

Abdulla Galadari (2013) "The Qibla: An Allusion to the Shema'," *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 9(2): 165-193.

Full paper originally published by Equinox. © Equinox Publishing Ltd. 2016, Office 415, The Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield, S1 2BX

<https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/CIS/article/viewArticle/20101>

The *Qibla*: An Allusion to the *Shema*'

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In this article it is argued that the *Qibla* passages in the Qur'an, which are commonly understood as referring to the direction of the prayer, are directly engaging with and interpreting the *Shema*' passages in Deuteronomy and their Talmudic commentaries. By defining and applying the method of intertextual polysemy, nine points of intertextuality are identified between the various Quranic, Biblical, and Talmudic passages. Against this background, the article implies that narrations from traditional Quranic commentaries are lacking in their interpretation of these passages, since they do not employ any extra-Quranic contexts to explain their meaning. Through the method of intertextual polysemy, the alternative thesis propounded here is that the historical reference for the *Qibla* passages is the *Shema*'.

Introduction

This article is a literary study of the Quranic *Qibla* passages [Q 2:115–150, 2:177], which are analyzed through an intertextual polysemous approach and compared to the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish tradition. As will be illustrated in more detail below, there is a distinctive tradition within modern Quranic studies, which has focused on relationships between the Qur'an and Jewish literature, starting with Abraham Geiger's (d. 1874) comparisons of the Qur'an with Jewish literature in the nineteenth century (Geiger 1833). Contemporary examples are Reuven Firestone's explorations of the intertextual relationship between

Keywords: Jerusalem, Mecca, Mizrah, prayer, Qibla, *Shema*'.

the Bible and the Qur'an (Firestone 2004). Such comparative approaches tend to challenge the accuracy of the history of early Islam, as brought down by traditional Muslim commentators of the Qur'an, who while acknowledging the presence of Jews and Christians in Muḥammad's environment still do not use the Bible and Judeo-Christian literature to contextualize the Qur'an (see Wansbrough 1977; see also Wansbrough 1978; Rippin 1988; Reynolds 2010). This study continues this line of exploration.

Classical Muslim exegetes state that the circumstance of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) of the *Qibla* passages is the change of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca. They state that Muḥammad preferred that the direction of prayer be moved from Jerusalem to Mecca, and so was waiting for revelation to change the direction of prayer (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, [Q 2:144], 3: 172–174). They state that when the direction of prayer was changed, it caused a commotion among some of Muḥammad's followers and among the Jews (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, [Q. 2:143], 3: 156–170). The Qur'an considers the change as a test to see who would follow Muḥammad and who would not:

Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses against humankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you. And We appointed the Qibla which you formerly observed only that We might know him who follows the messenger, from him who turns on his heels. In truth it was a hard (test) except for those whom God guided. But it was not God's purpose that your faith should be in vain, for God is Full of Pity, Merciful toward humankind. [Q2:143]

This article advances the thesis that the *Qibla* passages are actually not emphasizing the importance of Mecca over Jerusalem, but simply arguing that the direction of prayer is not as important as the faith in one's heart during prayer. Thus, assuming that the Qur'an is not arguing on the importance of the direction of prayer, it engages with the *Shema'* passages in Deuteronomy and its Talmudic interpretation to prove from within Jewish scripture and rabbinic tradition what is truly important, which is the faith and love in one's heart. The *Shema'* is the statement of the Jewish faith and focal point of the daily prayers and therefore, I argue here, something which the Qur'an engages with as it defines the Islamic faith and ritual.

Methodology

The method of intertextual polysemy that is developed and applied in this study has some similarity with Michael Fishbane's method in his *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Fishbane 1988). In Fishbane's technique, shared language, and specifically unique or rare vocabulary common between texts, increases the likelihood of an allusion. Also, as a word or a group of words appear in the same context, it also increases the likelihood of an allusion. As Fishbane considers scribal additions and modifications within the Hebrew Bible, I am not assuming

the same scribal additions and modifications have occurred within the Qur'an. Rather, it is the allusive method that the scribes of the Hebrew Bible used to cite earlier parts of it, which I assume occurs also in the Qur'an, where the Qur'an uses allusive methods to cite different parts of the Bible and Biblical literature. Thus, I contend that the Qur'an uses allusive methods to cite, to engage with, and to interpret the Bible and Biblical literature.

Ulrika Mårtensson looks into the style of Ibn Ishāq's biography of Muḥammad and finds that a recurring theme exists that uses creative parallelism between it and the Hebrew Bible (Mårtensson 2005). The example Mårtensson shows is the relationship between Isaiah 40:6, which uses the terms *iqra'*, *qol*, and *mā aqra*, paralleled with Ibn Ishāq's relation of Muḥammad's story in the cave, when Gabriel tells [qāl] him "*iqra*" and he answers, "*mā aqra*" (Mårtensson 2005, 314). This kind of parallelism is what is being sought between the Bible and the Qur'an, which is used in this article.

The methodology is philological in nature and consists of looking at the roots of keywords and understanding their various meanings (polysemy) and how different morphologies of the root are used in the Qur'an, or their cognates are used in Biblical literature, and then looking at parallelism between them (intertextuality). I must be specific that the term "intertextuality," as it is used in this article is not to be confused with "borrowing" or "influence," as this article implies a more complex dialogue occurring through "allusions" and "interpretations."

Polysemy exists when a word has multiple meanings that are related to each other. Polysemy is important in Semitic languages, since these languages are based on root-based morphology [mushtaqqāt]. This means that words have roots, which are typically three-lettered, from which morphologies of various meanings and understandings would spring (Kaye 2007).

For example, the word "to write" is from the root *k t b*. Different morphologies of this root would hold various meanings. A writer is called *kātib*; a book is called *kitāb*; a letter is called *maktūb*, which literally means something written; dictating is called *istaktaba*; a library is *maktabah*; and an office is *maktab*. However, defining those terms is not always semantically obvious, as it may sometimes depend on the context to understand what the term specifically refers. For example, *kitāb* which semantically means "book," could be a reference to a book or sometimes even a contract, especially a marriage contract, and a *kātib 'adl* would refer to a notary public. Those are just few definitions of the term and its morphologies. Understanding etymology is also important to comprehend the root meanings. For example, the term *katībah* is a reference to an army battalion, sharing the same root as writing. Although it may not be apparently obvious to the reader that there is a relationship between the root *k t b*, with the meanings "to write" and "an army battalion," there is actually a strong relation-

ship between both. The root *k t b* actually means to join together in a group.¹ It is because of this root meaning that it has taken the definition of writing, because writing is joining letters and words together in a group. Similarly, an army battalion is also a group of people who are joined together. Hence, sharing the same root between the terms for writing and army battalion makes perfect sense, once we understand its semantics and etymology (Galadari 2013).

Intertextual polysemy is an approach where keywords are used as an allusive method to refer to the text. For example, the first and third verses of Sūrah 96 use the term *iqra'*, rooted in *q r '*. This shares the same root as Qur'an in the second verse of Sūrah 55. Also, the first verse of Sūrah 96 uses the term *b-ism rabbik* (in the name of your Lord), which could be a reference to *al-Rahmān* in the first verse of Sūrah 55. The first and second verse of Sūrah 96 uses the term *khlq*, which is also shared with *khlq* in the third verse of Sūrah 55. The second and fifth verses of Sūrah 96 use the term *insān*, which is also used in the third verse of Sūrah 55. The fourth and fifth verses of Sūrah 96 use the term *'allam*, which is also used in the second and fourth verses of Sūrah 55. Through such intertextuality, one may assume that the first four verses of Sūrah 55 allude to the first five verses of Sūrah 96. Therefore, as the second verse of Sūrah 96 talks about the *'alaq*, which is understood as the clinging of the fetus in the mother's womb [rḥm], the term *rḥm* shares the same root as *rahmān* in the first verse of Sūrah 55. This is a simple example of the use of intertextual polysemy as an allusive method within the Qur'an.

Intertextual polysemy does not imply borrowing. Abraham Geiger uses philological technique to assert that Muḥammad borrowed from Judaism (Geiger 2012). Charles Torrey and William St. Clair Tisdall both show a Muḥammad who borrowed from Judaism and who made mistakes while borrowing (see Torrey 1967; see also Tisdall 1905). Richard Bell composed works that tend to show Muḥammad has borrowed from earlier religions, mainly Judaism and Christianity, to construct a new religion. This is especially seen in Bell's *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment*, originally published in 1925 (Bell 1968). Marilyn Waldman illustrates that it is more important to notice not what is borrowed by the Qur'an, but more importantly what the Qur'an does with borrowed material (Waldman 1985). Steven Wasserstrom, on the other hand, convincingly shows that the relationship between Judaism and Islam is far too complex to be simply called mere borrowing (Wasserstrom 2014). This article seeks to demonstrate that Muḥammad did not borrow from, but engaged with Jews and key Jewish theological concepts.²

1. Refer to *Tāj al-'Arūs* on the definition of *k t b*, Dār al-Hidāyah, 4: 100–107.

2. For more examples that also shows intertextuality between the Bible, Midrash, and Qur'an. Refer to Garsiel 2006, *Bible, Midrash and Qur'an: An Intertextual Study of Common Narrative Materials*.

John Wansbrough and Gabriel Reynolds assume the Qur'an emerged from Judeo-Christian context that was adapted by the Arabs (See Wansbrough 1977; see also Wansbrough 1978; Rippin 1988; Reynolds 2010). Perhaps that is the case, and the reason why the *Qibla* passages engage with the *Shema'*. However, instances of intertextuality can also be viewed as reflecting historical interactions between Muḥammad, his community, and the Jewish community's scholars and their traditions, and that Muḥammad wanted to engage with the *Shema'* to state the importance of faith over the direction of prayer. Gordon Newby suggests that there is Quranic evidence with its use of the terminologies *rabbāniyyūn* and *aḥbār* that Muḥammad was in contact with Rabbinic Judaism in Arabia (Newby 1988, 57–59). Hagai Mazuz also suggests Medinan Jews to be followers of Rabbinic Judaism for the same reasons suggested by Newby (Mazuz 2014, 21–23). Evidence that the *Qibla* passages are engaging with the Talmud even more so proves the existence of a Rabbinic Judaism tradition among the Jews of Arabia and that the Qur'an is specifically referring to them in many instances when it engages with the Jews.

History of the *Qibla*

In two verses, the Qur'an declares that the People of the Book know something as they know their own children. One discusses the *Qibla* controversy [Q 2:144–148] and another discusses the unity of God [Q 6:19–20]:

144. We have seen the *taqalluba* [turning] of your face to heaven. And now verily We shall make you turn toward a Qibla which is dear to you. So turn your face toward the Inviolable Place of Worship, and you, wheresoever you may be, turn your faces (when you pray) toward it. Lo! Those who have received the Scripture know that (this revelation) is the truth from their Lord. And God is not unaware of what they do.

145. And even if you bring unto those who have received the Scripture all kinds of portents, they would not follow your Qibla, nor can you be a follower of their Qibla; nor are some of them followers of the Qibla of others. And if you should follow their desires after the knowledge which has come unto you, then surely were you of the evil-doers.

146. Those unto whom We gave the Scripture recognize (this revelation) as they recognize their children. But lo! a party of them knowingly conceal the truth.

147. It is the truth from your Lord, so be not you of those who waver.

148. And each one has a goal toward which he turns; so vie with one another in good works. Wheresoever you may be, God will bring you all together. Lo! God is Able to do all things. [Q 2:144–148]

In another instance, the Qur'an states:

19. Say: "What thing is most weighty in evidence [shahāda])" Say: "(God) is witness [shahīd] between me and you; this Qur'an has been revealed to me by

inspiration, that I may warn you and all whom it reaches. Can you possibly bear witness (*latashhadūn*) that besides God there are other gods?" Say: "Nay! I cannot bear witness [lā ashhad!]" Say: "But in truth He is the one God, and I truly am innocent of joining others with Him."

20. Those to whom We have given the Book know this as they know their own children. Those who have lost their own souls refuse therefore to believe. [Q 6:19–20]

These two passages make a bold claim about the People of the Book knowing about issues as they know their own children. I consider the *Qibla* passages to be directly engaging with the *Shema*' passages in Deuteronomy and their Talmudic commentaries.³

According to Muslims, the *Qibla* is the focal point of prayer which they need to face to perform the prayer rituals. The focal point of prayer is Mecca; within Mecca, it is *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*; and within *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, it is the Ka'ba.⁴ The concept of having a focal point for prayer is very significant to Islamic practice and rituals. Knowing the direction of Mecca to Muslims is not a simple knowledge that they need to have; their basic five daily obligatory prayers are dependent on it.⁵

The focal point of Jewish prayers (and faith) is reciting the *Shema*', "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God the Lord is one, (*Shema' Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu Adonai eḥad*)" [Deuteronomy 6:4]. The *Shema*' is a Jewish public proclamation of faith

3. The Talmud is a text of rabbinic discourse that typically interprets Jewish law. This article finds relationship mainly between the Babylonian Talmud and the Qur'an, and in few instances between the Jerusalem Talmud and the Qur'an. The Jerusalem Talmud was compiled in circa fourth century, and the Babylonian Talmud was compiled in circa sixth century, although it continued to be edited until circa eighth century. Since the editing of the Babylonian Talmud was perhaps completed post-Quranic, this could reveal an interesting relationship on which books are interpreting the other and whether the Qur'an influenced the editing of some excerpts of the Babylonian Talmud. As such, there could be a more complex relationship between early Islam and Rabbinic Judaism that is beyond influence or borrowing, as Steven Wasserstrom suggests.
4. This is a prophetic tradition [ḥadīth] stating, "*Al-Bayt qiblatun li-ahl al-Masjid wal-Masjid qiblatun li-ahl al-Ḥaram wal-Ḥaram qiblatun li-ahl al-ard fi mashāriqihā wa maghāribihā mn ummati*," (The House is a *Qibla* for the people of the [Sacred] Mosque, the [Sacred] Mosque is a *Qibla* for the people of the *Ḥaram* [Mecca] and the *Ḥaram* [Mecca] is the *Qibla* for the people of the earth from my people from its east and west). This prophetic tradition is noted in the commentaries of al-Qurtūbī (d. 671/1273) and related by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373). See al-Qurtūbī 1964, [Q. 2:144], 2: 159. Also see Ibn Kathīr 1999, [Q. 2:144], 1: 331.
5. The significance of knowing the direction of the *Qibla* for correct prayers is noted as an exemplification of the Shāfi'ī jurisprudence [fiqh] in a famous debate between Imām al-Ḥaramayn, al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and Abu Ishāq al-Shirāzī (d. 476/1083). See Al-Sabkī 1993, 5: 209–214.

(Lamm 1998, 19). I will first bring up the history of the direction of prayer in Islam and its parallels in Judaism. Then, I will discuss the *Qibla* passages and how they are textually related to the *Shema*' passages in Deuteronomy and their Talmudic commentaries.

Jews face Jerusalem in their prayers, in accordance with the Talmudic teaching. During prayer, devout Jews in the Diaspora are to face the Land of Israel. Those in Israel are to face Jerusalem, those in Jerusalem are to face towards the Temple, and those in the Temple are to face towards the Holy of Holies (Gurevich 2010, 136–137), which is similar to the Islamic understanding of the *Qibla* in Mecca, as noted earlier. Spero identifies from the Bible and Jewish tradition the key elements from which the Jewish faith extrapolates that prayers must be done facing Jerusalem (Spero 2003). The *Mishnah* concludes that the direction of prayer must be made towards the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem:

- 4:5 A. If he was riding on an ass, he should dismount [to pray].
 B. But if he cannot dismount, he should turn his face [toward the east].
 C. And if he cannot turn his face, he should direct his heart toward the Chamber of the Holy of Holies.
- 4:6 A. If he was travelling in a ship or on a raft, he should direct his heart towards the Chamber of the Holy of Holies. (m. Berakhot 4:5-4:6)

The Jews use the term *Mizrah* in Hebrew, which means east, for the direction of prayer instead of *Qibla*. This is important to note for semantic purposes when attempting to understand what the Qur'an means when saying that the People of the Book know the issue about the *Qibla*, as they know their own children. The *Tosefta*, which is a secondary Jewish oral law supplementing the *Mishnah* and compiled in the third century, demands that Jewish prayer be directed towards Jerusalem, quoting the Book of Kings in the Bible. The *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a Christian text, requires that the direction of prayer should be towards the east:

For it is required that you pray toward the east, as knowing that which is written: *Give ye glory to God, who rideth upon the heaven of heavens toward the east.*

Didascalia Apostolorum, XII

Holger Zellentin notes that the term in the *Didascalia* for east is *qbl*, which shares the same root as the Quranic *Qibla* (Zellentin 2013, 62). Zellentin also suggests that the Quranic argument of God's sovereignty over the east and west may be in direct engagement with the *Didascalia*. Hence, the Qur'an's argues God's sovereignty over the east and west.

According to traditional Quranic commentators, Jerusalem is considered the first *Qibla* in early Islam. In Al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) commentary of the Qur'an, he narrates that some have suggested that Jerusalem used to be the *Qibla* as a possible reconciliation with the Jews, while others suggested that it was Godly

ordained (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, [Q. 2:142], 3: 138). Fazlur Rahman suggests that the change of the *Qibla* may not necessarily show a break with the Jews (Rahman 1976). He argues that there is a possibility that Jerusalem was first chosen as a *Qibla* while Muḥammad was in Mecca as a sign of protest against the persecution in Mecca, especially since Muslims were not allowed to pray in the Sacred Mosque in the early years, fearing for their own safety. Rahman states that according to tradition, early Muslims in Mecca typically prayed in their private homes or in a hiding place outside Mecca (Rahman 1976). Rahman argues that when Muḥammad was in Madinah, then the *Qibla* was changed to Mecca, as it was no longer a sign of protest. Rahman's observation may be interesting to note, but downplaying the *Qibla's* controversy to a dispute between Muḥammad and the Arabs instead of between Muḥammad and the Jews seems to lack support from the Quranic text. The *Qibla* passages in the Qur'an suggest that the dispute was between Muḥammad and the People of the Book more so than it was among Arab idolaters.

According to traditional Quranic commentaries, Mecca had become a second *Qibla* to the Muslims. Uri Rubin assumes that ancient Arab monotheists known as the *Haniṫs*, who predated Islam, considered the Ka'ba as a *Qibla* (Rubin 1990). Since ancient Arab pagans held the annual pilgrimage in Mecca, then they, too, have possibly considered the centrality of the Ka'ba in worship. With this assumption made by Rubin, it would not be strange for Arabs to consider the Ka'ba as a *Qibla*. However, if one compares the Quranic text with Deuteronomy and the Talmud using intertextual polysemy, the *Qibla* passages can be understood as having a completely different reference and meaning.

Quranic narration of the *Qibla* controversy

The Qur'an indicates that when the *Qibla* was changed, it created much controversy. It suggests that the change of the *Qibla* was for the purpose of testing people's faith in the prophet. I will divide the Quranic passages on the *Qibla* into three main sections. The first section is between Q 2:115–141. The section starts with Q 2:115 stating the sovereignty of God and that whether people face east or west, the face of God is everywhere. I will call Q 2:115 as the introductory verse on the issue of the *Qibla*. The first section acts as an introduction to the second section, which is between Q 2:142–150, as it is the core of the *Qibla* controversy narrated in the Qur'an. Q 2:142 repeats the notion of the sovereignty of God, as in the introductory verse, in that to Him belong the east and the west. The third and last section provides a conclusion on the matter of the *Qibla*, where it concludes it with Q 2:177. I will call Q 2:177 the concluding verse, which repeats the notion in the introductory verse that regardless of facing east or west, the direction is not really important. I will start deliberating on the core of the narratives of the *Qibla* controversy from the second section, showing its parallelism

with the *Shema* passages in Deuteronomy and its Talmudic commentary. I will then analyze the concluding verse, and then deliberate the first section, which discusses the Oneness of God, and finally return to the concluding verse for the final conclusion on the *Qibla* controversy.

Al-Ṭabarī relates that there was a great deal of controversy on the issue of the *Qibla* between the Jews and Muslims (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, [Q. 2:142–148], 3: 129–197). At first, when the *Qibla* was Jerusalem, he relates that Jews mocked Muḥammad, stating that he opposed them, while still following their *Qibla* (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, [Q. 2:144], 3: 173–174). When the *Qibla* was changed, many considered this a significant shift in policy that was not easily accepted (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, [Q. 2:143], 3: 161–162). Hence, the controversy of shifting the *Qibla* was not only a cause of dispute between Jews and Muḥammad, but also between Muḥammad and his own followers at the time. According to the Qur'an, the change in the *Qibla* would distinguish those who follow Muḥammad from the hypocrites.⁶

In the *Qibla* controversy, the Qur'an starts its argument stating the sovereignty of God, that to Him belongs the east and the west, and He guides whom He wills, as seen in Q 2:142. It appears as if the Qur'an is stating that the sovereignty of God is not only by shifting the *Qibla*, but also by guiding whomever He wills. God's sovereignty in guiding whom He wills is not unique to the Qur'an. The concept can be seen in Paul's epistle to the Romans [Romans 9:14–18], where he alludes to and quotes Exodus [Exodus 9:16, 33:19].

The Qur'an states that the shift in the *Qibla* was a matter of great dispute, except to those whom God has guided [Q 2:143]. The first verse that talks about the controversy alludes to the Sovereignty of God [Q 2:142]. It states that to God belong the east and the west. Therefore, it is in His Sovereignty to change anything He wills. In the following verse, it states that the only reason the *Qibla* was changed was to test people's faith [Q 2:143]. The verse that follows confirms the direction of the *Qibla*. It never mentions Mecca by name, but alludes to it by naming the *Qibla* as the Sacred Mosque, *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* [Q 2:144]. The verse that follows makes a claim that even if all the signs were given to the People of the Book, none will follow each other's *Qibla* [Q 2:145].

Seemingly, the greatest claim in regards to the *Qibla* that the Qur'an makes is in the verses that follow, which state that this is *al-ḥaqq*⁷ from God and that the People of the Book know it as they know their own children [Q 2:146–147]. It seems unusual that the Qur'an would claim that Jews and Christians would know that Mecca is the direction of prayer, given that there is no evidence for such

6. Fazlur Rahman has suggested this in his arguments and uses it as a basis of why he thinks that the *Qibla* controversy is more of a dispute between Muḥammad and the Arabs than it is with the Jews. See Rahman 1976.

7. The term *al-ḥaqq* in these passages is usually understood as “the truth.” Later in this article I will portray that it is not necessarily so.

a claim beyond Muslim literature. Hence, it is imperative to try to understand what the Qur'an is emphasizing. If the Qur'an is emphasizing that the truth that the People of the Book know as they know their own children is God's sovereignty in that He could do whatever He wills, then it might seem that such a truth is not objectionable to Jews and Christians. However, if the truth that the Qur'an is stressing is that Mecca is the true *Qibla*, then there would be no known Jewish or Christian literature that makes such reference. Quranic commentators, such as Al-Ṭabarī (2000 [Q. 2:146], 3: 187–189), in their explanation of the verse, state that the truth is that the Ka'ba is the true and real *Qibla*, which the People of the Book know as they know their own children. With an even stranger twist, al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), (Al-Rāzī 2000, [Q. 2:146], 4: 110–112) and al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), (Al-Qurṭubī 1964, [Q. 2:146], 2: 162), in their commentaries of the Qur'an, also narrate that the Jews knew Muḥammad was a prophet as they knew their own children. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), (1999 [Q. 2:146], 1: 333), quotes al-Qurṭubī on that matter as well. Beyond traditional Muslim literature, there is no Jewish or Christian evidence for any of those claims.

If the Qur'an stopped its argument by declaring the sovereignty of God in doing what He wills, it may have been less objectionable to Jews and Christians. However, since the Qur'an continues its argument, stating that the People of the Book know the truth about the *Qibla* as they know their own children, then the language seems to invite a highly debatable topic. Samuel Zwemer agrees with Robert Osborne's conclusion that the change of the *Qibla* created enmity between Islam and its main rivals, Judaism and Christianity.⁸ For this reason, it is important to understand the issues that the Qur'an is arguing. If the issue is about prayer and the direction thereof, then it is important to examine the background of Jewish prayer to see if the Qur'an is constructing an argument based on Jewish understandings of prayer.

Quranic Allusion of "Al-Ḥaqq"

The Talmud teaches that reciting the *Shema'* in prayer is "the acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven," which in Hebrew is called, *qabbalat 'ol malkhut shamayim*.⁹ The word that means "accept" is the same as the root of *Qibla* (*qabbalat*) in Hebrew. In other words, the Talmud refers to the *Shema'* as the *qabbalat* (*Qibla*). This is the first point of intertextuality between the *Qibla* passages and the *Shema'*. Also, reciting the *Shema'* is understood as the acceptance of the sovereignty of God (see Appel 1989, 2: xiii; see also O'Neill 1993, 133). Levin states, "The *Shema'* reveals the close connection between God's Oneness and His sov-

8. Zwemer (1937) cites Robert D. Osborne's *Islam under the Arabs* (1876).

9. b. Berakhot 2:2. See Neusner 2011, *The Babylonian Talmud*, Mishnah Berakhot 2:2(I), 1: 82. Also in Basri 1994, *Narratives of the Talmud*, 1: 24. Also see Soloveitchik 2003, *Worship of the Heart*, 108.

ereignty” (Levin 2002, 56). This is the second point of parallelism between the *Qibla* passages and the *Shema*’, where both are understood as an allusion to the sovereignty of God.

In Deuteronomy, the *Shema*’ is an assertion to the oneness of God and that people must love God with all their hearts, all their souls, and all their strength [Deuteronomy 6:4–5]. Deuteronomy then explains that these commandments, the *Shema*’, must be imprinted in their hearts [Deuteronomy 6:6]. Immediately after, Deuteronomy explains that they must impress this commandment, the *Shema*’, upon their children [Deuteronomy 6:7]. It further explains that they must talk about it when they sit at home, walk along the road, lie down, or get up [Deuteronomy 6:7]. When discussing prayers, Q 4:103 also seems to require people to remember God in a similar fashion, though there are variations in the wordings.

Later, Deuteronomy reminds the people that in the future, when their children ask them about what God has commanded them, they are to respond that they were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and that God saved them from their slavery to take them to the land that He promised their forefathers. As such, they are commanded to obey all of these decrees and to fear the Lord [Deuteronomy 6:20–25]. This again refers to the *Shema*’, because just preceding the *Shema*’ passages in Deuteronomy, it explains that they must teach the following commandments to their children and children’s children so that they may fear the Lord and obey His decrees and commandments so that it may go well with them in the land He promised their forefathers [Deuteronomy 6:1–3]. Deuteronomy is only reiterating what it stated earlier, that the people must have their hearts inclined to fear the Lord and keep His commandments so that they and their children may be well [Deuteronomy 5:29].

Concerning the *Shema*’, Deuteronomy repeatedly requires the teaching of the commandment to the children. The Hebrew term *shinūn*, which is used in Deuteronomy to state “Impress them (*shinantam*) on your children,” literally means to repeat. In a way, Deuteronomy asks that the commandment be repeated to their children, while Deuteronomy is itself repeating the importance of teaching the children. It seems that the text is embodying the necessary repetition [*shenan*] that is required.¹⁰ When the Qur’an describes the *Qibla* that the People of the Book know as they know their own children [Q 2:146], then the *Shema*’, which is the *qabbalat*, can be a candidate of this Quranic allusion, which is further investigated later in this article, making this a third point of intertextuality.

10. Teaching the commandments of the Torah to children and disciples is also brought into attention by Maimonides as an obligation, where he even forbids teaching the Oral Law for a fee. This emphasizes the importance of teaching the *Shema*’ and the commandments to the children, according to Jewish thought. See Berkovits Trans. 2008, 2: 792–793.

Concerning the *Qibla*, the Qur'an repeats that it is *al-ḥaqq* that the People of the Book know as they know their own children, and that this is *al-ḥaqq* from God [Q 2:144–149]. The Qur'an repeats the term *al-ḥaqq* several times in these verses. Typically, the term *al-ḥaqq* is used to mean the truth. However, not only does it mean truth, but also statute commandment, and law. The term *ḥuqūq*, which is cognate to the Hebrew term *ḥuqqim*, does not only mean truth, but also statutes and rights.¹¹ The Qur'an even uses the term *ḥaqq* in that definition. For example, when the Qur'an uses the term *bi-ghayr ḥaqq* or *bi-ghayr al-ḥaqq*, the term is usually understood as “without any right” [Q 2:61, 3:21, 3:112, 3:181, 4:155, 7:146, 22:40, 28:39, 40:75, 41:15, 42:42]. The Qur'an uses the term *ḥaqq* or *al-ḥaqq* to mean “right” [Q 2:282, 6:151, 24:49, 51:19, 70:24] and also to mean “judgment” (or those who have been decreed) [Q 7:30, 22:40, 28:63, 32:13, 36:7, 39:19, 46:18]. The polysemous nature of the term “*ḥaqq*” brings into question whether the terms “right,” “decree,” “statute,” “commandment,” or “judgment” are perhaps more appropriate definitions in many of the verses where *ḥaqq* is found in the Qur'an, instead of understanding it as simply “truth.” Since the term *ḥaqq* is used by the Qur'an to mean “right” or “decree,” the *Qibla* passages may be portraying that definition more so than “truth,” coinciding with the repetition of the term *ḥuqqim* in the *Shema'* passages. Deuteronomy repeats many times the term *ḥuqqim* and its various morphologies, which are rooted in *ḥaqq*, when discussing the *Shema'* [Deuteronomy 5:31, 6:1–2, 6:17, 6:20, 6:24]. Therefore, this is the fourth point of intertextuality between the *Qibla* passages and the *Shema'*. Thus, if the Qur'an specifies that this is “*al-ḥaqq*” from God, it could either mean truth from God or statute from God. Due to the polysemous nature of the Semitic word, perhaps both are equally intended due to the rhetoric style.

To understand the commandment of the *Shema'*, “⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” [Deuteronomy 6:4–5], it must be understood what Deuteronomy is instructing to do with it. First, it instructs that people's *hearts* must be inclined in the fear of the Lord and must keep the commandments (*Shema'*) so that they and their children would be well. Then it states that they should teach their children and their children's children the commandments (*Shema'*) that they need to obey. Then the commandment [*Shema'*] is given to love God with all their *heart*, all their soul, and all their strength. They are instructed to keep those commandments upon their *hearts* and to impress them on their children. It seems obvious that Deuteronomy is emphasizing the role that the *heart* has upon the *Shema'*. Closely analyzing the

11. See Al-Zabīdī n.d. (d. 1205/1790) *Tāj al-'arūs*, 25: 167. Also see Ibn Manẓūr 1994, (d. 711/1312), *Lisān al-'Arab*, 10: 49, 53. Also see Al-Fayrūzabādī 2005, (d. 817/1414), *Al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, 1: 874. As a note, Arabic dictionaries, such as those referred, usually use “*wujūb*” (commandment) as one of the meanings of *ḥaqq*.

Qibla passage in the Qur'an shows a possible allusion to the heart, which is the fifth point of intertextuality:

We see the turning [taqalluba] of your face to the heaven: now shall We turn you to a *Qibla* that shall please you. Turn then your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque: Wherever you are, turn your faces in that direction. The people of the Book know well that that is the truth from their Lord. Nor is God unmindful of what they do. [Q2:144]

The above verse about the *Qibla* says, "We see the turning [taqalluba] of your face..." In various verses, the Qur'an has used two related terms to mean the heart, *qalb* and *lubb*. The Hebrew Bible usually uses the term *leb* for heart. In the verse about the *Qibla*, the word *taqalluba* rooted in the term for heart [qalb] is used. However, most commentators of the Qur'an have always understood it to mean turning. This is identified in the Quranic commentary by most classical scholars, including Al-Ṭabarī (2000 [Q. 2:144], 3: 172–174), al-Qurtubī (1964 [Q. 2:144], 2: 158), and al-Rāzī (2000 [Q. 2:144], 4: 94–95). They narrate that Muḥammad was eager for the *Qibla* to be changed from Jerusalem to Mecca. As such, he was waiting for revelation from God, and so he was turning his face towards heaven waiting for that revelation. However, according to the Qur'an, revelation is brought down to the heart:

Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel-for he brings down the (revelation) to your heart [qalbic] by God's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe [Q2:97]

If revelation is brought down to the heart, which can also be seen in Q 26:192–195, then it seems very strange that Muḥammad would turn his face to heaven awaiting revelation. This could either mean that the story of Muḥammad turning his face towards heaven is a later conjecture by commentators trying to explain this verse, or even possibly both meanings are intended by this passage. Reuven Firestone states, "As in Jewish and Christian exegesis of biblical narratives, medieval Islamic exegesis of Quranic narratives often attempts to fill in the lacunae of Sacred Scriptures" (Firestone 1989, 99). Gabriel Reynolds suggests that classical Quranic commentators use story-telling techniques to fill the gap in *tafsīr* stating, "Very often these narratives are a means of identifying ambiguous material in the text: *ta'yīn al-mubham*" (Reynolds 2010, 202). This would, therefore, mean that Muḥammad turning his face to heaven is not necessarily what really happened, but is only the opinion of classical commentators, who are trying to make sense of the Qur'an. The same term, *taqalluba*, which most commentators of the Qur'an understand as "turning," is also used in yet another verse of the Qur'an:

And your movements among those who prostrate themselves [taqallubaka fil-sājidīn], [Q 26:219]

Commentators, such as Al-Ṭabarī (2000 [Q. 26:219], 19: 411–412), al-Qurṭubī (1964 [Q.26:219], 13: 144), al-Rāzī (2000 [Q.26:219], 24: 536–537), and Ibn Kathīr (1999 [Q. 26:219], 6: 154),¹² explain that *taqalluba* in this verse would either mean the changing of the movements within prayer from standing to kneeling to prostrating, or that during *sujūd* (prostration), it means instead of the face watching the front, it turns to watch the back. Al-Rāzī (2000 [Q. 26:219], 24: 537) also explains that a possible understanding in this verse is that Muḥammad descended from monotheists who all prostrated to God, which is similar to that of the Shīʿa understanding, as noted by al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1153), (n.d. [Q. 26:219], 7: 322–323). Therefore, Muḥammad’s seed turned from father to son among many generations of those who prostrated to God, until he was born. This understanding is not only among the Shīʿa, but al-Qurṭubī (1964 [Q. 26:219], 13: 144) also makes a note of it, and Ibn Kathīr (1999 [Q. 26:219], 6: 155) reiterates the same (specifically that Muḥammad descended from other prophets) by the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, which is also referenced by the Shīʿa commentator al-Ṭabarsī (n.d. [Q. 26:219], 7: 322). However, al-Ṭabarsī (n.d. [Q. 26:219], 7: 322) also uses the narration of Ibn ‘Abbās to explain the verse to mean that Muḥammad changed the movements within prayers from standing to kneeling to prostration. Al-Qurṭubī (1964 [Q. 26:219], 13: 144) uses a different narration from Ibn ‘Abbās, explaining this verse to mean that Muḥammad was able to see with his heart from the back, as he was able to see with his eyes from the front. However, when analyzing the text, there is another understanding that can be derived from it.

As can be seen from classical Quranic commentators, they are doing what they usually do, when they are trying to make sense of the Qur’an, filling in the gaps with a story. This is a reason why John Wansbrough refused to read the Qur’an from its assumed historical context and instead read it in its literary context (Wansbrough 1977).

The linguistic term for *taqalluba* is rooted in *qlb*. Therefore, linguistically, grammatically, textually, and contextually, it also is possible to understand that the term *taqalluba* does not necessarily mean “turning,” but to mean “to the heart.” Hence, it might as well be understood as such: “We see to the heart [taqalluba] you are facing in heaven...” [Q2:144]. This term can be compared with *tasharraqa* (facing east) or *taqharraba* (facing west).¹³ Just like in Arabic language *tasharraqa* and

12. Ibn Kathīr also relates the following prophetic tradition [ḥadīth] to support the claim that the prophet was able to see in his back as he sees in the front during prayer, “*Sawwū ṣufūfakum fa-innī arākum mn warā’ zahrī*,” (Straighten your rows, for I see you from behind my back) [Bukhari 11.686, 11.687, 11.692, Muslim 4.25.872].

13. In a prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*), it is narrated that Prophet Muḥammad said, “Do not face nor turn back to the *Qibla* while defecating or urinating, but turn towards the east or the west (*sharriqū aw qharribū*).” From Al-Nasir ed. 2002, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*,

tagharraba can be understood as facing east [sharq] or west [gharb], then similarly *taqalluba* may also hold the meaning of facing the heart [qalb].¹⁴

If the heart was the definition of this term, then we need to analyze the meaning of facing heaven. This can be viewed in various ways. It could be understood, “We, in heaven, see to the heart you are facing...” or “We see to the heart in heaven you are facing...” It either means that God, who is in *heaven*, is seeing Muḥammad facing the heart or that the heart is *heaven*. This might still allude to the *qabbalat* (*Qibla*) according to the Talmud, which is the acceptance [qabbalat] of the yoke of the kingdom of *heaven*, which the Talmud further explicates, as will be seen a little later. Also, it is interesting to note that in the Gospel of Luke, when Jesus is asked about the kingdom of *heaven*, he seems to allude to the *heart*:

20 Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, 21 nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst (or within you).” [Luke 17:20–21]

If we take into consideration that the *Qibla* passages are an allusion to the *Shema*, and in response to the Talmudic teachings, then there can be a different inference that can be obtained from understanding *taqalluba* to actually mean “to the heart” in the Quranic verse. If the verse is understood, “We see to the heart [taqalluba] you are facing in heaven...” [Q 2:144], in regards to the *Qibla*, which is perhaps connecting the heart with heaven, then this could coincide with the following Talmudic teachings:

He who recites the Prayer must concentrate his heart on Heaven.

Abba Saul says: A [Scriptural] allusion to prayer [and its requisite act of

1:88. Also from Al-Baqied. n.d., *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:224 (264).

14. There is an interesting reference to the *Qibla* controversy made by Bahā'u'llah (d. 1892), the founder of the Baha'i faith. In the Book of Certitude (*Kitab'i-Iqan*), Bahā'u'llah refers to the controversy mentioned in the Qur'an and makes an allusion to the heart:

Even as He hath revealed: “The East and West are God’s: therefore whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God” [Q 2:115]. Notwithstanding the truth of these facts, why should the *Qiblih* have been changed, thus casting such dismay amongst the people, causing the companions of the Prophet to waver, and throwing so great a confusion into their midst? Yea, such things as throw consternation into the hearts of all men come to pass only that each soul may be tested by the touchstone of God, that the true may be known and distinguished from the false. Thus hath He revealed after the breach amongst the people: “We did not appoint that which thou wouldst have to be the *Qiblih*, but that We might know him who followeth the Apostle from him who turneth on his heels.” [Q 2:143]. “Affrighted asses fleeing from a lion” [Q 74:50].

Were you to ponder, but for a while, these utterances *in your heart*, you would surely find the portals of understanding unlocked before your face, and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled before your eyes. Such things take place only that the souls of men may develop and be delivered from the prison-cage of self and desire.

In Bahā'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, (The Project Gutenberg, 2005), 29–30.

concentration] is “Thou wilt strengthen their heart, thou wilt incline thine ear [Psalm 10:17].”

(b. Berakhot 5:1, m. Berakhot 5:1)¹⁵

A. The pious men of old used to tarry one hour before praying,

B. so that they could direct their hearts to their father in heaven.

(b. Berakhot 5:1)

This Talmudic teaching coincides with the one on directing one’s heart when reciting the *Shema*, but is even more explicit on directing the heart towards heaven. This can give us a further understanding of what is meant by the Qur’an, *taqalluba wajhika fil-samā* (facing the heart in heaven). In another part of the Talmud, which emphasizes directing the heart to recite the *Shema*, it is usually understood to have the intention of fulfilling the obligation of the recitation.

One who recites the *Shema* must direct his heart [so as to intend to carry out his obligation].

As to one who was reading [the verses of the *Shema*] in the Torah and the time for the recitation [of the *Shema*] arrived:

If he directed his heart [to read in order to carry out his obligation to recite the *Shema*], he fulfilled his obligation [to recite the *Shema*].

[Blacks: And if [he did] not, he has not fulfilled his obligation.]

(b. Berakhot 5:1)

This may be similar to the Muslim prayer that one of the first obligations to start praying is that one must have the intention [niyya] of doing so, and the place of that intention [niyya] is typically understood as the heart as well. The Talmudic discourse parallels that with the Muslim discourse on the intention and whether the intention is to be recited or silent.¹⁶ Whether either tradition had influenced the other pertaining to the intention is not an issue here.

There seems to be a relationship between the *Qibla* [qabalat], the kingdom of heaven, and the heart. Linguistically, the Qur’an and Deuteronomy might both be referring to the heart as the *Qibla* [qabalat]. Deuteronomy reiterates many times, asking people to fear the Lord, to obey His commandments (*Shema*), to keep it in their hearts, and to teach it to their children. In the *Qibla* passages, the Qur’an first stated the sovereignty of God, that to Him belongs the east and the west, so He could do what He wishes [Q 2:142]. Nonetheless, before the Qur’an even discusses the *Qibla* controversy, it states the sovereignty of God and that

15. Also see Mishna Berakhot 5:1. Also in the Jerusalem Talmud, it states that if a blind person or anyone who is unable to discern direction, “... they pray [by turning their thought] towards heaven” (j. Berakhot 4:5).

16. See b. Berakhot 5:1 for the different teachings of the Jewish rabbis on the matter. For Muslim references on the issue, a collection of sayings among jurists on this matter is collected in Ḥusām-ul-dīn b. Mūsa Muḥammad b. ‘Afāneh 2004, 105–115.

the physical direction is unimportant [Q 2:115]. After discussing the controversy of the *Qibla*, the Qur'an continues to conclude that the physical direction is not important [Q 2:177]. It seems that the *Qibla* passage starts its argument with Q 2:115 and concludes it with Q 2:177:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; but it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing. [Q 2:177]

The above verse argues that the physical direction one faces is not important. Early commentators, such as Al-Ṭabarī, suggest that this verse is talking about the direction of prayer (2000 [Q. 2:177], 3: 336–338). Al-Rāzī even further explains that the changing of the direction of prayer (the *Qibla*) should not be significant according to this verse, because it truly does not matter where people face (2000 [Q. 2:177], 5: 211–214). He suggests that, when the *Qibla* was changed, some Muslims were fanatic about the original *Qibla* and thought that turning to Jerusalem was an extremely important factor of faith. Al-Rāzī counters that the direction of prayer (*Qibla*) is not important, but rather the faith that comes with it (2000 [Q. 2:177], 5: 211–214). Al-Rāzī appreciates the contradiction that could arise from the understanding of this verse that directing oneself towards the *Qibla* for prayer is not necessary, while praying cannot be fully accomplished without directing oneself towards the *Qibla*. Nonetheless, he suggests that the verse is asserting that faith and praying is more important than the direction, especially in the context of the *Qibla* controversy mentioned in the earlier verses. Ibn Kathīr elaborates that during the *Qibla* controversy, when some Muslims and Jews felt the change from Jerusalem to Mecca was a significant affair, this verse was revealed to show that it does not matter where people turn their face (Ibn Kathīr 1999 [Q. 2:177], 1: 354). He relates that the verse is stating the real importance is to obey God's commandments wherever He asks people to face, a matter on which al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1067), (n.d. [Q. 2:177], 2: 94) and al-Ṭabarsī (n.d. [Q. 2:177], 1:339–440) agree in their commentary that the object of faith is not prayer alone, and by that meaning to face oneself during prayer, but that faith is a more expansive view of obeying God's commandments generally.

When comparing this verse with the Talmud, the Quranic passage seems to be in response to a Talmudic regulation that the direction of prayer is important in both the *Babli* and *Yerushalmi* Talmuds, while the *Yersuhalmi* Talmud state the importance of the direction towards Jerusalem immediately after emphasizing

the service of the heart in prayers.¹⁷

Lest one think that he may pray facing any direction he wishes, Scripture states [to the contrary], “He had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem” [Daniel 6:10]

(b. Berakhot 5:1)¹⁸

Although both *Babli* and *Yerushalmi* Talmuds signify the importance of facing Jerusalem, there are some apparently different views. The *Yerushalmi* Talmud also narrates, “It was taught there: one may not face in any direction [to recite the Prayer] except East” (j. Berakhot 4:5). It must be pointed out that “east” in Hebrew is “*Mizrah*,” which may be a general reference for praying towards a focal point (and perhaps understood as Jerusalem). In any case, the Talmud later explains that depending on where a person is to the Temple, they are to face, south, north, west, or east towards the Temple, (j. Berakhot 4:5). and if they could not discern the direction, then the Talmud narrates from Rabbi Hiyya the Elder (c. 200) that they would need to concentrate their thoughts to the Chamber of the Holy of Holies *in heaven* (j. Berakhot 4:5).

Oneness of God

As stated earlier, Q 6:19–20 also makes a claim about an issue that the People of the Book know as they know their own children. That verse seems to also refer to the *Shema*’, because it is referring to the oneness of God [shahāda], the first and most supreme Islamic pillar. The oneness of God, which is viewed in this passage, coincides with the first section of the *Qibla* passages as well. Hence, the notion of the oneness of God between the *Qibla* passages and the *Shema*’ is the sixth point of intertextuality:

The Talmud explains under the narration of Simeon ben Laqish (c. 200) wherefrom the *Shema*’ blessing starts and expresses it in the context of Jacob in his deathbed.¹⁹

And Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what will befall you in the end of days” (Gen. 49:1). Jacob wanted to reveal to his sons the end of days, so the Presence of God departed from him. He said, “God forbid! Is it possible that out of my bed has come someone unfit among my children, like Abraham, from whom Ishmael came forth, and my father, Isaac, from whom Esau went forth?” His sons said to him, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” They said, “Just as there is only One in your

17. The *Yerushalmi* Talmud is the rabbinic discourse that was noted in the Land of Israel and is considered to have pre-dated the *Babli* Talmud, which is the rabbinic discourse compiled in Babylon.

18. Also, this is found in direct discussion of the *Shema*’ in the Jerusalem Talmud after discussing the service of the heart. See j. Berakhot 4:1, A].

19. b. Pesachim 56a, 4:8.

heart, so there is only One in our hearts.” At that moment, Jacob our father commenced, saying, “Blessed be the name of his glorious kingdom forever and ever.” (Pesahīm 56a)

Perhaps this account in the Jewish tradition is what the following Quranic verse might be referring to, as well, just before discussing the *Qibla* controversy, which is the seventh point of intertextuality:

Were you witnesses when death appeared before Jacob? Behold he said to his sons: “What will you worship after me? They said “We shall worship your God and the God of your fathers Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, the one (True) God. To him we bow in Islam. [Q2:133]

The first section of the *Qibla* passages that precede the narration of the *Qibla* controversy in the Qur’an, discusses the significance of Abraham’s faith, the oneness of God, and how the Jews and the Christians would not accept “you” (Muḥammad), unless “you” (Muḥammad) become one of them [Q 2:120–141]. Within these passages, it is apparent that the Qur’an explains who the fools [sufahā’] are that it later describes in the *Qibla* passages as the ones who would question the change in the *Qibla* [Q 2:142]. It describes anyone who turns away from the faith of Abraham as one who has fooled himself [safihā nafsahu]. It can be, therefore, presumed that the fools [sufahā’], who question the change in the *Qibla*, are those who are turning away from the faith of Abraham. The passage that directly follows the Quranic definition of a fool emphasizes the role of submitting to God [islām] as in the faith of Abraham [Q 2:131]. It then continues to state that Abraham told his sons and also Jacob that they should not die unless they have submitted to God [muslimūn] [Q 2:132]. Then immediately after, the Qur’an recalls the Jewish tradition from the Talmud,²⁰ as described earlier, that Jacob had gathered his sons and that his sons promise that they shall adhere to worship only one God to whom they are submitting [muslimūn] [Q 2:133]. According to the Talmud, as described earlier, Jacob’s sons recite the *Shema’*. The Quranic passages that follow emphasize the faith of Abraham [Q 2:134–141] and then start talking about the *Qibla* controversy. In my view, the *Qibla* passages in the Qur’an continue the same story. The Qur’an introduces the *Qibla* controversy by referring to the fools [sufahā’], whom it previously described as those who turn away from the faith of Abraham. At the same time, it draws in the Talmudic story of the origins of the blessings of the *Shema’*, when Jacob asked his sons on his deathbed the question of the oneness of God. The intertextuality between the Qur’an, Deuteronomy, and Talmud thus consists of the keywords and context of the *Qibla* passages and their allusions to the *Shema’*.

20. b. Pesachim 56a, 4:8.

Love your neighbour

In the Gospels, when Jesus is questioned about the greatest commandment, he refers to the *Shema'*. Looking at the Gospels' account of the *Shema'* may contextualize how the Jews, at the time of the Gospels' authorship, might have understood the importance of the commandments pertaining to it:

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but Him.³³ To love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions. [Mark 12:28–34]

The Talmud explains that the recitation of the *Shema'* is the acceptance [qabala / Qibla] of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven. As a form of intertextuality, the Gospel of Mark seems to note that Jesus makes a relationship between the *Shema'* and the kingdom of God [Mark 12:34].

As the Talmud shows the importance of the direction of prayer, the concluding Quranic verse [Q 2:177] reveals that the real importance is to believe God, to love, and to love your neighbour as yourself, where here I am using the definition of neighbour given by Jesus, according to the Gospel of Luke. When talking about the *Shema'*, Jesus did not define a neighbour as the one who lived next door, but as someone who was in need and was helped [Luke 10:25–37].

The Quranic term for love, in Q 2:177, is not clear about whether love is referring to a person's love of wealth and money or the love of God. In other words, it could be understood that a person would pay charity from his possessions, even though he loves his possessions. This is the understanding of early Quranic commentaries, such as Al-Ṭabarī (2000 [Q. 2:177], 3: 340–344), al-Rāzī (2000 [Q. 2:177], 5: 215–216), and Ibn Kathīr (1999 [Q. 2:177], 1: 355). Shī'a commentators, such as al-Ṭabarsī (n.d. [Q. 2:177], 1: 440) and al-Ṭūsī (n.d. [Q. 2:177], 2: 95) have suggested that the love may either return to the love of money or the love of giving charity. Al-Ṭabarsī (n.d. [Q. 2:177], 1: 440), however, also suggests that the love could even be returning to the believer making the act of charity. Nonetheless, there could be a linguistic appreciation here that the love could be return-

ing to God. As such, it may be understood as a reference to those who pay out of love of God or even out of love for the people to whom the charity is being paid. Perhaps there are people who are ascetics for whom money is not an object of their love; it may not necessarily mean that since they do not love money, they are not being included among those people to whom this verse is referring as the believers who pay charity. If we do adopt such an understanding, then it may coincide with Deuteronomy's explication of the love of God in the *Shema'* passages, as such supplementing it with an eighth point of intertextuality.²¹

Notably, when discussing the *Qibla*, the Qur'an might have given the allusion to the role of the heart, as described earlier. The concluding verse about the *Qibla* describes righteousness using the term "love" and giving charity [Q 2:177]. Comparing this with the Talmud's commentary on the *Shema'* also gives us few insights. Norman Lamm discusses how the English translation of "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" [Deuteronomy 6:5] does not provide the full intent of the original Hebrew understanding of "might" (Lamm 1998, 141–145). The Hebrew word used is "me'odekha." The root of the term means "very" or "extra" (Lamm 1998, 141–145). The Talmud teaches that the meaning of "With all your might" is "with all your wealth."²² It also provides another interpretation that since *me'od* means "very," then with a play of words it comes to mean "for every measure that He measures you, for everything thank Him very much."²³ This might contextualize the concluding verse on the *Qibla* that righteousness is to pay, out of love, money as charity to those in need with all of a person's wealth and possessions. This understanding is not very different from that of Jesus' teaching according to the Gospels when asking the rich man to give his possessions to the poor. The meaning of "with all your might" is paralleled with giving charity in the concluding verse on the *Qibla*, making this the ninth point of intertextuality.

Another interesting point of intertextuality is the issue of the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the episode between Jesus and the Samaritan woman [John

21. This type of understanding can be seen within Maimonides' commentary, where he shows that a true understanding of the *Shema'* and the commandment of "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" [Deuteronomy 6:5] is the perception that any action a person makes must be for the love of God, and not for the love of being called a good person or rabbi, or even to receive reward in the world to come. Refer to Berkovits 2008, 2: 770–772. Also refer to Avraham Y. Finkel, Trans. 2005, *Fundamentals of the Rambam: Ethical and Inspirational Laws and Writings of Maimonides*, 1: 189–191.

22. b. Berakhot 9:5. Neusner's translation uses "With all your might," to mean "with all your money." Also refer to b. Sanhedrin 8:7.

23. b. Berakhot 9:5. Neusner's translation uses "With all your might," to mean "with all your money." Also refer to b. Sanhedrin 8:7.

4:23–24]. Since the Parable of the Good Samaritan is given in the context of the *Shema'*, the episode with the Samaritan woman refers to the focal point of prayer. The Samaritan woman tells Jesus that they worshipped on a mountain in Samaria, which is identified as Mount Gerizim, while the Jews worshipped in Jerusalem. Jesus informs her that there will come a time when God is worshipped in neither that mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in Spirit and Truth. Therefore, it can be understood that when the Qur'an discusses the *Qibla*, and referring it back to the *Shema'*, it does state that this is *al-haqq*, which can still be understood as truth, coinciding with the response that Jesus gives the Samaritan woman about true worship.

Service of the heart

The *heart* has an important role in Jewish worship, prayers, and the recitation of the *Shema'* from at least the time of the rabbinic discourses to modern times. Temple ceremonies in Judaism had an integral role in Jewish worship. Details of the Temple worship are documented in the Hebrew Bible. During the Temple era, both the First and Second Temples, prayer was only part of Jewish worship, while Temple ceremonies and festivals were another integral part. However, since the destruction of the Second Temple, Jewish prayers have become somewhat an exclusive form of Jewish religious expression. Judaism, today, considers prayer as a ritual that has replaced Temple service and is called, "Service of the Heart" (Knohl 1996). Jewish prayer takes its roots from the Bible [Hosea 7:14, Psalm 108:1, 111:1]. The Talmud calls prayers the "Service of the Heart," referring to the *Shema'*:

[C] "To love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart" [Deuteronomy 11:13] – What is the form of service that is carried out with the heart in particular?

[D] One must say it is Prayer.²⁴

Not only was the role of the heart important in the rabbinic discourses, but also in medieval times. In his book, *Guide to the Duties of the Heart*, Rabbi Baḥya ibn Paquda (d. 1080), when discussing the *Shema'*, has portrayed the importance of wholeheartedly worshipping God through conceiving His full unity and teaching it to the children (1999, 63–159). Psalm 62:8 represents prayer as pouring out of one's heart.

To the time of recent history and the present, the role of the heart continues to play a major role in Jewish worship. A quote from Schechter (1896), in which he cites the Talmud, summarizes the significance of the role of the heart in Jewish prayers and the recitation of the *Shema'*:

24. b. Tannaite 1:1. j. Berakhot 4:1.

God says to Israel, I bade thee read thy prayers unto me in thy synagogues; but if thou canst not, pray in thy house; and if thou art unable to do this, pray when thou art in thy field; and if this be inconvenient to thee, pray on thy bed; and if thou canst not do even this, think of me in thy heart.” Prayer is, indeed, as the Rabbis call it, “the service of the heart,” but “matters given over to the heart,” as the Rabbis phrase it, can, as the Rabbis express themselves in another place, only be comprehended by God. Prayer, and the recitation of the *Shema*’, are among the things which keep the heart of Israel in exile awake, and God requires of Israel that, at least in the time of prayer, they should give him all their hearts; that is to say, that the whole of man should be absorbed in his prayer. “Prayer without devotion is like a body without a soul,” is a common Jewish proverb. (Schechter 1896, 375–376)

The gap between text and *Tafsīr*

On the bases of my analysis, the *Qibla* passages can be understood as engaging with the *Shema*’ passages. This conclusion raises complicated historical questions, which I cannot address here, only point out. Starting with the issue of borrowing, it does not necessarily mean that Muḥammad borrowed excerpts from the Torah and the teachings of the Talmud. Rather, the Qur’an in these passages appears to be directly engaging with and interpreting the *Shema*’ passages and their commentary. It is as if the Arabic Islamic terminology is being woven through the Hebrew/Aramaic Jewish terminology simultaneously to make an argument. As Wasserstrom puts it, “The model of ‘influence and borrowing,’ by means of its over-emphasis on genetic origination, may in fact obscure insight into a mature interreligious sharing” (Wasserstrom 2014, 103). Zayd ibn Thābit, who traditionally is considered one of the Prophet’s scribes and who wrote down the Qur’an, did, according to one tradition cited by Ibn Sa’d (d. 230/845), study Hebrew and/or Syriac, as well the Jewish texts (1990, 2: 273–274),²⁵ thereby making this kind of interwoven textual allusion to Jewish literature in the Qur’an a possibility.

When we compare the literary analysis of the *Qibla* passages with what classical commentators suggest are the meanings of these passages, we find there is a vast lacuna. On one hand, the text engages with the *Shema*’, while classical commentators provide their opinions that are completely aloof of the Judaic background. This reminds us of John Wansbrough arguments for a literary analysis of the Qur’an, placing it within the literary milieu of its time and within the context that the Qur’an is part of the Biblical reception history. Rippin states, “So, a full study of the Qur’ān in the framework of literary history will require the text to be put within its overall literary context, that then requiring a study of the overall Near Eastern religious milieu which preceded the emergence of Islam” (Rippin 1983, 45). The problem with taking classical commentators’ *tafsīr*

25. Also see Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 6: 182 (#4984).

is that it may be filled with the biases of the commentator. On that account, Rippin states, “Each attempt to state that meaning [of the Qur’an] is done, of course, within the social, economic, political and religious framework of each individual commentator” (Rippin 1983, 45).

An attempt to understand why there is a lacuna between the text of the Qur’an and its *tafsīr* may bring us to several possibilities. This is something that the classical exegetes tried to do in filling the lacunae and trying to interpret the Qur’an in light of an assumed Muḥammad’s biography. However, Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), who does not foster the method of *tafsīr bil-ma’thūr* as traditional *mufasssīrūn*, has an interesting interpretation of the *Qibla* passages.

In Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary of Q 2:142–143, he suggests that the issue in controversy is the oneness of God [tawḥīd] (*Tafsīr*, [Q. 2:142–143]). He also states that *al-sufahā* in Q 2:142 are those who are ignorant of *tawḥīd* (*Tafsīr*, [Q. 2:142]). He also suggests that the house in Q 2:127 is the Ka’ba, which symbolizes the heart (*Tafsīr*, [Q. 2:127]). He also states the following on Q 2:142: “We will make your face follow the *Qibla* of the heart by expanding your chest.” (*Tafsīr*, [Q. 2:142–143], my translation). He also explains that the meaning of “turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque,” in this verse is “turn towards the expanded chest that is forbidden from the reach of the attributes of the self, passion, and Satan” (*Tafsīr*, [Q. 2:142–143], my translation).²⁶ On Q 2:149, Ibn ‘Arabī again explains “turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque,” to mean, “be present to the truth in your heart facing your chest.” (*Tafsīr*, [Q. 2:149], my translation). Here, we see a commentary that closely resembles the importance of the heart, as it is evident in the *Shema*’ passages and its Talmudic commentary.

There is a possibility that Muḥammad explained the *Qibla* passages. However, when his community grew, they wanted to be independent from their rivals, such as the Jews and the Christians. The community that became independent wanted to show that they have something better than the Jews and the Christians, and as such suppressed anything that suggests otherwise.

This may further be illustrated from Abraham’s sacrificial son and why Al-Ṭabarī, one of the earliest commentators, suggests that it is Isaac (Al-Ṭabarī 2000 [Q. 37:101–102], 21: 72–76). while later commentators, such as al-Rāzī and Ibn Kathīr, narrate that there were differences of opinion among Muslims on whether it was Isaac or Ishmael, and later conclude that it was Ishmael (Al-Rāzī 2000 [Q. 37:102], 26: 346–349. Also, Ibn Kathīr 1999 [Q. 37:101–102], 7: 26–31). Reuven Firestone shows how there were two groups—those who supported the notion that the sacrificial son is Isaac, and those who supported the notion that it was Ishmael—and while the former group were from the earliest accounts, later generations adopted the latter group’s opinion (Firestone 1989).

26. Forbidden and sacred share the same root in Arabic, *al-muḥarram*.

Perhaps the lack of evidence from Muslim literature that the Qur'an is engaging with the *Shema'* is due to Muslims wanting to distinguish their religion from Judaism and Christianity. Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 437/1045) states in his commentary about the sacrificial son, after saying that there were differing opinions among narrators, "The Jews claimed it is Isaac, and the Jews lied" (Q. 37:101, my translation). A polemical statement like this in a commentary pushes to prove that some Muslim scholars were trying as much as possible to make conclusions that differentiated and alienated them from the Jews and for that reason attempted to suppress any knowledge that would show similarities with the Jews, something that Jacob Lassner also finds true in medieval Muslim scholarship, such as Ibn Ishāq's *sīra*, which shows traces of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian features (Lassner 1990).

Conclusion

This article demonstrates parallel textual observations between the *Qibla* passages in the Qur'an and the *Shema'* passages in Deuteronomy and their Talmudic commentaries. In summary, there are nine main points of intertextuality that are noted: i) the term *Qibla* and *qabbalat*, which the Talmud uses as a reference to the *Shema'*; ii) both the *Qibla* passages and the *Shema'* bring forth the understanding of the sovereignty of God; iii) the Quranic allusion that the People of the Book know this as they know their own children is paralleled with the repetition of teaching the *Shema'* and the commandments to the children in Deuteronomy and its Talmudic commentary; iv) the parallel frequent usage of the term *al-ḥaqq* in the *Qibla* passages and the term *ḥuqqim* in the *Shema'* passages; v) the Quranic allusion to facing the heart and directing the heart to heaven in the *Qibla* passages that is also paralleled in the *Shema'* passages and their Talmudic commentaries; vi) the emphasis on the oneness of God in both the *Qibla* and *Shema'* passages; vii) the reference to Jacob questioning his sons on his deathbed that is found in the *Qibla* passages is paralleled with the Talmudic commentary on the *Shema'*; viii) the love emphasized in the concluding verse on the *Qibla* is paralleled with the *Shema'* passages; and ix) the importance of giving charity (out of love) in the concluding verse on the *Qibla*, which is paralleled with the Talmud's understanding of "with all your might" in the *Shema'*. Textually, it thus appears that the Quranic passages pertaining to the *Qibla* are directly engaging with the *Shema'* passages in Deuteronomy and their Talmudic commentaries. This is the only assertion we can make from this analysis. We can further extrapolate other opinions on the matter, and my further reflections are simply opinions.

Since Deuteronomy emphasizes the role of the heart, and the Qur'an uses the term *taqalluba*, which can also mean "to the heart," then perhaps both Scriptures are recalling the importance of the heart in prayer over the direction. Therefore, Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* to signify the heart would find itself with some linguistic and literal evidence from the Qur'an and

through the intertextuality with Deuteronomy and the Talmud. Even from the traditional context of Quranic commentaries, in which the circumstances of revelation [asbāb al-nuzūl] of the *Qibla* passages is on the changing of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca, the Qur'an might be arguing that it is not significant in which direction one prays, Jerusalem or Mecca, east or west, but what is important is to pray to God with all one's heart, to believe, to love, and to give charity. As such, the *Qibla* passages should not be read that the Quranic community is breaking up with the Jews. On the contrary, the passages are engaging with the Jews reminding them of the importance of the *Shema'* over the direction of prayer.

There is a high likelihood that early Muslims considered Isaac as the sacrificial son, as Firestone asserts, and that the direction of prayer is not more important than the heart, where faith of God's oneness truly resides. However, later generations of Muslims appear to have wanted to distance themselves from Jews and Christians. They wanted to distinguish the superiority of their prophet's genealogy, prophethood, and temple or direction of prayer. As Firestone concludes, Muslims in the first two centuries of Islam adopted a case of reactive theology, to prove their distinction and superiority over Jews and Christians (Firestone 1989, 131). This could also be a case and cause of the apparent lacuna between the textual analysis of the *Qibla* passages and the interpretation by classical exegetes.

Since the Qur'an's engagement with the *Shema'* passages is not found in any of the traditional Quranic commentaries, this also proves that these commentaries may not always be fully reliable in interpreting the Qur'an. Actually, it seems more relevant to interpret the Qur'an through the Bible and, in this case, the Talmud. The Qur'an cannot be read and interpreted separately, especially in the passages that directly invoke other Scriptures. Also, since this article uses the role of intertextual polysemy to show parallelism among the texts, further research on this sort of methodology is important in Quranic studies.

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