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Chapter 7

THE PORTRAYAL OF PHYSICAL RESURRECTION IN QUR'AN 2:260

Continuing from the last chapter, this one looks at the second verse of the Qur'anic passage (i.e. Qur'an 2:260). Closely analysing Qur'an 2:259 with its biblical, extrabiblical and rabbinic intertextualities showed that it is highly likely to be a metaphor for the rebuilding of the Israelite nation. It was also shown that the regeneration of the Israelite nation after the exile is part of a prophetic theme about a covenant between God and the Israelites, the breaking of the covenant, and the resurrection (metaphorically speaking) of this covenant, while still keeping open the possibility for a destroyed nation to be rebuilt – physically resurrected.

Qur'an 2:260 will also be argued to have a biblical relationship, in particular to the covenant that God makes with Abraham, according to Genesis. Qur'an 2:260 narrates Abraham asking God to show him how the dead are resurrected. Then, God asks him to bring four birds, put a piece of them in each hill, and call for them; and they come to Abraham. The act the Qur'an depicts that Abraham was supposed to do to prove to him the resurrection of the dead has a relationship with Genesis 15. Abraham, in Genesis 15, appears to complain that he has no children, but God promises him that he will, and makes a covenant with him.¹ This will be a familiar theme, as in Qur'an 2:259, resurrection maybe understood as having children, just as the donkey having generations of offspring in Ḥoni the Circle-Drawer's narrative in the Talmud.²

Accordingly, the interpretation of Qur'an 2:260 continues to be closely associated with Qur'an 2:259, in which the topic of resurrection is metaphorical though still physical, but not in the sense of dead bones leaving their graves. In Qur'an 2:259, resurrection is the regeneration of the Israelites coming back from exile; in this next verse, it is a promise for Abraham to have children, which is perhaps why the narrative suggests God allowing the Israelite nation to be regenerated after being exiled. Through this promise God has proven to Abraham the power to resurrect, the resurrection of Abraham through his generations of children. Additionally, biblical literature, as will be seen, directly connects the covenant with Abraham, in Genesis 15, with the Israelite exile.

Abraham and the birds

Qur'an 2:260 recounts the story of Abraham asking about resurrection. The story has similarities to and differences from Genesis 15.³ In Genesis 15, Abraham complains that he is childless, but God promises Abraham two things: children and land.

In the Qur'anic account, Abraham wants to know how God gives life to the dead; in Gen. 15:8, Abraham asks to know about the land he will possess. In the Qur'an, God asks Abraham if he has not believed, and he responds affirmatively that he has; Gen. 15:6 by comparison has Abraham believing God's promise that he will have a son. The centrality of Abraham's belief is paralleled in both narratives. Even though Abraham is said to have believed, he still asked for some sort of sign.

The early church emphasized the role of Abraham's faith in this passage as a way to counter the Jewish emphasis on the law commandments in the rabbinic writings, especially with Abraham's assumed lack of faith in Gen. 15:8.⁴ Therefore, as Qur'an 2:259 is related to Qur'an 3:93–97, which also emphasizes Abraham's faith, Qur'an 2:260 might respond to rabbinic writings by emphasizing faith over the law, especially in light of the argued understanding of *ṭa'ām* in Qur'an 3:93. Later rabbis emphasized Abraham's actions and obedience to commandments over his faith, as rabbinic scholar Norman Cohen states:

Therefore, even if early traditions did imply that Abraham's righteousness was expressed through his faith alone, it seems that a bit later on the rabbis went out of their way to emphasize that his faith was expressed through action, be it his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac or, by implication, his fulfilment of the commandment of circumcision. It is in this light that Abraham is brought as the first illustration of R. Nehemiah's principle – he is rewarded because of his faithful action, i.e. his *'amanah*.⁵

While later rabbis tried to convey that the meaning of *'amanah* as faithful action and not faith alone,⁶ the Qur'anic narrative in Qur'an 2:259–260 and its conjunction with Qur'an 3:93–97, appear to interpret it differently. The commandments came later (i.e. Qur'an 3:93), but faith came first (i.e. Qur'an 2:260), and it was due to this faith alone that Abraham was counted among the righteous (i.e. Qur'an 3:95). The Qur'anic narrative, however, appears to emphasize faith (*īmān*) coming before action, as it also appears in Gen. 15:6, echoing the same concept that Paul stresses in Romans 4,⁷ and the early Church Fathers who have argued against the rabbis.⁸

Qur'an 3:93–97 and Qur'an 2:259 allude to one another; by extension, Qur'an 3:93–97 also discusses Abraham's faith, as in Qur'an 2:260. Qur'an 3:93 discusses the Torah, arguing that the commandments came later, and within this context, Qur'an 3:64–68 emphasize that Abraham was righteous not because of commandments but because of faith. In this narrative, it appears that the Qur'an is echoing Romans 4, especially when discussing the promise of the restoration of the nation of Israel and the Temple in Qur'an 2:259 and Qur'an 3:93–97,

¹³For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations') – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead [*tou zōopoiontos tous nekrous*] and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations,' according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness [*nekrōsin/deadness*] of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore it [his faith] 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.' ²³Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him,' were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Rom. 4:13–25

Evidently, Romans 4 attempts to interpret Genesis 15.⁹ Thomas Tobin has argued that Romans 4 fervently asserts the supremacy of the faith of Abraham over the divine commandments that came only through the Torah (Mosaic Law):¹⁰

First, righteousness was reckoned to Abraham because of his faith and not because of his observance of the law (Rom 4:1–8); second, righteousness was reckoned to Abraham before Abraham's circumcision (4:9–12); and third, God's promise to Abraham and his 'seed' came through faith, not through the Mosaic Law (4:13–17a). All three points are based on Paul's interpretation of Gen 15:6 and closely related texts. Paul appealed to Abraham in order to show that Abraham was meant to be the father not only of the circumcised but also of the uncircumcised (Rom 4:11–12, 16–17).¹¹

The Qur'an very strongly parallels much of the arguments that Romans 4 typically makes, reminding Jews and Christians (the People of the Book) to return and follow the faith of Abraham. Whereas Qur'an 3:93–95 states that divine commandments came through the Torah and not before it, reminding its audience to follow the faith of Abraham, Rom. 4:16 emphasizes that whoever shares the faith of Abraham, even nonadherents of the law, is part of the promise and becomes a

spiritual seed of Abraham.¹² With the intertextuality between Romans 4 and both Qur'an 2:259–260 and Qur'an 3:93–95, these passages are strongly contextualized with Genesis 15.

There also seems to be another relationship between Qur'an 2:260 and Rom. 4:17, in which both put Abraham's context of faith with God's power to resurrect the dead. The Qur'anic phraseology echoes that of Rom. 4:17: neither text uses the term for 'resurrection'. Qur'an 2:260 uses the phrase 'show me how you give life to the dead', which parallels Rom. 4:17, 'who gives life to the dead'. The phrase 'and calls into existence the things that do not exist' in Romans has some resemblance with Abraham calling the birds who come forth to him in Qur'an 2:260. The main difference between the Qur'anic narrative and Romans 4 is that though Romans 4 is referring to Genesis 15, it does not discuss the ritual – Qur'an 2:260 does.

Nonetheless, while Genesis 15 does not associate resurrection with Abraham's faith, Rom. 4:17 overtly suggests that the faith of Abraham in Genesis 15 also implicitly includes the belief in resurrection. Nicholas T. Wright states:

In 4.17 Paul describes Abraham's God in two ways, corresponding exactly to this parallel. Abraham, he says, believed in the God who

- (a) raises the dead and
- (b) calls the non-existent things into existence.

I suggest that Paul, in reading Gen. 15, sees these two reflected in Abraham's request and God's promise. Abraham asked God about an actual physical offspring; this is answered by God 'raising the dead', giving life to his and Sarah's 'dead' bodies by giving them a son of their own.¹³

Wright makes a strong case of how Paul's Epistle to the Romans interprets Genesis 15 in view of resurrection, which would resonate with Qur'an 2:260. Even while Genesis 15 is not explicit on death, let alone resurrection, Benjamin Schliesser, in *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4*, emphasizes the metaphorical use of "death" in Romans 4 in light of Genesis 15:

God's judgement on Abraham's faith has a creative, qualitative-authoritative character already in Gen 15:6 ... For Paul now God's judgment encounters Abraham in a state of a fundamental antithesis to God, of ungodliness ([Rom.] 4:5) and nothingness, symbolized through the notion of 'death' (4:17).¹⁴

Additionally, preceding Romans 4, Rom. 3:30 explicitly states that *God is one* when it speaks of circumcision, which is further deliberated in Rom. 4:9–12. It has been suggested that this appears to be an invocation of the *Shema* ' (oneness of God) (i.e. Deut. 6:4).¹⁵ Mark Nanos suggests that the basis of the argument in Romans 3–4 is the supremacy of the *Shema* ' over the law, which Abraham believed even before the circumcision,¹⁶ and that the *Shema* ' is the overarching theme and argument throughout the Epistle to the Romans.¹⁷ The Qur'an also appears to

have invoked the *Shema* ' in the throne verse just before Qur'an 2:259–260, and just prior it discusses the covenant, *al-'urwah al-wuthqā*, in Qur'an 2:256, when stating:

God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting [Resurrector] [*al-ḥayy al-qayyūm*]. Neither slumber [*sinah*] overtakes Him nor sleep. Unto Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth. Who is there who may intercede with Him except by His Leave? He knows that which is before them and that which is behind them. And they encompass nothing of His Knowledge, except what He wills. His Seat [throne] embraces the heavens and the earth. Protecting them tires Him not, and He is the Exalted, the Magnificent.
Qur'an 2:255

This further acknowledges how Qur'an 2:260 might be engaging with Romans 4 or a tradition based on it, just as an earlier passage invokes the *Shema* ' (oneness of God), similar to Rom. 3:30. The similarity of the opening of Qur'an 2:255 and Qur'an 112:1 is also evident, in which the latter has been recognized by some scholars as an indication for the *Shema* '. While most scholars emphasized the use of *aḥad* in Qur'an 112:1,¹⁸ it must be noted that this verse also defines God as *huwa* (the third person singular masculine pronoun), which resembles the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* of the *Shema* ' as well, and is sometimes used in this form in theophoric names.¹⁹ In this case, *huwa* is also defined as God in Qur'an 2:255. After all, the Peshitta translates the *Shema* ' in Deuteronomy 6:4 as 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord One is He [*hu*].' By introducing God as the Living (*al-ḥayy*) and Self-Subsisting or Resurrector (*al-qayyūm*), Qur'an 2:255 is put within the context of resurrection; this is itself a phrase frequently found in Jewish liturgy and, perhaps most importantly, in the daily *Shema* ' blessing (i.e. *ēl ḥay w-qayām*), which possibly further relates the Throne verse with the *Shema* '.

One of the main themes of the Epistle to the Romans is death and life. Sometimes it speaks of the death and resurrection of Christ, and at other times speaks of it in a metaphorical sense, when contrasting people's death through sin (e.g. Romans 5). Rom. 5:12 elaborates that death came through sin, which is due to the transgression of Adam (i.e. Rom. 5:14). While death came through Adam, life came through Christ (i.e. Rom. 5:17–21). The righteous act of Christ and the faith in Christ in Romans 5 appears to be paralleling Romans 4 on the righteousness and faith of Abraham.²⁰ The epistle's metaphors are prominent in Rom. 6:1–14, which discusses being dead to sin, but alive to God: 'No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness' (Rom. 6:13). However metaphorical this appears, biblical scholar Menahem Kister suggests that Rom. 5:12–21 appears to parallel some rabbinic texts, specifically the *Sifra*,²¹ which appears not to understand this context as spiritual death.²² Though some scholars have understood death in this context as spiritual death, and while both Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism have concepts of spiritual death as well,²³ Kister would rather not read spiritual death into Rom.

5:12–21.²⁴ It is very apparent in the whole context of Romans 5–8 that the notion of death is in tension with various concepts, and not any single concept,²⁵ as New Testament scholar C. Clifton Black II states:

Thus in the first fourteen verses of Romans 6 we may detect no fewer than seven related though subtly different conceptions of death: as a physiological event, as associated with sin, as liberation, as a settlement of debt or an atoning sacrifice (according to some exegeses of 6:7), as an occasion for tempered hope, as the impetus for righteous living, and as a tyrannical power.²⁶

The metaphorical understanding of death in the Epistle to the Romans is emphasized by the scholar of Christian history Emma Wasserman, in *The Death of the Soul in Romans* 7, where she writes, 'The moral discourse about soul-death is particularly helpful for making sense of Paul's statements to the effect that the believer must "die" to sin, "live" to God, and "put to death" the sinful body.'²⁷ Wasserman assumes that the Epistle to the Romans was influenced by Hellenistic moral psychology.²⁸ If the Epistle to the Romans or an exegetical text or oral tradition that uses it was the conduit that passed to Qur'an 2:260, then it might not be surprising if the very understanding of a dual natured soul-body was passed along, as well.

Romans 8, for example, is clear that death and resurrection are to be understood in a metaphorical way, where one is spiritually dead in sin and spiritually alive in Christ.²⁹ Black finds the notion of life and death under great tension in Romans 5–8, between physical and spiritual senses.

¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Rom. 8:10–11

The tension in the various meanings of death intended in the Epistle to the Romans has a long history within Christianity. Origen, for example, understands it both figuratively and literally, in which he relates it with the saying in Col. 3:5, 'Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly.'³⁰ Origen considers the dead in the Epistle to the Romans to be the sinners.³¹ Pelagius (d. 418), who after his death was deemed a heretic by the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431 ce),³² interprets 'the dead' in 'life to the dead' in Rom. 4:17 as those who have no children. Giving 'life to the dead [those without children],' in this passage, Pelagius interprets as allowing them to bear children.³³ This meaning may carry some weight for understanding Abraham's situation in seeking to have children in Genesis 15.

Within Muḥammad's own time, his contemporary John Climacus (d. 649 ce), a Christian monk at the Mount Sinai monastery, wrote *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. His work discusses the monastic and ascetic framework on the art of dying; that is to gift one's mind, soul and body by dying for Christ, to live in Christ.³⁴ He

extensively uses the Epistle to the Romans in his writing when discussing the issue of death.³⁵ In scholar of early Christianity Jonathan Zecher's reading,

Climacus, building on traditional ascetic ideas, makes of death a symbolic framework within which to cultivate and communicate the contours of Christian ascetic identity – like the wall of the monastery, it divides by its equivocality those within [the blessed dead] from those without [those perishing]. The *Ladder* highlights the profound importance of understanding practices such as the 'memory of death' and metaphorical deployment of 'death' for interpreting the ideals and tools of Christian asceticism.³⁶

Understanding death and life metaphorically in the Epistle to the Romans was customary within the church at the time of Muḥammad. The daily dying exercise, as argued by John Climacus targeting monks at Christian monasteries at the time, resembles the Muslim alleged prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) propagated mostly by Sufi scholars that states, 'Die before you die.' If Qur'an 2:255–260 and Qur'an 3:93–103 appear to be engaging with the Epistle to the Romans or a tradition based on it, it would not be unusual for the Qur'an to take life and death from a metaphorical perspective, similar to how some Christian literature and traditions at the time have viewed the text.

As has been argued so far, Qur'an 2:258–260 connects the concept of death and resurrection directly to the exile of the Israelites and the subsequent return from exile. The Qur'an appears to understand it almost exclusively in a metaphorical sense, which makes Qur'an 2:258 clearer in that the topic is not truly about physical death and resurrection of literal bodies from graves. Qur'an 2:258 shows that Abraham tells a person (a supposed king) that God has the power to bring forth death and life, and the person (the supposed king) says that he, too, has such a power. Obviously, it is inconceivable to think that the Qur'an is arguing that the man has the power to resurrect a dead physical body out of its grave. However, from a metaphorical perspective in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem, the exile and the return of the Israelites, and the rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem, a person can have such power. After all, according to biblical tradition, King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and exiled the Israelites to Babylon but eventually King Cyrus decreed that the Israelites return and rebuild Jerusalem. Within the context of Qur'an 2:258–260, such an understanding would fit well.

Traditional Muslim exegetes, such as al-Ṭabarī, interpret Qur'an 2:258 as a person (sometimes identified as King Nimrod) arguing with Abraham in that he, also, has the power to bring forth life and death, when Abraham tells him that his God can bring forth life and death.³⁷ The exegetes claim that the meaning behind it is that if a person intends to kill someone and does not, it is as if he gave them life.³⁸ However, when taken into the context of the Babylonian exile with the destruction of Jerusalem and its rebuilding in Qur'an 2:259, it would make more sense to understand death and life in such a background, instead.

While Romans 4 associates Genesis 15 with resurrection, the contextual sense of Genesis 15 does not. Though Genesis 15 elaborates on the ritual performed by

Abraham, Romans 4 does not. Qur'an 2:260 contains both resurrection and the ritual, as well as being within the context of the *Shema* ' (oneness of God) in Qur'an 2:255, which is evident in Romans 3, but not in the Genesis account. Therefore, it is difficult to discern a subtext for this Qur'anic verse. The Qur'an may be engaging with either, both, or neither. In other words, it might be that the Qur'an understands that Romans 4 engages with Genesis 15 and so it engages and interprets both texts simultaneously. Otherwise, there could be a different text, most likely a Christian text or oral tradition, which is exegetical of Romans 4 and discusses its close relationship with Genesis 15, and this text or oral tradition would be the subtext of the Qur'an.

In the Qur'an, God asks Abraham to bring four birds and to divide them between different hills. In Gen. 15:9–10, God asks Abraham to get a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. He cut them in half, except for the birds. Although the Qur'anic account seems to provide the reason why Abraham was to divide the birds between different hills – to show how they will come alive – Genesis 15 gives no reason why those animals were required or why such a ritual was to be performed. The term used for cutting is from the Hebrew root *b-t-r*, and is used for a covenant.³⁹ The only other part of the Hebrew Bible that uses this term for the cut parts of an animal in a similar, covenant-making context is Jer. 34:18–22.

Some scholars have argued that to cut up animals was part of the ancient Near Eastern culture of covenant-making. It symbolizes the curse that would befall any who broke a covenant: they would also be cut in a way similar to the portrayal in Jer. 34:18–22.⁴⁰ Yet there is no consensus among scholars that links Genesis 15 with Jeremiah 34, because in Genesis, God is a party to the agreement, and it would be inconceivable to impose a self-curse in the case of God not upholding the terms of the agreement.⁴¹ Nonetheless, whether it is meant as a curse or simply the ratification of a treaty is highly debatable.⁴²

Some scholars prefer to divide the passage into two, Gen. 15:1–6 and 15:7–21, which becomes evident due to the mismatch in the day's chronology. Even early Jewish and Christian exegetes⁴³ tried to explain why it is night in Gen. 15:5 and yet the sun sets in Gen. 15:12.⁴⁴ Some have interpreted the former part of the narrative as a promise for a son, while the latter narrative as a promise for land.⁴⁵

Abraham's ritual in Genesis Rabbah

Abraham's ritual in Genesis 15 captured the attention of various rabbis who attempted to explain its symbolism in *Genesis Rabbah*.⁴⁶ Redacted sometime around the fifth century,⁴⁷ *Genesis Rabbah* cites definitions of certain terms as found in Arabia, suggesting its traditions were in close proximity and some of the rabbis were living there.⁴⁸ In the seventh-century milieu of the Qur'an, it is therefore likely that either traditions stemming from *Genesis Rabbah* or the proto-traditions that gave birth to it might have been accessible to the surrounding Jewish communities and perhaps garnered some popularity, as midrashic scholar Burton Visotzky suggests.⁴⁹

Given *Genesis Rabbah's* wide influence, the way the rabbis have interpreted Genesis 15 might provide us with some insights for why the Qur'an contextualizes the ritual as resurrection from death and how it relates to the Israelite exile, as in Qur'an 2:259. From *Genesis Rabbah*, it is clear that some rabbis understood how this ritual foreshadows later Temple rituals.⁵⁰

The rabbis explain that God shows Abraham three kinds⁵¹ of heifers, three kinds of goats, and three kinds of rams.⁵² The three heifers are (1) the one sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, (2) the heifer brought on for unwittingly transgressing any of the precepts (i.e. Lev. 4:13–21), and (3) the heifer whose neck was broken (i.e. Deut. 21:1–9).⁵³ The three goats are (1) the one sacrificed on festivals, (2) the one sacrificed at New Moon, and (3) the goat brought by an individual as a sin offering for an unintentional sin (i.e. Lev. 4:27–31).⁵⁴ The three rams are (1) the guilt-offering of certain obligations (i.e. Lev. 5:15, 14:24, 19:21; Num. 6:12), (2) the guilt-offering of doubt,⁵⁵ and (3) the lamb brought by an individual (i.e. Lev. 4:32).⁵⁶ The turtledove and the young pigeon are also considered sacrificial but are not divided, because a fowl burnt offering⁵⁷ is divided but a fowl sin offering is not.⁵⁸ Thus, some rabbis conclude in *Genesis Rabbah* that God shows Abraham all the atoning sacrifices.⁵⁹

Another interpretation offered for the symbolism is that the three heifers allude to Babylonia, which produced three kings, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, and Belshazzar.⁶⁰ The three she-goats allude to Media, which produced three kings, as well, Cyrus, Darius, and Ahasuerus.⁶¹ The three rams allude to Greece, which conquered the west, north, and the south except the east.⁶² Dan. 8:4 symbolizes a ram charging through these three directions.⁶³ However, Dan. 8:20–21 explains that the ram with two horns symbolizes the kings of Media and Persia, while the he-goat is the king of Greece.⁶⁴ Why some rabbis in *Genesis Rabbah* reverse the symbolism remains unknown. The turtledove and young pigeon refer to Edom, according to this second interpretation.⁶⁵ The animals being divided and placed on top of one another shows how the kingdoms will be divided and go against the other, while the birds, symbolizing Israel, are not divided.⁶⁶ This interpretation may be the reason why the Qur'anic account implies that the birds were divided: if they symbolize Israel, the Qur'an might consider the nation divided, especially since it is within the context of the exile. Although divided, they did come back together again – and yet the Qur'an is not very explicit as to whether the birds were divided in the sense of being cut. It suggests only that Abraham was to take four birds, bind them together, and leave a part on each hill. These instructions would imply that their bodies are cut, but it leaves open the possibility that each bird was left on a different hill. The Qur'an is even silent as to how many hills there are: two, four, or perhaps even more. If the birds symbolize the nation of Israel, the Qur'an might even be alluding to the four cardinal directions to which the Israelites are scattered in the Diaspora whom God is capable of bringing together.

If one takes Qur'an 2:259–260 as referring to the Jewish Diaspora, then that might also be the reason why there are differences between those verses and their assumed subtexts. Qur'an 2:259 narrates the story of a man who dies for a hundred years, instead of only sixty-six or seventy years, as Abimelech or Honi the Circle-Drawer, respectively, in the extrabiblical and rabbinic traditions. The hundred

years might suggest that the man is to be identified with Abraham himself, who had Isaac when he was that age (i.e. Gen. 17:17). After all, the verse immediately preceding it (i.e. Qur'an 2:258) and following it (i.e. Qur'an 2:258) explicitly name Abraham. The rabbis in the Babylonian Talmud also associate the hundred-year-old Abraham with birds:

'And it came to pass after these words that God tested Abraham' (Gen. 22:1) What is the meaning of 'after'? Said R. Yohanan in the name of R. Yosé b. Zimra, 'It was after the words of Satan. For it is written "And the child grew and was weaned and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned" (Gen. 21:8). Said Satan to the Holy One, blessed be He, "Lord of the world, as to this old man, you have shown him grace by giving him the fruit of the womb at *one hundred years*."⁶⁷ Now of the entire meal that he has made, he did not have a *single pigeon* or a *single dove* to offer before you."⁶⁸ He said to him, "Has he done anything at all except to honor his son? [But] if I were to say to him, 'Sacrifice your son before me,' he would sacrifice him immediately." Forthwith: "And God tested Abraham" (Gen. 22:1).⁶⁹

Moreover, if Qur'an 2:260 is aware of Romans 4 or some tradition based on it, it is relevant that Rom. 4:19 explicitly mentions Abraham's age when he had Isaac, 'He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a *hundred years old*),⁷⁰ or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb' (Rom. 4:19). Therefore, Abraham is a likely candidate for the man in Qur'an 2:259. Additionally, the Qur'an's discussion in 2:260 of four birds instead of just two, as in Genesis 15, perhaps does not symbolize the two divided nations of Israel but the Jewish Diaspora scattered to the four corners of the earth.

Covenant-making language is also not absent in Qur'an 2:260. Not only is it mentioned within the context of Qur'an 2:256, as cited earlier, but also Qur'an 2:260 uses the phrase *fa-ṣurhunn ilayk* (bind them to you). The root ṣ-r-r as binding resonates with covenant-making, giving further support to the possibility that it alludes to Genesis 15. Moreover, the Qur'anic language where Abraham needs to bind them together to him and put a piece on each hill or mountain also resonates with the binding of Isaac (*Akedah*) on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. The symbolism the Qur'an might be making is how the Israelites are scattered to the four corners of the earth. This would also reverberate with the weekly Torah portion reading for Genesis 15, part of *Parashat Lekh-Lekha* (i.e. Gen. 12:1–17:27), in which the addendum reading (Haftarah) is from Isa. 40:27–41:16, where the chosen offspring of Abraham, Israel, who God calls from the farthest corners of the earth will not be cast off (i.e. Isa. 41:8–9).

Furthermore, the binding of Isaac (*Akedah*) in Genesis 22 is part of the weekly Torah portion reading of *Parashat Vayera* (i.e. Gen. 18:1–22:24), which has an addendum Haftarah of 2 Kgs. 4:1–4:37 that actually narrates how Elisha prophesizes that a childless Shunammite woman will have a son, even though she initially does not believe him, which would resonate with Abraham's promise for a

son as well as with Sarah who was barren. However, the Shunammite's son later dies only to be raised up again by Elisha. The binding of Isaac is also about a boy about to be sacrificed only to be saved from death. Thus, the parallelism between the Parashat and the Haftarah are evident, and would possibly bring Qur'an 2:260 in the context of resurrection. This might even suggest that the Qur'an is in conversation with a Jewish community that has a liturgical tradition which includes the weekly Torah portion reading.

A significant part of *Genesis Rabbah*'s interpretation by the rabbis that links Genesis 15 to the Qur'an is the birds of prey that attempt to eat the carcasses. According to R. 'Azariah, when Abraham drove away the birds of prey which came upon the carcasses, God was hinting to him that when his children become like carcasses without sinews or bones, his virtue will sustain them.⁷¹ The significance of this is that the Qur'anic account has an allusion to some form of resurrection – namely that, even if Abraham's children were corpses, Abraham's merits could still save them, and it is done through their repentance, as symbolized by the offerings discussed earlier.

Nonetheless, the kind of resurrection that *Genesis Rabbah* seems to be writing about is not one that involves bones coming out of their graves. Rather, it is metaphorical for how, though the nations may prey on the sinful Israelites, symbolized as corpses, if the Israelites repent and return to God, God will save them through Abraham, as in resurrecting them. This interpretation by the rabbis is further supported by the following verses in Genesis, in which God tells Abraham that his children will become servants in a stranger's land and that God will bring judgement on the nation whom they served – 'afterward' they will come out with a great possession (i.e. Gen. 15:14).

Genesis 15:17 continues expressing that as the sun set and it became very dark, a smoking furnace and a flaming torch passed through the sacrificial pieces. Speaking in the authority of R. Yoḥanan, Simeon b. Abba interprets this to mean that God shows Abraham hell (*Gehenna*) and the foreign kingdoms which will subdue the Israelites, and shows him the Revelation and the Temple with the promise that if his children dwell with the latter two, they will be saved from the former two.⁷² However, if they forgo those, the former two will punish them.⁷³ Several rabbis in *Genesis Rabbah* continue to portray God as giving Abraham a choice of whether he would rather his children fall into hell (*Gehenna*) or be conquered by foreign kingdoms.⁷⁴ Among the rabbis, opinions differed as to what Abraham chose:⁷⁵ some say that Abraham chose foreign kingdoms, while others opine that he chose *Gehenna* (hell), but that God chose foreign kingdoms.⁷⁶ Others even suggest that Abraham chose that his children would be subdued by foreign kingdoms instead of falling into *Gehenna* (hell), and God approved his choice.⁷⁷ Recall the description in the previous chapter of the fiery furnace motif in the different parts of the Hebrew Bible symbolizing the Israelites conquered by foreign kingdoms. Dennis Johnson asserts that the image of trial by fire in the Hebrew Bible starts with Abraham's vision of the torch-furnace in Genesis 15.⁷⁸

After all, Deuteronomy 30 states that if the Israelites repent and keep God's commandments, they will be brought together again after they have been scattered.

It explains (instructs) that God has given them both life and death; if they keep the commandments, they will be granted life. Hence, even if they metaphorically die and their enemies take over, through repentance they may be given life again.

According to R. Joshua, the smoking furnace and the flaming torch passing through these pieces (*gēzārīm*) also allude to the parting of the Red Sea, a phenomenon for which Ps. 136:13 uses the term *gōzēr*.⁷⁹ *Genesis Rabbah* continues by showing the disagreement of the rabbis over the interpretation of God's covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15:18. Some rabbis say that God revealed this world to Abraham but not the next.⁸⁰ In other words, God informed Abraham what would happen to the Israelites in this world but not in the next; others opine that God revealed to Abraham both this world and the next.⁸¹ On interpreting *ba-yôm ha-hû* (in that day) in Gen. 15:18, the rabbis disagreed on whether God revealed to Abraham the future *until* that day (i.e. until the Exodus) or *from* that day (i.e. from the Exodus until the Messiah's coming).⁸² Either way, the focus of the conclusion is the redemption given to the Israelites.⁸³

After God promises Abraham in Genesis 15 that he will bear children, Sarah tells him, 'You see that the lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children [*'ibbāne*] by her' (Gen. 16:2). The term *'ibbāne* used in this passage also means to be built up.⁸⁴ On this passage, the following is written in *Genesis Rabbah*:

It may be that I shall be builded up through her. It was taught: He who has no child is as though he were dead and demolished. As though dead: And she said unto Jacob: Give me children, or else I am dead [Gen. 30:1]. As though demolished: It may be that I shall be builded up through her, and only that which is demolished must be builded up.⁸⁵

When taking Qur'an 2:259–260 together and in context, the first verse speaks of a dead (demolished) city that is revived (built up), and the second verse speaks of a dead man (Abraham) because he has no children given life; thus, the Qur'anic passage discusses the promise of land and children. Rom. 4:17 implies that Genesis 15 has something to do with resurrection and Rom. 4:19 is explicit in interpreting that Abraham's body is as good as dead due to Sarah's womb being dead, which is the term used to symbolize her barrenness.⁸⁶ In both instances, the analogy is that they are both demolished and in need of building up.

Additionally, as in Gen. 30:1, where a person without children is described as dead, in this Qur'anic passage Abraham could be entreating to be shown how God will make the dead alive. The response from God is to ask whether Abraham has not yet believed. It appears that God makes a promise to Abraham, but Abraham wants some sort of sign. When intertextualized with the Genesis narrative, Abraham has no children, which is equated with being dead, but God promises him children: he is not dead but alive. Therefore, Abraham asks God for a sign, which is when God asks Abraham to perform the ritual. Thus, once the Qur'anic passage is considered with its possible biblical subtext, it can be seen that the resurrection of the dead implied in the Qur'anic passage is a metaphor for a

person with no children having children and not about literal dead bones coming out of their graves. This is emphasized even further in the Talmud:

'You shall indeed die?' *The sense of 'death' here is 'poverty,'* for a master has said, 'Four classifications of persons are equivalent to corpses, and these are they: the poor man, the blind man, the person afflicted with the skin disease [of Lev. 13], and the person who has no children. The poor man, as it is written: 'for all the men are dead who sought your life' (Ex. 4:19). *Now who were they? This refers to Dathan and Abiram, and they were certainly not then dead,* they had only lost all their money. The blind man, as it is written: 'He has made me dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead' (Lam. 3:6). The person afflicted with the skin disease, as it is written: 'Let her, I pray you, not be as one who is dead' (Num. 12:12). And the person who has no children, as it is written: 'Give me children or else I die' (Gen. 30:1).⁸⁷

The deep sleep (*tardēmā*) that Abraham undergoes suggests further intertextuality (i.e. Gen. 15:12). Although this deep sleep is not explicitly attested in the Qur'anic account, it is associated with the Companions of the Cave, which has some phraseology closely related to Qur'an 2:259. Moreover, this kind of deep sleep is what both Abimelech and Hōni the Circle-Drawer undergo for sixty-six and seventy years respectively, as discussed in the previous chapter, further fitting this passage with the whole context.

Israelite exile and restoration in the Qur'an

Undoubtedly, by now, the reader will wonder why the Qur'an is interested in engaging with and alluding to materials on the Israelite exile and their return. The answer to this puzzling question might be simpler than it initially seems, which is presented in a list of fourteen points of intertextuality.

First be reminded that Qur'an 2:259–260 is discussing resurrection. In relation to Jewish understandings of the return of the exiles or the ingathering of the Israelites, the Qur'an's notion would correspond to the End of Days or, in other words, the Messianic Age. Numerous rabbinic traditions connect the exilic imagery of the Israelites and their ingathering or return with the End of Days; perhaps one of the most prominent is the daily Jewish prayer ('Amidah).⁸⁸ It would seem very natural for the Qur'an's Jewish audience to be familiar with the 'Amidah and its imagery, especially since the same Qur'anic chapter includes a discourse on the Jewish direction of prayer (*Qiblah* passage), which would have the 'Amidah in mind, as it is the prayer that the Jews are required to face Jerusalem. The 'Amidah prayer frequently praises God and God's power to raise the dead (e.g. the second benediction), and frequently petitions for God's forgiveness, mercy, and redemption.⁸⁹ This Qur'anic chapter even ends by glorifying the power of God, reinstating faith, and petitioning God with a prayer for forgiveness, mercy and victory (or redemption) (i.e. Qur'an 2:284–286).

Second, if Qur'an 2:260 uses four birds to symbolize the Israelites scattered to the four corners of the earth and then Abraham calling them to bring them together, then this would also parallel the 'Amidah's tenth benediction:

Sound a great Shofar [rams horn of the Messiah], for our freedom, and raise a flag to gather our exiles, and assemble us together quickly from the *four corners* of the earth to our land [of Israel]. Blessed are You, that assembles the displaced of His people, Israel.

The theme of ingathering and redemption is strongly highlighted in both the daily *Shema* 'blessings and the 'Amidah,⁹⁰ which would possibly constitute the backdrop of the Qur'an's theme in these passages.

Third, if Qur'an 2:259 is alluding to the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple, then this would parallel the 'Amidah's fourteenth, fifteenth and seventeenth benedictions, which are prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the coming of the Messiah, and the restoration of the Temple.⁹¹

Fourth, if Qur'an 2:258–260 uses Abraham as the one who seeks to ensure that the resurrection and restoration of the Israelite nation, then this would parallel the 'Amidah's first benediction. It recalls the patriarchs, and especially exalting God as the shield (protector) of Abraham, which is an expression only found in Gen. 15:1 in the Hebrew Bible, just before Abraham was asked to make the aforementioned ritual as a sign for God's promise of children and land.⁹²

Fifth, it is important to understand that the context of Qur'an 2:259–260 is within an overarching imploration of giving charity. This imploration starts before the Throne verse (i.e. Qur'an 2:254) urging people to pay charity before a day comes when no business deals would be allowed (implying the Day of Resurrection/Judgement) and it continues in a relatively lengthy discourse immediately after the passage in question (i.e. Qur'an 2:261–274). Even Qur'an 3:93–115, which has been discussed as alluding to the Israelite exile and the building of the Temple, is preceded with an imploration to give charity (i.e. Qur'an 3:91–92) and followed with a warning that riches stored in this world will be worthless (i.e. Qur'an 3:116–117). Giving charity is also related to the 'Amidah in rabbinic traditions. Charity is not only related to prayer in rabbinic literature, but it is also closely related to prayer in the Qur'an. Giving alms is almost always associated with prayer in the Qur'an.⁹³

Qur'an 2:261–274 uses the plural term for *ṣadaqah* to refer to charity, which would resonate with its Jewish audience, who also use this term. It might seem a bit strange to discuss resurrection or the return of the Israelite exiles within the context of charity. However, an old Arabic adage says, 'If the reason is known, the strangeness disappears.' If the Qur'an expects its audience to keep in mind the 'Amidah, which is a prayer for resurrection and the return of the Israelite exiles, then its imploration towards charity becomes clear: according to some rabbinic traditions, before one starts to pray, they are to give charity.

For example, the Babylonian Talmud narrates a tradition by R. Dosetai b. R. Yannai, who says that someone who gives a gift to God by giving a coin to the poor

will be granted an audience with God, which is what prayer represents.⁹⁴ Another narrative from R. Eleazar features his idea of paying a coin to a poor man before praying, in compliance with his interpretation of Ps. 17:15 ('I shall behold your face in righteousness [charity]').⁹⁵ Then, the Talmud continues with a tradition by R. Nahman b. Yitzhak, who interprets the second half of Ps. 17:15 as a reference to the World-to-Come (Messianic Age / End of Days). Charity is discussed in relation to resurrection.

Sixth, Qur'an 2:259–260 has been placed within the context of God redeeming the Israelites and returning them from exile within a greater discourse on charity. In the Talmudic discourse on charity, which associates the giving of charity with the 'Amidah, R. Judah says, 'Great is charity, for it draws redemption nearer', referring to Isa. 56:1.⁹⁶ Since charity has the power for redemption,⁹⁷ it is perhaps why the Qur'anic discourse puts it in that context understanding its rabbinic interpretation.

Seventh, while the Israelite redemption seems general, the Qur'anic passage is very particular about putting it in the context of death and resurrection. The metaphor the Qur'an uses is death. The Talmud further states that R. Judah was also specific that while ten strong things exist in the world, death is the strongest of all, but charity saves from death, referring to Prov. 10:2. The Qur'an's emphasis on charity within the context of death and resurrection perhaps alludes to this teaching.

Eighth, on charity, the Talmud then also continues with a tradition by R. Yoḥanan interpreting Prov. 19:17: 'Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the lord.' This passage has some resemblance to a verse in the Qur'an also preceding the Throne verse: 'Who shall lend unto God a goodly loan, which He will multiply for him many times over? And God withholds and outstretches, and unto Him shall you be returned' (Qur'an 2:245).

Ninth, this particular tradition's interpretation in the Talmud has parallels with the Qur'anic passage concerning the day of wrath when riches will be worthless. The interpretation provided by R. Yoḥanan refers to Prov. 10:2 and 11:4, which both have a similar message: that wealth is irrelevant on the day of wrath, but righteousness (charity) delivers from death. Since the phrase on righteousness delivering from death is mentioned twice by both passages, it is interpreted that one of them, which uses the day of wrath (i.e. Prov. 11:4), delivers from hell. According to the tradition, the day of wrath is the day Zeph. 1:15 refers to, which also later states that their silver and gold will not save them on that day (i.e. Zeph. 1:18).⁹⁸ This warning is mirrored just before the Throne verse in Qur'an 2:254, where charity needs to be made before a day comes when no business deal will save anyone. A similar warning is seen in Qur'an 3:91: even if one would offer the gold that fills the earth, it would not be accepted, a message recurring in Qur'an 3:116–117.

Tenth, the other righteousness (charity) (i.e. Prov. 10:2) is interpreted as deliverance from unnatural death, which the Talmudic narrative continues to suggest occurs when the giver does not know to whom he is giving and the recipient does not know the giver's identity. Qur'an 2:264 also warns the uselessness

of someone giving charity to boast in front of people, as Qur'an 2:271 is also explicit that while one can give charity in the open, it is still better to do it in secret. Qur'an 2:274, then suggests that both types of charity will be rewarded. As Qur'an 2:264 warns against those who give charity to boast before others, in the Talmud, several rabbis concur that while idolaters may also give charity, they do it for self-aggrandizement and pride instead of sincerity.⁹⁹

Eleventh, Qur'an 2:262–264 emphasizes the importance of not following giving charity with hurtful words. Qur'an 2:263 is specific that saying kind words are even better than giving charity if that generosity is followed by hurtful words. This might also resonate with a Talmudic teaching within the same discourse of giving charity attributed to R. Yitzhak, who says, 'Anyone who gives a coin to the poor is blessed with six blessings, and anyone who speaks to him in a comforting manner is blessed with eleven.'¹⁰⁰ The emphasis of speaking kindly to the poor is mirrored in both the Talmudic and the Qur'anic discourses, further suggesting the possible Qur'anic engagement with these traditions.

Twelfth, during the relatively lengthy discourse on charity and emphasizing using kind words thereafter, Qur'an 2:269 abruptly speaks of those given wisdom. The logical flow of the passage moves smoothly until one arrives to this sudden change of topic, but then the passage returns to a further discussion of charity immediately thereafter. This does not necessarily suggest that Qur'an 2:269 might have been edited into the passage, as the Babylonian Talmud also includes a similar reference: in the middle of its also relatively lengthy discourse on charity, and also after it emphasizes speaking kindly to the poor, it adds a tradition by R. Yeshua b. Levi saying, 'Whoever is accustomed to do acts of charity gains the merit of having sons who are masters of wisdom, wealth, and lore.'¹⁰¹ The tradition refers to Prov. 21:21, where wisdom, wealth, and lore correspond to the idea that he who follows after righteousness (charity) and mercy finds life, righteousness, and honour respectively.

Thirteenth, the 'Amidah emphasizes the power of God as the redeemer of the Israelites. There is no place in its theological construct for a human redeemer. Even in its Messianic motif, God's power is invoked and it is only God who shall provide salvation and redemption. As rabbinic scholar Reuven Kimelman concludes about the 'Amidah,

In sum, the Amidah, like the Mishna and the Haggadah, reflects a tannaitic view of redemption that draws upon both prophetic language and perspective in order to present a restorative vision that minimizes human agency while maximizing divine agency.¹⁰²

While this theme is no different in the theological construct of the Qur'an, the Throne verse makes it very clear that no one may even intercede with God without God's own permission (i.e. Qur'an 2:255). More importantly, immediately before Qur'an 2:259–260, the power of God is contrasted with a power of a human king, to emphasize that no power is comparable (i.e. Qur'an 2:258), since God not only gives life to the dead, but also brings the sun from the east.

The Babylonian Talmud narrates a conversation that occurred between Antoninus and the Rabbi redactor, who asks why the sun rises in the east and sets in the west.¹⁰³ The response provided is that it does so in obeisance to God, referring to Neh. 9:6. It is worth noting that the referenced verse is a prayer of Ezra's that signifies the power of God, who created everything and gave everything life, and that the host of heaven (including the sun) worship God. Then the passage immediately moves on to discuss God's choosing Abraham and making a covenant with him to give his descendants land. Thereafter, it supplies a brief history of the Israelites from the exodus to the exile and their disobedience, while Ezra beseeches God's forgiveness and redemption. Qur'an 2:258 would therefore be well situated within the broader context of Qur'an 2:259–260, which has been argued to be in conversation with the Israelite exile and their return.

Fourteenth, the Qur'an's engagement on the direction of prayer through the *Qiblah* passages had been shown to emphasize the importance of the *Shema* and its rabbinic commentary.¹⁰⁴ This would also suggest that the Qur'an might not only be aware of the daily 'Amidah benedictions recited, but also the daily *Shema* blessings. Even in the *Shema* blessings, a prayer for the ingathering of the Israelites from the four corners of the earth and frequent petitions for redemption are made.¹⁰⁵

Given this web of intertextualities, it would seem very plausible that the Qur'an's reason for using Israelite exilic imagery, their return and redemption to not necessarily simply denote some history but also perhaps a future. As Genesis 15 discusses God's dual promise to Abraham, Qur'an 2:259–260 also presents this promise of land and children. The passage shows that God has the power to bring the dead back to life, which translates into rebuilding a dead and desolate town and for the scattered children of Abraham to strive quickly to return from the four corners of the earth. The passage is within the context of giving charity due to the power of charity in saving people from death.

The use of the 'Amidah's imagery is not surprising in a chapter aware of the Jewish direction of prayer (*Qiblah* passage). After all, the 'Amidah, though a prayer for a future, itself is a web of intertextualities that are deeply rooted in the Hebrew Bible, containing passages from Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Malachi and the Psalms.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, it should not be surprising that the Qur'an would be aware not only of the 'Amidah but also of its content: the resurrection of the dead, the ingathering of the exiles, and perhaps the intertextual style it uses to portray not only a history but also a future. I hope by now the patient reader appreciates that the Qur'anic engagement with the Israelite exile is not as absurd as it might have initially seemed.

Conclusion

The most vivid portrayal of resurrection in the Qur'an (2:259–260) seems to evidently engage with biblical, extrabiblical, and rabbinic material. The context of the biblical, extrabiblical, and rabbinic material in both cases is not a literal

understanding of death and resurrection in the sense of bones leaving their graves. The intertextual background of Qur'an 2:260 is seemingly Genesis 15, with its rabbinic commentary and Romans 4. The resonances may not mean that the Qur'an necessarily draws from these texts directly; perhaps it engages them in an indirect manner through secondary texts or oral traditions that in turn concern these materials. The same can be said regarding Qur'an 2:259, in that it does not necessarily engage with the primary sources of either 4 Baruch or the Talmud along with the biblical context of the exile; it may pull from some secondary sources or oral traditions that engage with them or those based on their proto-traditions.

There is a discrepancy of the one hundred years suggested in the Qur'anic account with the years of the exile in the biblical, extrabiblical and rabbinic accounts. It is being proposed that the Qur'an's narrative identifies the man with Abraham, who begat Isaac at one hundred years old. In other words, Qur'an 2:259 signifies the promise of land, and Qur'an 2:260 signifies the promise of children. After all, the passage immediately preceding Qur'an 2:259 and following it explicitly name Abraham. Furthermore, as Qur'an 2:260 shows a possible awareness of Romans 4 or a tradition stemming from it, Rom. 4:19, explicitly mentions Abraham's age of one hundred years when he had Isaac.

Another discrepancy is the four birds instead of two in Genesis 15. The Qur'an appears to use the same motifs of the exile but rearticulates them. Perhaps it even suggests the Israelite Diaspora and the dispersion of the Israelites to all four corners of the earth, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70 CE, which continued to be the case during the Qur'an's composition. It has been suggested by scholars that the discrepancy of sixty-six years in 4 Baruch might be a reference to the Bar Kokhba revolt in 136 CE, which is sixty-six years after the destruction of the Second Temple.

Furthermore, the Qur'an appears to be aware of Jewish liturgy, such as the daily 'Amidah prayer and the daily *Shema* recitation including the possibility of its awareness of the weekly Torah portion readings. This even sheds light on the beliefs and rituals of the Jewish community with whom the Qur'an is in conversation.

Regardless of the exact sources of these stories, the intertextuality between the Qur'anic account with the biblical, extrabiblical, and rabbinic material is palpable. Since the biblical subtext and context are not about physical death and resurrection of bones from their graves but are about the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile along with the return and restoration of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel, then that is how apparently Qur'an 2:259 should be understood. In Qur'an 2:260, the subtext and context both are about Abraham and the ritual he had performed after asking to know about God's promise of bearing children and granting land. While Genesis 15 does not explicitly associate death and life to the context, Romans 4 does so directly. Accordingly, the Qur'an must have been aware either of the Epistle to the Romans or a text or oral tradition that interprets it in its Genesis 15 background.

Given that neither the biblical, extrabiblical and rabbinic subtext nor context is about physical death and resurrection from graves, then the same can be said about Qur'an 2:259–260. The destruction of Jerusalem and its restoration – or even Abraham having children and being gifted land – are not necessarily immaterial, but the death and resurrection described are not imagined as dead bodies leaving their graves in a very vivid manner. The whole concept, though it may have to do with the physical, is a metaphor and, with the given evidence, appears to be distinctively so.