shade. There he once again prays to Allah for whatever good thing He may send upon him in his need (Q. 28:24). What follows is an invitation, shyly brought, to come to the father who wants to recompense Moses.⁷ Moses recounts his experiences to the father and is promised a haven away from the wrongdoing people (Q. 28:25). Recommending him as strong and trustworthy, one of the women then suggests that her father should hire Moses (Q. 28:26). This leads to an agreement between the father and Moses. Moses would receive in marriage one of the daughters on condition that he serves the father for eight years. Moses also has the option to work for him for a further two years, should he wish to. The father promises

⁷ The name of the daughters' father is not, contrary to Biblical tradition (Ex. 2:18), mentioned in the Qur'an. However, in Muslim interpretative tradition he is identified as Shu'aib (Wolf 1958:103).

not to make life difficult for Moses. Moses will, if Allah wills, find him a righteous person (Q. 28:27). The stipulations are accepted by Moses, calling Allah as witness (Q. 28:28).

Comparison (Ex. 2:11-22 and surah 28:14-28)

Events as articulated in Ex. 2:11-22 and the narrative found in surah 28:14-28 show a remarkable correspondence. Both describe Moses' intervention in two subsequent disputes in Egypt in parable style; and both mention the episode and outcome at the well in Midian in broadly matching terms. There are, however, also important differences between the presentations of thematic material in Exodus and the Qur'an. Three features will be highlighted in the article, namely idiosyncrasies of each as regards imbedding, structuring of contents, and theology.

Imbedding

Preceding the Egypt and Midian centred events in both Exodus and the Qur'an are accounts of oppression, slaughtering of infants, as well as the hiding, rescue, and upbringing of Moses. Likewise, Ex. 2:11-22 and surah 28:14-28 are followed by an account of the revelation of God in a fire epiphany.

However, the relation of the Biblical and Qur'anic narratives respectively to the main exodus differ. In the Biblical narrative, the situation of hard labour, ill treatment (Ex. 2:12), and slavery (2:24) is what eventually leads to divine intervention (2:25 and 6:5) and the exodus proper from Egypt. The Qur'anic narrative, to the contrary, is presented as "news" (*naba'*) about Moses and Pharaoh (surah 28:2). Pharaoh is pictured as arrogant (28:39), exalting himself (28:4), and even claiming divine status (28:38). He is stereotyped as an oppressive ruler, splitting the people into factions, committing infanticide, and spreading corruption (28:4). Moses, in turn, is framed within the role of prophet (surah 6:84), who receives (28:32) and communicates the divine revelation (28:35). As in the Bible, God does intervene in favour of the oppressed, making them leaders and establishing them in the land (28:5). Positive statements are, however, vaguely phrased. What is emphasised, is the elimination (28:40) and ultimate punishment (28:41) of Pharaoh and his army, illustrating the end of wrongdoers (28:40).

Lexical correspondence in the Qur'an between the former and later exodus events does not resemble that of MT. Depicting the fatal blow by Moses (Ex. 2:12), the Qur'an (surah 28:15) uses the verb *wakaza*, but a different verbal expression, *daraba*, in recounting the striking of the rock (surah 2:60). Furthermore, in the Qur'an the striking of the rock to produce water takes place at the command of Allah.

The Qur'an does not mention any offspring of Moses born out of the wedlock (28:27) with one of the two daughters of the father, but prior to his encounter with "a fire on the side of the mountain" (28:29) mention is made of his traveling "with his family" (*bi-ahli-hi*).

Structure

In the Qur'an there is a greater interconnection between different episodes of the narration. Moreover, certain questions relating to detail aspects, which remain unanswered in the Biblical account, are addressed in the Qur'anic version.

The Biblical version begins (Ex. 2:12) by stating that Moses “went out to his brothers”, adding two observations, namely “And he saw their hardship” as well as “And he saw an Egyptian hitting a Hebrew from his brothers”. Surah 28:15, on the other hand, commences by recounting, “And he entered the city at a time of inattention of the people and found therein two men fighting; one from his faction and one from among his enemy”.

Stating that Moses “went out” (MT) presupposes, according to the present arrangement of texts, that he left the royal abode or royal living (cf. Ex. 2:5-10) to unite with his brothers. His VIP status, however, is seemingly not taken into account in the subsequent Biblical narrative. The Qur’anic account does not refer to Moses going out but states instead that he enters the city unnoticed by the people. Furthermore, according to the Qur’an, Moses does not find a situation of people subjected to hardship, but only observes two persons fighting. Although Qur’anic commentaries identify them as an Egyptian and Hebrew respectively, the nationality of the two men are not mentioned in surah 28:15. It is only stated that they belonged to two factions, that of Moses and that of the enemy.

The person of the enemy faction (surah 28:15) or Egyptian (Ex. 2:12) is struck by Moses, according to both the Exodus and Qur’anic accounts. Death ensues. In the Bible this can be assumed (Moses buries the person), and consequently the verb *wayyak* (and he struck) is translated as “and he killed” by the Syriac and the Sinai Arab 2 and 4 versions. The Qur’an adds to the verb *wakaza*, (he struck) the verbal expression *fa-qaḍā ‘alai-hi* (so the end came upon him). According to Qur’an commentaries, the striking was per fist or hand. Only Qatadah (quoted by Ibn Kathīr) mentions Moses’ staff as weapon. Death was thus not the intended outcome. Moses himself ascribes (28:15) the consequence of his deed as “the work of Satan”.

As regards Moses’ intervention the next day, the Bible (Ex. 2:13) does not (as with the first intervention) offer any spatial indications. The Qur’an (surah 28:18), to the contrary, localises the event as again taking place “in the city”, also specifying that it was “in the morning”. Moses is, furthermore, portrayed as being “wary” or “apprehensive” (*khā’ifan*). In the Bible, the two persons fighting are both new characters. According to the Qur’an, Moses is called for help by the same person who asked for his intervention the previous day. Moses scolds him, but nevertheless decides to help him, only to be reminded of his act of killing the previous day. In the Qur’anic version, the person concerned even addresses Moses by name.⁸

As a result of his murder having become known, Moses flees. The Bible mentions as background Moses’ fear that his transgression had become general knowledge, and that his life was in danger as Pharaoh was seeking avenge. Although editorially coupled in Ex. 2:15, spreading of the news and Moses’ realisation of Pharaoh’s personal attention

⁸ The speaker is clearly the person Moses is about to strike. However, calling Moses by his name implies previous acquaintance. Thus argued, of the two contenders, it is only the person of Moses’ faction, to whose rescue Moses comes for the second time, who could have known who he was. This possibly led to a view expressed in classical commentaries that it was actually the person of Moses’ faction who expressed his concern over being killed by Moses. According to the 13th century interpretative compilation of al-Qurtubi (printed edition 1996), Ibn Jubair says: “Moses intended to attack the Qibti [Egyptian] but the Israelite thought that he wanted to attack him because Moses had [previously] been harsh with him in speech. He therefore said: Do you want to kill me as you had killed the man yesterday. So the Qibti [Egyptian] heard these words and spread them.”

to the case, are not so easily linked. In the Qur’anic version (28:20), Moses is warned by someone from “the farthest end of the city” about a conspiracy of authorities to get rid of him.

In Midian, at the well, both the Bible and Qur’an mention feminine persons watering their cattle. According to the Biblical account (Ex. 2:16-17), they had arrived first but were driven away by local shepherds. In the Qur’anic version (28:21), Moses finds them keeping their flock back until the shepherds had watered their animals. However, in both the Biblical and Qur’anic accounts, Moses interrupts the watering sequence and changes the order of precedence in favour of the women.

The father of the girls behaves similarly in the Bible and Qur’an. However, in the Qur’an the reporting of the women about Moses’ help does not feature. In surah 28:25 one of the girls shyly conveys the father’s invitation to Moses to their house, while the Bible jumps this episode. The Bible also does not mention any discussion between Moses and the father of the girls; Moses agrees to stay and receives Zipporah as wife. The Qur’anic version (surah 28:26-28) provides elaborate details about negotiations between the girls and the father, and the father and Moses. The outcome of the negotiations in the Qur’an reminds of the Biblical Laban Jacob story in Gen. 29:1-30.

Structural and lexical correspondence

Biblical and Qur’anic versions can be compared both on structural and lexical level in specific cases by juxtaposing the Sinai Arab 2 or 4 renderings of the Biblical text with parallel Qur’anic statements.

When attempting to intervene in the quarrel between two men after the first incident, Moses is addressed by one of the men whom he confronts. According to surah 28:19, the latter says

do you want to kill me, *'-t-r-y-d '-n t-q-t-l=n-y,*
as you killed the person yesterday, *k=m-' q-t-l-t n-f-š-' b='-l='-m-s.*

The Biblical version (Ex. 11:14), as rendered by the two 10ths century Arabic texts, uses comparable expressions.

Sinai Arab 2:

Is [it] with this remark of yours you are my killer.
'= b=q-w-l=k h-dh-' '-n-t q-'-t-l=y
as what you killed that Egyptian yesterday?
k=m-' q-t-l-t dh[!]-l-k '-l=m-š-r-y '-m-s

Sinai Arab 4:

Do you perhaps desire my killing?
'= l-'-l[!]=k t-r-y-d q-t-l=y
as what you killed that Egyptian yesterday
k=m-' q-t-l-t dh[!]-l-k '-l=m-š-r-y '-m-s

The above quotations each consist of both an interrogative and comparative clause.

As regards the question that precedes the comparative clause in the above clauses, there is a close relation between the statements in surah 28:19 ('=*t-r-y-d* '*n t-q-t-l=n-y*) and Sinai Arab 4 ('=*l*-'*l[l]=k t-r-y-d q-t-l=y*). Both comprise a question ('=*l* is it that?), either alone or complemented by an adverbial expression (*l*-'*l[l]=k*, you perhaps), followed by a finite verb (*t-r-y-d*, you wish) and a subordinate clause (to kill me), stated by means of a conjunction and verb with pronominal suffix ('=*n t-q-t-l=n-y*) in surah 28:19, and an infinitive with suffix (*q-t-l=y*) in Sinai Arab 4.

As regards the comparative clause, there is a close affinity between surah 28:19 and the Arabic Bible translations.

Identical in surah 28:19 as well as Sinai Arab 2 and 4 is the expression

k=m-'*q-t-l-t* ... '*m-s*
as what you killed ... yesterday

The three narrations differ as far as the naming of the deceased person is concerned. He is referred to as “the person” (*n-f-š-*') in surah 28, and “that Egyptian” (*dh-l-k* '*l=m-š-r-y*) in the Arabic translations. Furthermore, specification of date, '*m-s* (yesterday), is preceded in surah 28:19 by a preposition and article (*b*='=*l*=).

During the Midian episode, Moses assists the women at the well to attend to the need of their flock ahead of the other herdsmen. As a matter of fact, he himself fulfils the task of drawing the water as stated in the Biblical version (2:17 and 19) and implied in the Qur'anic narration. Both Qur'anic and Biblical accounts then conclude the mentioning of the help provided by Moses by stating respectively

And he [Moses] watered [their flock] for them (f. dual) (*f=s-q-y l=h-m-*' ; surah 28:24)

And he watered for them their (f.) small-cattle (*w=s-q-' l=h-n[n] gh-n-m=h-n[n]*; Ex. 2:17, A2)

And he watered their (m.) small-cattle (*w='s-q-y gh-n-m=h-m*; Ex. 2:17, A4)

The Qur'anic version is elliptical (“And he watered for them [dual]”), while the Arabic translations add to the verb the nominal phrase “their small-cattle”. “He watered” is expressed in Surah 28:24 (*s-q-y*) and A2 (*s-q-*') by form one, and by A4 by form four of the verb *s-q-y*. Surah 28:24 (*l=h-m-*' ; dual) and A2 (*l=h-n[n]*; f. plur.) supplement the verb by a prepositional phrase and a feminine pronominal suffix referring to two (Qur'an) and seven (A2) women, respectively. Both A2 (*=h-n[n]*) and A4 (*=h-m*) attach to the noun (“small cattle”) a pronominal suffix that differs grammatically (A2, f.; A4, m.) but agree in reference (seven women).

Surah 28:25 and the A2 version of Ex. 2:20 both use the verbal root *d-*'*w* in a related context but by means of different statements.

According to surah 28:25, one of the two girls whom he had helped to water their small cattle, conveys to Moses the message.

Indeed, my father is calling/inviting you ('=*n*-[*n*] '*b=y y-d-*'*w=k*)

The Biblical text reports a discussion between Reuel, father of the seven girls, and his daughters. He is informed about Moses' assistance in watering their small cattle, whereupon, according to Ex. 2:20 (A2), he instructs the ladies

Go and call/invite him! ('*dh-b-n f*'=*'d*-'*w-n=h*)

In surah 28:25 the verb *d*- '*w*' is used to express a statement containing an invitation; in A2 the verb (*d*- '*w*') is in the imperative as part of an instruction to the girls.

Theology

Ex. 2:11-22 contains no divine references. The Biblical material, even as edited, gives a secular impression. A similar tendency manifests itself in the preceding infancy tradition (Ex. 2:1-10). Surah 28:14-28, however, abounds with theological references.

After referring to the maturing of Moses (28:14), the Qur'an states, "We [i.e., Allah] gave him ('*attain-hu*) judgement and knowledge (*ḥukman wa- 'ilman*). And thus, we reward the doers of good (*muḥsinīna*)." Moses is thus depicted as having been gifted with specific qualities following the demonstration of specific behaviour.

Furthermore, in aftermath of Moses being instrumental in killing the person of the hostile faction, he prays (28:16), "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me." Then follows the comment, "and He forgave him"; and the theological characterisation of Allah, "Indeed He is the forgiving, the Merciful." Moses responds (28:17) by thanking Allah and promising that he "would never be an assistant to the criminals (*mujrimīna*)".

Following being informed of a conspiracy against him, Moses asks for divine intervention (28:21), "My Lord save me from the wrongdoing people (*zālimīna*)."

Leaving Egypt and on his way towards Midian, Moses expresses the wish (28:22), "May it be that my Lord will guide me (*sawā'a 'l-sabīli*)," which literally means "soundness of road", that is, on the right path. Moses' arrival at the well and the outcome are therefore not accidental as may be derived from the Biblical version (Ex. 2:15) but predestined by Allah.

In the transaction between the father of the two girls and Moses several religious expressions occur. The father assures Moses, "You will find me, if Allah wills (literally, "and [by] Allah") among the righteous (*ṣāliḥīna*)." After accepting the terms of agreement stipulated by the father (both compulsory and voluntary), Moses calls Allah as witness, "And Allah, over what we say, is witness (*wakīl*)."

Several ethical expressions are used where reference is made to the divine. Moses and the father of the two girls are respectively categorised as being among the *muḥsinīna* (doers of good) and *ṣāliḥīna* (righteous). Those conspiring against him are typified by Moses as *zālimīna* (wrongdoing people), and he promises never to be associated with the *mujrimīna* (criminals).

Moses and Muhammad

Moses is depicted as a prophet in the Qur'an and is thus classified in the same category as Muhammad. As ultimate prophet of Islam, Muhammad is even compared to Moses in the latter part of surah 28, lacking the experiences and ability to produce wonders; but, like Moses (Q. 28:43) receiving scripture (Q. 28:49) as guidance for the people.

Finally, a striking comparison between Muhammad and Moses is that the former, like Moses, had to leave his initial abode under life threatening circumstances. Moses feared the revenge of Pharaoh following the killing of his people; Muhammad was forced to depart from Mecca to find a living in Medina because of local resistance to his preaching.⁹ The latter event, known in Muslim tradition as *hijrah*, is commemorated as the commencement of Islam as an independent religious movement; Moses' departure marks the beginning of his later career as leader of an autonomous group of people, called the Israelites. Stated differently: In fleeing from Egypt, Moses becomes an exile but is eventually welcomed in the home of a Midian household. Muhammad needs to depart from Mecca, in fact becomes an exile, but finds a home in Medina.

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⁹ In Muslim tradition, Muhammad's leaving of Mecca is preferably referred to as a departure rather than fleeing. A similar tendency is found in LXX's rendering of Ex. 2:15. In MT, *wayyibraḥ mōseh*, (and Moses fled) is translated in the Greek tradition as "Moses retired (*anekhōrēsen*) [from the presence of Pharaoh]" (Wevers 1990:19).

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