Islam – Midrashic Perspectives on a Quranic Term

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In memory of my father, M.J. Kister

Introduction

In this article I wish to examine several Quranic passages which contain the verb aslama and the noun islām in light of Jewish parallels. My aim is not to solve the riddle of the Quranic usage of the term islām but rather to point out Jewish parallels which can shed some light on the shades of meaning that this term seems to have accrued.

From my perspective as a student of midrashic literature, the Quran is a mine of midrashic material, both known and lost. The challenge is not only to note similar midrashic and Jewish motifs, but also to read Quranic passages as interpreting – sometimes in a remarkably nuanced manner – passages in the Bible, and to reconstruct the biblical interpretation underlying the Quran.

Two approaches may be discerned in prior studies of the word islām in the Quran. One approach treats the word in light of parallel words in Hebrew and Aramaic. The other confines itself to the use of Arabic texts. Among the latter the following suggestions may be mentioned: Meir Max Bravmann’s suggestion that the term denotes

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defiance of death and self-sacrifice (for the sake of God and his prophet);\(^2\) Helmer Ringgren’s suggestion that it denotes surrendering to God;\(^3\) and the suggestion of David Zvi Baneth that it denotes the worship of one God alone.\(^4\) My father, Meir Jacob Kister, discussed this word briefly in his article concerning the pre-Islamic *talbiyāt* (ritual invocations). In one of these *talbiyāt* the worship of Allah (as opposed to that of the other gods) is referred to as *islām* in the phrase *tanazzuhan wa-islām*, "self-withdrawal (from shame) and *islām*". He believed that this text supports Baneth’s suggestion and indicates that already in pre-Islamic times the term denoted – if not Monotheism exactly – exclusive devotion to the main God, Allah.\(^5\) Though this evidence is important, it is difficult to base far-reaching conclusions on one word in a tradition transmitted in Islamic times. The main source for the word *islām* in a religious context remains the Quran.

The Quran should be studied against the background of both pre-Quranic Arabic and Jewish and Christian literature. I am not competent to deal with the former, and my contribution will be from the latter perspective. Various scholars have attempted to link the word *islām* to its Hebrew and Aramaic cognates and their usages in Judaism and Christianity. Leopold Zunz thus hinted very briefly that the word *muslim* might be related to the phrase *hislim nafsho* (נפש והשלים, "he gave his life"),\(^6\) (also: "delivered himself [to


Moritz Steinschneider, in a footnote, reacted to Zunz's suggestion by considering, alternatively, that the origin of the Arabic usage is the word *tamim* (תמים), "wholly (devoted); perfect" – which is synonymous to Hebrew and Aramaic שלם – and is used in the Bible (Gen 17:1) with regard to Abraham. Others suggested a link with the word *shalom* (שלום), in the sense of "salvation", or "covenant", or with Syriac usage. Josef Horovitz drew attention to usages such as "delivered himself to God" (referring in a midrash to a proselyte who abandoned idolatry), Shlomo...
Dov Goitein took up Horovitz’s line, adding a few further references. The comparative approach common to these studies has not been developed in the last decades.

In this article I wish to carry further this approach, by comparing the Quranic usage to certain uses of its Hebrew cognate—not merely in an isolated, lexical study, but also with reference to the specific midrashic reading of a biblical text to which the Quranic usage can and should be read.

I. The Semantic Range of Hebrew *hishlim*

First let us survey briefly the various meanings the verb *hishlim* has in Hebrew which may be relevant for the study of the Arabic term *islām*.

In some instances *hishlim* is a denominative verb derived from *shalom*, “peace”, with the meaning “make peace.” It should, however, be remembered that quite often the peace yearned for is established by the surrender of the enemy. Thus we read concerning the inhabitants of Gibeon: “There was not a town that made peace with (*hishlima el*) the Israelites (אֶל הִشְׁלִימוּ הָאֲשֶׁר עִיר הָיְתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל) except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all were taken in battle” (Joshua 11:19). Likewise we read concerning an enemy town: “If it does not submit to you peacefully (*tashlim*; וְאִם עִמָּךְ תַּשְׁלִים לֹא), but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it” (Deuteronomy 20:12). Similarly we read in Job 5:23 “and the wild animals shall be at peace with you (*hishlim* הַשָּׂדֶה וְחַיַּת לָּךְ).” In all of these verses (and others) the meaning of “making peace” is the surrender of the enemies. It seems likely that some occurrences of this verb in rabbinic literature should be explained in a similar manner. Such is the case of the brigand who in his old age surrenders to the king, saying למלך שולמים אני, “I will make peace with the king”. Likewise, in a liturgical poem composed around the time of Muhammad we read

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14 It is now easy to have the data of the usage of this verb in the best texts of rabbinic literature as well as in the *piyyut* literature with the aid of *ma'agarim*, the database of the Historical Dictionary of the Academy of the Hebrew Language: http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx

concerning the Messiah that “all will surrender to him that he be king over them” (וככל ישלימו לו שליטה עליהם Malk). In Shir Ha-shirim Zuta, a passage commenting on “Return, return, O Shulammite!” (Song of Songs 7:1) asserts that all human beings will surrender to God and He will make a pact with them (שכל בא עולם חליכות לכלachers והוא נוהג Malk) as opposed to those which rebel against him (מרדו בו) or do not accept his authority (כפרו בו). The huphʿal stem is used to describe legions which surrender to a king (מלך רבש ודם כל زمن שלגיונותיו משהלモノ לא ישלימו להם Malk) or do not accept his authority (כפרו בו). In Pesikta Rabbati § 26 we are told that Jeremiah was accused of planning to surrender (le-hashlim) to the Chaldeans (אלה השדדים) as opposed to those which rebel against him (מרדו בו) or do not accept his authority (כפרו בו). As we shall see, this secular usage is significant for construing the background of the Quranic account of the story of Solomon and the queen of Sheba. This usage is also found in the Quran in a religious context. Compare:

Q 13:15, "To God bow (yasjudū) all who are in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly […]", 20

Q 3:83, “[…] and to Him has surrendered (aslama) whoso is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly […]”

In these verses sajada and aslama are parallel. Note, however, that in the context of Q 3:83 islām is specifically a religion opposed to Judaism and Christianity (i.e., Islam), as is made clear in the following verses:


18 Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa 15 = Exodus Rabbah 41.4.


20 “All the nations that You have made shall come and bow down before You, O Lord’ (Ps 86:9) Willingly or unwillingly” (Midrash Psalms 86:4, ed. Buber 373; see S. Lieberman, Deuteronomy Rabbah [Jerusalem: Wharmann Books: 1974], 133 [in Hebrew]).
Say: 'We believe in God, and that which has been sent down on us, and sent down on Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes [that is, Jacob’s twelve sons], and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we are Muslimūna.' (85) Whoso desires another religion than Islām, it shall not be accepted of him […]

According to another meaning of the verb hishlim – attested from the Second Temple times and till late Antiquity21 – denotes “handing over, delivering”. Thus hishlim naʃso (משלח נפשו) means “he gave his life” and hishlim ‘asmo (משלחשמו) means “he handed himself (or: his life) over”.22 The poet Yannai (fifth century?) refers to Jacob as ìממשלימיך (“those who have surrendered themselves to you”) and adds: ìצצם השלםך ("he surrendered himself to you").23

In the late Tanhumâ midrashim the phrase ìהשלים עצמוך occurs occasionally as a term for piety. Thus it is said that a proselyte is favored in God’s eyes more than those who attended the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai since he “delivers himself (mashlim) to the Holy One, blessed be He” (בְּהַמִּשְלָם צצמו לְךָ), without seeing the wonders which accompanied that event.24 It is not always possible to distinguish between the two meanings: “to surrender” and “to deliver oneself;” both are, in fact, closely linked semantic variations of one meaning. A classical midrashic collection, Genesis Rabbah,

21 The dates of the paytanim can be given only very roughly.
23 Zvi Meir Rabinovitz, The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai according to the Triennial Cycle of the Pentateuch and the Holidays (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1985),1:213 (in Hebrew). Such condensed phraseology is found also in Midrash Tehillim 76.2 (ed. Buber; Wilna: Rom, 341), where the tribe of Judah is said to have “surrendered (itself) (hishlim) to God in being first to enter the Red Sea and thereby to have hallowed His name” (משלחו לך ויקדש שמו). This expression, however, is absent in earlier versions of the same tradition.
24 Tanhumâ Lekha §6.
asserts that when Adam was in Eden, before his sin, he was ("obedient, surrendered, to his Maker);25 in later midrashim Shem is described as (worthy and obedient to his Maker)26 or (worthy and perfect to his Maker).27

The picture is complicated somewhat by another meaning of the root sh-l-m, namely "perfect, whole." Accordingly hislim (in the hiph'il stem) means "to make whole". When we read in Syriac version of Ben Sira that Josiah ashlem his heart to God (חָסָלֵם לְאֹלֶה; Sir 49:3), does this mean "he delivered his heart to God" or "he made his heart wholly devoted"? In Syriac both interpretations are acceptable; the Hebrew original, in which the root tmm is used (ְיִשְׁמָא אֶל לְבָנו) demonstrates that the latter option is correct: "He made his heart perfect to God" (by abandoning idolatry).28 Should we interpret similarly the phrase תשלים לאל לְבָנו in a piyyut of the Qillir (who flourished about the time of Muhammad)?29 When another classical midrashic collection, Pesikta De-Rab Kahana explains the name Jerusalem as “the daughter that fears Me and is mashlemet / mushlemet to Me” (הבת שיראה ומשלמת לי),30 it is clear that this is a term for piety and devotion to God; what this exactly means is less clear, nor can we be sure from which sense of the root sh-l-m this usage is derived.31 Lexically, it seems that the Hebrew root consists of a web of entangled meanings. A piyyut of the poet El'azar birbi Qillir combines the two meanings: Isaac is characterized there as ("he [Isaac at the Aqedah] who delivered his soul [i.e. gave his life] wholeheartedly"); the wordplay between the usage of hislim in the meaning of "delivering" and tom,

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26 Tanhuma Buber, Noah 19.
28 Cf. אליה לְבָנו ויתם "he made his heart perfect (or: wholly) for her," referring to wisdom.(4Q525 2-3 ii 8 (E. Puech, Qumrán Grotte 4.XVIII: Textes Hébreux [4Q521-4Q528, 4Q576-4Q579], DJD 25 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998], 122).
29 Qillir, Erez Maṭa, line 535 (Elizur, Rabbi El'azar birbi Kiliri Hymni Pentacostales [Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdanim, 2000],128 [in Hebrew]).
"wholeheartedly, being perfect" (a synonym of shalem) is noteworthy. It can be inferred from a survey of all the occurrences of the verb that there is no remarkable difference in usage between Hebrew texts before and after the emergence of Islam.

These observations may help in reading the Quranic texts in their midrashic context.

II. Q 2:124–133

The first passage to be discussed is from Sūrat al-Baqara (Q 2), a Medinan Sura replete with polemics against Jews and Christians. In this passage it is stressed that Islam rather than Judaism or Christianity is the religion of Abraham. Thus we read:

(124) And when his Lord tested Abraham with (certain) words, and he fulfilled them. He said: “Behold, I make you a leader for the people”. Said he: “And of my progeny?” He said: “My covenant shall not reach the evildoers” [...]

(127) And when Abraham, raised up the foundations of the House, and Ishmael with him: “Our Lord, receive this from us; You are the Hearing, the Knowing; (128) and, our Lord, make us muslimīna to You, and of our progeny a nation (umma) muslima to You; and show us our holy rites, and turn towards us; surely You are the Relenting, the Compassionate; (129) and, our Lord, send among

32 This phrase occurs in a piyyut by the Qillir to be published by Sh. Elizur and M. Rand in their forthcoming edition of the Qillir’ poems for the Day of Atonement (forthcoming). The text is accessible at the moment in http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx. See Elizur and Rand, Rabbi El’aar berabbi Qillir, Liturgical Poems for Rosh ha-Shana, 106 n. 27.

33 Because of the ambiguity of the verb aslama I left its various forms untranslated throughout the article.
them a Messenger, one of them, who shall recite to them Your signs, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them; You are the Mighty, the Wise”.

(130) Who therefore shrinks from the religion of Abraham, except he be foolish-minded? Indeed, we chose him in the present world, and in the world to come he shall be among the righteous. (131) When his Lord said to him: “aslim”, he said: “aslamtu to the Lord of all beings”. (132) And Abraham charged his sons with this and Jacob likewise: “My sons, God has chosen for you the religion; see that you die not save as muslimina”.

I believe that some verses in this passage, especially vv. 124 and 131 allude to Genesis 17.34 In this biblical chapter we read:

(3) and God said to him, (4) “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations… (6) …and kings shall come forth from you. (7) And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. (8) And I will give to you, and to your progeny after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” (9) And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your progeny after you throughout their generations.

The command aslim given to Abraham in verse 131 alludes to the divine command in the Bible, “walk before me, and be perfect (tamim)” (התהלך לפני יהוה תמימים) (Genesis 17:1). In the Targums this is rendered with shlem (והיה שלמים). This command is conceived of in Jewish traditions as introducing the commandment of circumcision, which is one of Abraham's trials.35 The words “Behold, I make you a leader for the people” in verse 124

34 According to Joseph Witztum (“The Foundations of the House [Q 2:127],” BSOAS 72 [2009], 25-40), the passage is related to Genesis chapter 22. I find the parallels to chapter 17 compelling. This does not exclude the possibility that some elements of Genesis 22 could be intertwined into the Quranic passage.

35 Avot de-Rabbi Nathan, Version A, Chapter 33 = Version B, chapter 36 (note the wording of version A살ם נמצא ובכולם, "he was found (by God) as perfect in all His trials.” See also Rashi's commentary to Genesis 17:1: "be perfect in all my trials." For Abraham as "perfect with the Lord in everything that he did"
alludes to God’s saying “for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations (אֲבֵי הָמוֹן נַחֲרָת)… and kings shall come forth from you” in Genesis 17:5-6.  

The question of whether or not the covenant with Abraham is conditional is an old Jewish problem. The idea that the covenant is indeed conditional is reflected in Q 2:124: “Said he [=Abraham]: “And of my progeny?” He [=God] said: ‘My covenant shall not reach the evildoers’”. In Genesis Rabbah §46.9, fourth-century rabbis qualify the promise of Genesis 17:8 as depending on Abraham’s accepting God as his Lord, observing circumcision, and keeping of the covenant as mentioned in Genesis 17:9. Thus it is said in the name of Rabbi Avin the son of Yose : “'And I will give to you, and to your progeny after you,' etc. (Gen 17:8), providing that you fulfill the condition, 'and as for you, you shall keep My covenant' (Gen 17:9).” In other words: the covenant with Abraham is not unconditional according to these utterances.

Moreover, the phrase "And God said to Abraham" at the beginning of Gen 17:9 seems superfluous, since it is God who speaks to Abraham in the preceding verses (Gen 17:3-8). Why—to ask a midrashic question—should the text repeat "and God said to Abraham"? The dialogue in Q 2:124 may preserve an otherwise unattested midrashic answer: by inserting a question by Abraham between verses 8 and 9 in Genesis 17, namely, “Are You granting this to my children unconditionally?” Verse 9 could be construed as God's response to this query of Abraham’s, namely “you shall keep my covenant, you and your seed after you” – only if they keep my covenant. If this is the case, then the words "And God said to Abraham" in this verse are altogether appropriate: this was what God said to Abraham in response to a query. His response is "you shall keep my covenant, you and your progeny after you." This reconstructed midrash, which

see the Book of Jubilees 23:10 (J.C. VanderKam, The Book of Jubilees: Edition [Leuven: Peeters, 1989; CSCO 510 = SÆ 87], 127, 278; idem, The Book of Jubilees: Translation [Leuven: Peeters, 1989; CSCO 511 = SÆ 88], 139). Jacob is also characterized in the Book of Jubilees as "perfect" (Jub. 19:13 [see VanderKam, Translation, 112-113]; 27:17; after זָכַר, Gen 25:27), and so is Jacob's seed (Jub. 25:20).

36 The Quranic wording may be taken as an interpretation to the ambiguous expression אֲבֵי הָמוֹן נַחֲרָת. This expression raises the question in what sense will Abraham be "the father of the multitude of nations."

suits the wording of the Quran, conveys the sentiment of the passage in *Genesis Rabbah* 46.9, but in the form of a dialogue between Abraham and God.

Q 2:132, "And Abraham charged his sons with this and Jacob likewise," (وَوَصَّىَ بِهِ) alludes to another biblical verse, “For I have known him (יכָּלֵד יִצְרָאֵל), that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord” (Genesis 18:19) The biblical text’s "I have known him" may be understood as an oblique reference to God’s covenant with Abraham recounted in the preceding chapter of Genesis. The Quranic wording, "charged his sons with this" might best be understood as similarly referring to Abraham’s transmission of his covenant obligations to his descendants. Already in the *Book of Jubilees* (2nd century BCE) Genesis 18:19 was interpreted to mean that all the patriarchs, the children of Abraham, charged their children before their death “to keep the way of the Lord” (*Jubilees* 20:2-10; 36:3-4).38

The Quranic passage concentrates on Jacob’s testament to his children: "and Jacob likewise: 'My sons, God has chosen for you the religion; see that you die not save as muslimīna.'" In a passage in *Genesis Rabbah* Jacob specifically is depicted as charging his children before his death: “Hearken to the God of Israel, your father” (שמעו אל יהוה אלהיכם).39 In another passage in the same composition,40 a confessional statement is attributed to Jacob at his death. He says to his children: “He is our God to whom we deliver (mashlimim) our souls (probably at the time of death).”41

The relevance of the Jewish midrashic material for Q 2:133, is striking.42 The Quranic verse reads as follows:

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40 The midrash appends to Genesis 49:3 (“When Jacob ended his charge to his sons”).
41 *Genesis Rabbah* 100 (101).1 (ed. Theodor Albeck, 1283). This is an interpretation of the words שלום אלהיכם in Ps 100:3 (“Know that the Lord is God. It is He that made us, and we are His”).
42 In Q 2:127-9 Abraham and Ishmael pray that God make them muslimīna laka and make their progeny a nation which is muslima laka and that He send a messenger, one of them. Needless to say, the narration in this passage aims at stressing Muhammad’s special importance; it is therefore quite possible that it does not necessarily draw on any passage in the Bible or elsewhere. One may hesitantly hypothesize, however, that
(133) Were you witnesses, when death came to Jacob? When he said to his sons: “What will you worship after me?” They said: “We will worship your God and the God of your fathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, One God; to Him (lahu) we are muslimūna”.

A rabinic parallel is attested already in a tannaitic source, (edited at the end of the 2nd century CE; the following translation is deliberately literal):

When our father Jacob was departing from this world he called his sons… He said to them: “Is there division (mahāloqet) in your hearts concerning Him who spoke, and the world came into being?” They replied: “Hear, O Israel, our father! Just as there is no division in your heart, so there is no division in our heart concerning Him who spoke and the world came into being [=God]. Rather, The Lord, our God, the Lord is one. (Deuteronomy 6:4)… He gave thanks and praise to God that no corruption [=corrupted, wicked sons] had emerged from him.44

In a late stratum of Midrash Tehillim this is formulated as follows:

the Quranic paraphrase of “and be perfect” (الْمَوْتُ) of Genesis 17:1 was combined with another biblical passage with similar phraseology, namely Deuteronomy 18:13–18, “You must be perfect (tamim) with the Lord your God… The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brethren.” Deut 18:18 was cited by medieval Muslim scholars as a proof-text from the Torah for Muhammad’s prophecy (‘Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī, Al-dīn wa-al-dawla, [ed. ’Adel Nuweyhed; Bairut: Dār al-āfaq al-jadida: 1973], 137; Samaw’al al-Maghribi, Iḥām al-yahūd: Silencing the Jews [New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1964], *29, 45. It is also possible that these verses, describing the building of a holy house by Abraham and Ishmael, are influenced by Christian or Jewish traditions (as suggested by Witztum, "The Foundations of the House.").


44 English translation adapted from Reuven Hammer, Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 58. This text has been compared with the Quran by Geiger (A. Geiger, Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judentume aufgenommen? [Bonn: F. Baaden, 1833], 140-141 [ET: Judaism and Islam (Madras: M.D.C.S.P.C.K. Press, 1898), 110]).
From Abraham emerged corruption [=wicked sons]: Ishmael and all the sons of Keturah; from Isaac emerged corruption: Esau and his chiefs. But Jacob begot twelve tribes, all of them wholly (devoted) (shlemim) to the Holy One, blessed be He, as is said, "We are all one man’s sons; we are upright" (Genesis 42:11).45

The words שלמים ליהקב, “wholly (devoted) (shlemim) to the Holy One," are strikingly similar to the Quran’s lahu muslimūna. It can be demonstrated that the phraseology of this passage is related to the phraseology of earlier sources. Interestingly, the words שלמים ליהקב are also precisely the opposite of “having division (mahāloqet) in the hearts" concerning God (wis Calpess Matolak ut mi śammar yehu utulfa) in the parallel passage in the Sifre. The word mahloqet does not carry here its more common meaning (“disagreement”), but is rather a term for describing belief in two powers, i.e., deviation from monotheistic belief.46

This is also how the Targum renders the difficult words concerning the people who worship both God and the Baal in 1 Kings 18:37, “and that You have turned their hearts back” (ואתה הסבות את לבם אחרנית); in the Targum this sentence reads: “and they made their heart divided” (ואנון יהבו ית לבון פליג). Here we have "a divided heart" – the opposite of "a whole heart" – to express anything less than strict monotheism. This is


46 For a similar usage see a late midrash according to which Moses asks the angels: חיה דך ואלא אלוהים אחרים – הלוחים יש לך? Thou shalt have no other gods (Exod 20:3). Have you a division (of heart)? Do you have (i.e., believe in) two powers?" (Pesikta Rabbati, §20.4; English translation adapted from Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, 1.409). It is unclear to me how this sense is related, if at all, to חולק לב. The secular sense of the latter expression is to hesitate (e.g., Pharaoh hesitates concerning the chase of Israel; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, Vayyehi Beshallah, 1 [ed. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949], 129). The secular sense of the latter expression is to hesitate (e.g., Pharaoh hesitates concerning the chase of Israel; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, Vayyehi Beshallah, 1 [ed. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949], 129). The secular sense of the latter expression is to hesitate (e.g., Pharaoh hesitates concerning the chase of Israel; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, Vayyehi Beshallah, 1 [ed. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949], 129). The secular sense of the latter expression is to hesitate (e.g., Pharaoh hesitates concerning the chase of Israel; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, Vayyehi Beshallah, 1 [ed. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949], 129). The secular sense of the latter expression is to hesitate (e.g., Pharaoh hesitates concerning the chase of Israel; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, Vayyehi Beshallah, 1 [ed. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949], 129). The secular sense of the latter expression is to hesitate (e.g., Pharaoh hesitates concerning the chase of Israel; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, Vayyehi Beshallah, 1 [ed. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949], 129). The secular sense of the latter expression is to hesitate (e.g., Pharaoh hesitates concerning the chase of Israel; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, Vayyehi Beshallah, 1 [ed. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949], 129).
perhaps also the meaning of the rabbinic saying "with all your heart" (Deut 6:5) – with every heart that you have, so that your heart will not be divided concerning God" (Sifre Deut 32, ed. Finkelstein, 55).47

This phrase is found in the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Targumim (Neofiti and the Fragment Targum) to Deuteronomy 6:4 (composed prior to the 6th century), where Jacob asks his sons if they worship idols and they "answer together with a whole heart" (ךֵּסֵכִיָּה תְּחָשְׁבוֹתָּהּ כְּחָדָה). A whole heart is a heart which worships only the one God, whereas the antonyms, “a divided heart” and “division”, denote the worship of other gods besides God.

Noteworthy in this context is a text that precedes the latter passages by many centuries. According to the Hebrew original of Ben Sira 49:2–3 (2nd century BCE), Josiah destroyed the idols (דְּשֵׁב וְתַעֲבֹתֵהוּ הָבִיל;) i.e., made his heart whole for God, – that is, abstained from worshipping other gods. As mentioned above, in the early Syriac translation of Ben Sira included in the Peshita (2nd century CE?) the Hebrew sentence is rendered with the verb aslem: (Josiah) aslem his heart to God (ܐܘܝܠܡ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܘܐܫܠܡ).48

See the parallel in Deuteronomy Rabbah (a midrash compiled in a much later date): 'כלל לבכם' – לא יאوا לבך, 글ר לבך כלו, ולא יאיו טעם לא התאוו למשה בלבו 'with all your heart' (Deut 6:5) – your heart will not be divided, but perform the commandment for its own sake wholeheartedly."See also S. Lieberman, Midrash Devarim Rabbah, 3rd edition (Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1974), 70, 138 (in Hebrew). Lieberman thinks that the meaning of the expression is "uncertain, have doubt" (he compares it to Greek δίψυχος). However, elsewhere in the same compilation (in the version of Deuteronomy Rabbah edited by Lieberman) the term שוה, which is rightly recognized by Lieberman as the antonym of חלוק, refers to idolatry (it is said that gentiles אין שוה שמשו בביתו והיושב ממלכתו תמליכו "their heart is not equal, because they are idolatrous and do not accept God's authority." See Lieberman, ibid., 71 n. 10. See also the wording of a late passage of the Samaritan compilation Tibat Marqe: 'שמע יראנו אלהינו ביצאו세 את אדומ רשבים ממנה ומלאו בה והשלום זכרתי לתרעוף."

Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one' – when it is recited it is made it a foundation, and made the minds perfect by it, and made it the root of God's worship" (Tibat Marqe, 4.106 [245a], Ben-Hayyim, 299).

Possibly, this usage may explain the following passage from Deuteronomy Rabbah: "כמה יאדו ממליכים מא Odin הלא נמי? zeigen ילכו?" המאדו מנמליכים מא Odin הלא נמי בזום של העון, שמי שיאד אופי ייוסיפו במשה והיכל לארך מא". (How many days were they [i.e. Israel] mashlamim to the Holy One, blessed be He? Not [even] one day were they mashlamim to the Holy One, blessed be He, but on the very same day they sinned in idolatry, as it says Yet they deceived him with his mouth... their heart was not upright toward Him (Psalms 78:36–7)."

47 See the parallel in Deuteronomy Rabbah (a midrash compiled in a much later date).

48 See Lieberman, ibid., 71 n. 10.
It is possible that this concept is found already in the Hebrew Bible. In Hosea 10:2 we read, as part of the description of Israel's idolatry:

יאשמו עתה לבם חלק, which could be translated: "their heart is divided, (therefore) they will now be destroyed." It seems to me that the "divided heart" is the opposite of worshipping God with one heart.

Having established the meaning of the word maḥāloqet in the Sifre’s tradition concerning Jacob and his sons, we are in a position to evaluate the Palestinian Targums which render Genesis 49:2 as follows (in the wording of MS Neofiti 1):

מן דאתכנשו תרין עשר שבטו דיעקב...ญו אבון י⚓ך וֹאמר לֹוהּ: אברוהם אביו דאתכנש הק מציה פמלא ושמעת כל בניו דקדרות, ורצית אביאה הק מציה פמלא – עוד אחורי, והאדה דאל תבו בינו בֹּבר הליבנו פמלא על אוחי למלול לפפול חמד שערו אוחרי. עניי חצרת עשר שערו דריךק פמלא

Our father Jacob said to them: “From Abraham, my father’s father, arose corruption – Ishmael and all the sons of Keturah. And from Isaac, my father, arose corruption – Esau, my brother. And I fear lest there should be among you one whose heart is divided against his

(Deuteronomy Rabbah ed. Lieberman, 8). The antonym of mushlamim is idolaters and the synonym in the cited verse is עמו_correctו לבר. As I mentioned above, the poet Yannai (5/6 century CE?) refers to the people of Israel as “a people who are mushlamim to You (i.e., God)” (cf. in a piyyut by the Qilir: Civ 함ל כלם היו ומושלמים שלימים). By itself, the word mushlamim in Deuteronomy Rabbah may be understood as “devoted,” and it may be suggested that it is derived from the other meaning of the root, namely "to deliver oneself" to God; in light of the other passages discussed here, however, it seems to me unlikely that the meaning of "wholly worshipping God" did not play any role in this midrash.


50 This interpretation is not found in classical rabbinic literature. It would therefore seem that the usage in rabbinic Hebrew is not derived from Hosea, but rather that the idiom continued to be in use. The following verse in Hosea connects the rebellion against God with rebellion against the king. In this context see Amarna letter 119, 41-44: "I have no second heart, my face (intention) being to serve the king my lord" (The translations of W.L. Moran [The Amarna Letters (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1992), 197 and of A.F. Rainey [The El-Amarna Correspondence (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1.630-631] are rather free.) I thank Dr. Noga Darshan-Ayali for referring me to this text.
brothers to go and worship foreign idols”. The twelve tribes of Jacob answered together and said: “Hear us, O Israel, our father; the Lord our God is one Lord”. Though all the surviving Palestinian targums share the text "divided against his brothers to go and worship before foreign idols," it would seem – in light of the other sources discussed above – that the words "divided heart" originally meant the deviation from the sole worship of God, and that the words “against his brothers” (על אחיו) were added mistakenly by someone who misinterpreted the expression “whose heart is divided” (דלביה פליג) in this context, interpreting it – in light of another sense of this expression in Aramaic – as referring to an argument between human beings. The latter sense, however, suits neither the context nor the midrashic parallels. As mentioned above, according to the Palestinian Targums to Deuteronomy 6:4 describing the same conversation, all of Jacob's sons "answered together with a whole heart," precisely the antonym of "divided heart." I therefore suggest that the original text of the Palestinian Targums to Gen 49:2 – or rather the original tradition embedded in the Targum – was:

ללא יהוה בניוכם בער דלביה פליג למדא להפלת קדם טועון אחרניין

Lest there should be among you one whose heart is divided to go and worship foreign idols.

It is of general importance to point out this case, in which the Palestinian Targums, in their present forms, interpret a midrashic source in a manner which departs from its original meaning. It is difficult to decide conclusively whether there was ever a more original form of the Palestinian Targum to Genesis 49:2 (without the words על אחיו, "against his brothers") or whether, alternatively, the tradition was misinterpreted (i.e., the words על אחיו were added to it) in the earliest form of the Palestinian Targum. In view of the Targum to Deut 6:4, "answer together with a whole heart," I incline to the first solution.

Thus far we have examined a Quranic passage which polemicizes against Judaism and Christianity while drawing on Jewish traditions. The Arabic verb aslama in this

51 English translation adapted from Martin McNamara, Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 216–7.
passage has been shown to be a parallel of *shalem*, *tamim*, and *hishlim* in those Jewish traditions.

**III. Q 37:84, 101-103**

Let us now turn to another passage of the Quran. In Q 37:84 it is said that Abraham “came unto his Lord with a *qalb salīm*”. This phrase is to be understood of course in light of the Biblical phrase *lev* or *levav shalem*, wholeheartedness. In the present case it seems that this phrase refers to monotheism, as in the next verse Abraham’s battle in his youth against the idolatry of his father and his people is described.

Later on the sacrifice of Abraham’s son, who remains unnamed, is related:

(101) Then We gave him the good tidings of a prudent boy; (102) and when he had reached the age of running (or work) with him, he said: "My son, I see in a dream that I shall sacrifice you; consider, what do you think?" He said: "My father, do as you are commanded; you shall find me, God willing, one of the steadfast." (103) When they had *aslamā*, and he ... (wa-tallahu li-l-jabīn), (104) We called unto him: "Abraham, (105) you have fulfilled *(şaddaqta)* the vision [...]"

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52 The phrase is borrowed from Hebrew; see Ringgren, *Islām*, 8-10. In the context of Arabic vocabulary it is explained "sound, healthy, unimpaired (heart)" (Ambros, *Concise Dictionary*, 138). Muslim commentators understood very well that monotheism is meant here (see, e.g., Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Al-Turkī [Cairo, 2001], 19.565). The phrase occurs also in Q 26:89; the sense of "wholeheartedness" in this latter verse might be broader; see also below.

53 Abraham says: *innī arā fi –l-manām innī adhbahuka. fa-nzur mādhā tarā*. Note the sight vocabulary (*nażara, ra'ā*) in Abraham’s question.

54 For a suggestion concerning the interpretation of these words see N. Calder, "The Sa'y and the Jabīn: Some Notes on Quran 37:102-103," *JSS* 31 (1986), 17-26 esp. 22-26. Calder interprets *jabīn* as mountain; he does not interpret the word *tallahu*. 
Of special interest for the present study is verse 103, where it is said that Abraham and his son aslamā (dual form of aslama). Scholars such as Charles Cutler Torrey considered this to be an important key for understanding the term islām, whereas Baneth considered it a problematic and uncharacteristic usage. We will examine it in light of the parallels within the context of the nearby verses. In verse 102 Abraham says: “My son, I see in a dream that I shall sacrifice you”. A similar notion about the occasion of the command to sacrifice the son is found in a late Jewish work, Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer §31:

באותו הלילה נגלה הקב"ה על אברם.

On the same night, the Holy One blessed be He, revealed Himself to Abraham

As Rabbi David Luria rightly noted (in his commentary ad loc.), this is grounded in the words of Genesis 22:3, “So Abraham rose early in the morning,” which suggests that God’s order to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:2–3) occurred during the night. To this we may add the similarity between “Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey” (Genesis 22:3) and “Balaam got up in the morning and saddled his donkey” (Numbers 22:21), the latter verse following immediately after “That night God came to Balaam and said to him…” (Numbers 22:20). Thus, the Quranic reference to a dream apparently elaborates on a Jewish midrash that paid close attention to the words of the Bible and brought together distinct passages with similar wording. To be sure, Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer is a post- Quranic document, but this midrashic detail is not derived from the Quran; in fact, one could reconstruct the midrash underlying the Quran without the evidence of Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer. The Quran would seem to be the earliest testimony of this specific midrashic tradition. The rest of verse 102, in which Abraham's son

56 Baneth, “What Did Muhammad Mean?”, 188.
57 For a mirror comparison between Abraham and Balaam see, Genesis Rabbah 55:8 (ed. Theodor – Albeck, 593).
encourages him to do as commanded and thus become a full partner in the deed, is reminiscent of the famous rabbinic (and Christian) legends.\(^{58}\)

In verse 103 following the words “and when they \textit{aslamā}”, Abraham’s act towards his son is described obscurely (טָלֵלֶהוּ \textit{wa-tallahu li-jabīn}). Then we hear of the call to Abraham: “Abraham, you have already fulfilled (صدقته) \textit{saddaqa} the dream” (verses 104–5). This too is better understood in light of a midrashic reading of the Bible. God’s command to Abraham is, according to the Bible: \textit{העָלָהוּ לָהוּ \textit{laho le-}
\textit{alahu} \textit{li-yu} \textit{lulah} meaning "sacrifice him to Me as a burnt offering." The midrash, however, choses to interpret God’s commandment in retrospect as commanding Abraham merely to "take Isaac up" (a literal translation of the word \textit{העָלָהוּ if it stands alone). Thus the rabbis say in an ingenious midrash:

\vspace{1em}

אמרו \textit{לוהי}, "העלווה \textit{li-yu} \textit{lulah}." \textit{העילוהו \textit{alahu} \textit{li-yu} \textit{lulah}.}

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: “Did I say to you: ‘Slaughter him?’ ‘Take him up’ is what I said to you. You have taken him up; now take him down.

According to the Quran, however, Abraham saw in his dream (i.e., was commanded by God) that he should \textit{sacrifice} Isaac (verse 102), and it is stated that this was fulfilled by Abraham (verse 105).

It seems, then, that several aspects of the Quranic passage are rooted in Jewish midrashim concerning the binding of Isaac. The word \textit{aslamā} too finds its parallel at the exact same point in the story of the binding of Isaac in the Palestinian targums. In Targum Neofiti to Genesis 22:8, for example, we read that “the two of them went together, wholeheartedly” \textit{(ואזלו תריון כחדא בלבה שלמה).} \(^{60}\) The Jewish parallel to \textit{aslamā} then would be \textit{be-lebba shlema}, their wholehearted willingness to bind and to be bound.\(^{61}\)

\footnotesize


\(^{59}\) \textit{Genesis Rabbah} 56:8 (ed. Theodor & Albeck, 604).

\(^{60}\) English translation adapted from McNamara, \textit{Targum Neofiti} 1.117. See also J.L. Kugel, \textit{Traditions}, 305-306.

\(^{61}\) The relationship of the Quranic verse to midrashic renderings of Gen 22:8 has been noted by Calder ("Sa'y," 22-23); my emphasis here is on the lexical dimension of \textit{aslama}.
A liturgical poem of Qillir, roughly a contemporary of Muhammad, offers a slightly different parallel. There Isaac is referred to as "the pure one who gave up (ha-mashlim) his soul (nefesh) at the binding". Elsewhere, Qillir refers to Isaac as "He who gave up his soul wholeheartedly". Similarly, in a liturgical poem of Yoḥanan ha-Kohen ben Yehoshua (fl. in the beginning of Islamic rule in Palestine) it is said of Isaac:

כי השלים למטאכלת ולאש תוקר / והלב בלב שלם תוקר

For he (=Isaac) delivered (himself; hislim) to the knife and to the fire that would be lit / and the binder and the bound one went whole-heartedly (be-lev shalem). Here the verb hislim by itself (without any complement) has the meaning "deliver oneself to death." In any case, it is only Isaac who delivers his life, whereas Abraham and Isaac both go wholeheartedly.

It seems rather plausible that the wording of the Quranic passage is related to the wording of the Jewish sources.

IV. Q 27:29-44

In yet another Quranic passage the comparison to a Jewish source is illuminating. In the course of the story about the Queen of Sheba (Q 27:17–44) we read as follows:

قالت يا أبتها الملا
إلين لقيت كتاب حريم (29) إنه من مسلمين واني بن اسم الله الرحمن الرحيم (30) ألم تروا
علي وأوتوش مسلمين (31) قال يا أبتها الملا أتكم باليتوني بغرضها فكل أتوبو مسلمين (38) فان تكرعوا

62 Elizur and Rand, Rabbi Elazar Berabbi Qillir: Liturgical Poems for Rosh Ha-shana, 307. For a discussion of the usage of this expression as referring to martyrs' death – including the Aqedah – or to death in general, see the discussion of Elizur, ibid., 106-108. Cf. an interpretation of the Quran by Qatāda (8th century C.E.): aslama hādha nafsahu illahi, wa-aslama hādha bnahu illahi, "This one [Isaac] delivered his soul [or himself] and this one [Abraham] delivered his son" (Ṭabarî, Tafsir, 19.584)

63 See above, n. 32.

64 N. Weissenstern, "The Piyyutim of Johanan ha-Kohen Birabbi Jehoshua: Critical Edition with an Introduction," PhD thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, p. 38 (in Hebrew). Note that a very similar phrase is found in an earlier piyyut by Yose ben Yose: השלמה ולאולו שלמה ליזודת אשת (Yose ben Yose, Asapper gedolot, 17; A. Mirsky, Yose ben Yose: Poems [2nd edition; Jerusalem, 1991], 205 (in Hebrew). In the latter piyyut, however, the lamb is "delivered" rather than "deliver himself" (I have not found a reading in השלמה שלמה ליזודת אשת in Yose ben Yose's piyyut).
29) She said: “O Council, see, a noble letter has been cast unto me. (30) It is from Solomon, and it runs: ‘In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. (31) Rise (pl.) not up against me, but come to me muslimīna’”… (38) He [Solomon] said: “O Council, which one of you will bring me her throne, before they come to me muslimīna?”… (41) He said: “Disguise her throne for her, and we shall behold whether she is guided or if she is of those that are not guided”. (42) So, when she came, it was said: “Is your throne like this?’ She said: “It seems the same”. “And we were given the knowledge before her, and we were muslimīna”. (43) But what she worshipped, apart from God, barred her, for she was of a people of unbelievers. (44) It was said to her: “Enter the chamber”. But when she saw it, she supposed it was a pool, and she bared her legs. He said: “It is a polished chamber of glass”. She said: “My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I have aslamtu with Solomon (wa-aslamtu maʿa sulaymān) to God, the Lord of all beings”.

When Solomon calls the Queen of Sheba and her people in his letter: “Rise not up against me, but come to me muslimīna”, the audience may rightly assume that Solomon is calling the queen of Sheba to submit to his authority. It seems that the same is true of Solomon’s words in verse 38, “O Council, which one of you will bring me her throne, before they come to me muslimīna?” (i.e., surrendering to my sovereignty). If the story would have ended with the words wa-aslamtu maʿa sulaymān (see v. 44), it could have been interpreted as referring to political submission; the words that follow in v. 44, however, make it clear that the issue is religious: “aslamtu to God, the Lord of all beings”. In verses 42 (“And we were given the knowledge before her, and we were muslimīna” وَأَوْثِنَا ٱلْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ) the verb aslama seems to be used in a religious context.

In fact, the root sh-l-m in a similar meaning occurs in a close literary parallel to the Quranic tale of Solomon and Queen of Sheba. The parallel, that has been noticed and

65 Cf. Margoliouth, "Muslim and Ḥanīf," 475.
studied in relation to the Quran, is a Jewish tradition preserved in a source which in its present form is perhaps post-Quranic, the Second Targum of Esther. It tells of the hoopoe (תרנגול ברא) finding a kingdom not subject to Solomon. Upon learning about it, Solomon sends the Queen of Sheba the following letter:

From me, King Solomon, peace to you, peace to your princes. As you know, the Holy One, blessed be He, appointed me to reign over the wild beasts, over the fowl of the heavens, and over the demons and spirits, and all the kings of the East, the West, the South and the North come and greet me (literally: inquire about my peace; shaylin bi-shlami). Now if you wish to come and greet me, I will grant you great honor among those who sit reclining in my presence. But if you do not wish to come and greet me (tish'alin bi-shlami) I will send kings, legions, and riders against you.

Unlike the story in the Bible (1 Kings 10:1 = 2 Chronicles 9:1-9), which is concerned only with Solomon's wisdom, the Second Targum adds to it matters of dominance and surrender, and in the Quranic passage this is the most dominant feature, besides the religious motif (notably absent in the Second Targum); although Solomon's wisdom is central in the context of the passage in the Quran (verses 15-27), a remnant in the Quran of the wisdom contest described in the Second Targum is verse 44, a verse that is

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66 See A. Geiger, Was hat Mohammed, 186-187 (ET: Judaism and Islam, 147-149); and see below.
67 The date of this targum is still a mystery. Even if it is post-Quranic, as it might well be, it does not mean that it is influenced by the Quran. For considerations related to the date of the targum, see B. Ego, Targum Scheni zu Esther (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996; TSAJ 54), 21-25.
69 Possibly verses 41-42 may be also a wisdom contest undocumented elsewhere; these verses, however, are related to verse 23 (see below n. 79); the throne of the Queen of Sheba symbolizes her sovereignty, which is overpowered by God (by the human agency of Solomon).
unintelligible by and of itself in the Quranic context, but is part of the wisdom contest between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba described in the Second Targum. The passage in the Quran is thus a remnant of an aggadic tradition well attested in Jewish literature (and rooted in the biblical narrative) for the wisdom contest between Solomon and the Queen; moreover, this tradition is the key for understanding the Quran.

The story as presented in the Second Targum builds on a play on words between Solomon’s name, shelomo, and greeting (literally: inquiring about one’s shlama, i.e. “peace”) which means acknowledging someone’s authority and rule. The Quranic story seems to build on a play between shelomo and hishlim, i.e. surrendered. In Hebrew, the verb hishlim (followed by the preposition le- or ‘im) denotes the submission to a king (as noted above, the Palestinian paytan of the sixth century, Hadutahu, writes: מֶלֶךְ הָמָשְׂרֵיהּ יֵשְׁלָמָה וּמִים מֶלֶךְ וְיֵשְׁלָמִים וְיֵשְׁלָמוֹ�וּלָם וְיֵשְׁלָמִם מֶלֶךְ You shall make the messiah king flourish, him being the son of a king. / All will surrender to him (yashlimu lo) to be king over them”). The Quranic narrative, then, is a parallel word play, one that works well either in Arabic or in Hebrew, between Sulaymān and aslama, or between the Hebrew name of Solomon, Shlomo, and hishlim. It is conceivable that Solomon’s reign over all the animals in this passage of the Second Targum is related to the biblical verse “and the wild animals shall surrender to you (הָשְׁלָמָה הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַחֲיָת לָךְ; Job 5:23). Be that as it may, this very same play on words is explicitly found in rabbinic lore, albeit in an entirely different context. In a passage from Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, the name shelomo in Song of Songs 3:11 is construed as a name of God who is said to have “made His creations surrender (hishlim) to His creatures” (בֶּן מֶלֶךְ שֵׁלומֶת מֶלֶךְ שֵׁלומֶת מֶלֶךְ שֵׁלומֶת מֶלֶךְ על בְּרִיתוֹנֶיו).  

70 The terminology שלום שלם in the meaning of becoming the vassal of a great king is well attested in a variety of ancient texts. Prof. Y. Eph'al draws my attention to an Accadian text: "Muttallu von Kummulj... [a vassal king], der verlies sich auf die hochragenden Berge... verweigerte die Abgabe und schickte mir [nicht seinen] Boten ins Land Bit-Jakin, um sich nach meinem Wohlbefinden zu erkundigen (ša-al šul-mi-ia; A. Fuchs, Die Inschriften Sargons II aus Khorsabad [Göttingen: Cuvillier Verlag, 1994], 337-338, 177).
71 Above, n. 16. See also above, n. 15.
72 Or: be at peace with you (see above, on the ambiguity of the verb hishlim).
73 E.g., God surrendered fire to Abraham (who was not burnt when thrown by Nimrod to the fire), and angel to Jacob (Gen 32:26).
74 Pesikta de Rav Kahana (ed. Mandelbaum), 1:5. English translation adapted from Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 8–9.
The complexity of the Quranic verses was described by William Montgomery Watt in the following passage:

Several points are obscure. Thus verses 39 and 40 appear to give parallel accounts, and it is not stated by whom 43 and the latter part of 42 are spoken… The general point of the story is clear. It is the summoning of sun-worshippers to a belief in the true God… In this the Quran is markedly different from the very similar story in the Targum Sheni where the queen is required to come and do homage to Solomon in order to enhance his glory… In verse 31 the word would conceivably mean "in submission to me, Solomon", and this would be in accordance with the Aramaic form of the story; but it is more likely that the correct interpretation is submission to God, as is certainly to be understood in the other verses [38, 42], while in verse 44… God is explicitly mentioned.76

I would contend, however, that the parallel with the Second Targum (as well as with the Hebrew usage of hishlim) makes a strong case for considering the wording in verse 31 as reflecting the story that was embedded in the Quran, in which the word aslama was used as a secular political term.77 Verse 31 was not remodeled to suit the broader context of the Quranic passage, which is the religious aspect of Solomon's activity (but remained in accordance with the tradition attested in the Second Targum).78 The Quranic passage, however, plays with the double meaning of aslama, as it plays with the double meaning of "great throne" in verses 23, 26 (according to verse 23 the Queen of Sheba has "great throne," while according to verse 26 the "great throne" is God's throne.79

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75 Verse 38, however, should not necessarily be read as meaning submission to God; its meaning is precisely that of verse 31, whatever it may be.
76 W. Montgomery Watt, "The Queen of Sheba in Islamic Tradition," in: Solomon and Queen of Sheba (ed. J.B. Pritchard; London: Phaidon, 1974), 85-103, esp. 94. It has been noted by Geiger, who compared the Quranic account with the Second Targum, that "turns the matter from one of government into one of religion" (above, n. 66).
77 It is conceivable that the wording at the end of the tradition, (verse 44) could be originally: aslantu ma'a sulayman, without the last words: "to God… " I would like to stress, however, that I do not mean to argue that there was such an original text of the Quran; it could possibly be the original meaning of a tradition embedded in the Quran.
78 The religious sense of aslama occurs in the awkward verses 42-43.
79 These verses are related to vv. 40-41.
To be sure, the religious aspect of the encounter between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba could easily emerge from a midrashic reading of the biblical text. The story begins, according to 1 Kings: "and the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning (?) –Heb. לשם (לשם) the name of the Lord," (1 Kings 10:1) and concludes with the Queen's acclamation "May the Lord your God be blessed..." (1 Kings 10:9), which were elaborated in the Second Targum: "When the Queen of Sheba saw Solomon's greatness and glory, she praised the One who had created him." The religious aspect of the encounter in the Quranic passage could easily be an elaboration of an earlier source elaborating this element in the biblical text.

V. Q 6:125

Finally, after identifying some Quranic passages in which the verb *aslama* is strikingly related to Jewish passages using the root *sh-l-m*, mention should be made of another Quranic verse that may be relevant. Q 6:125 reads as follows:

"Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast (*ṣadrahu*) to *islām*; whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast (*ṣadrahu*) narrow, tight…"

To be sure, there is nothing surprising in the wording of this verse in the context of the Quran. For the sake of the present discussion, however, it should be noted that the wording is reminiscent of an ancient Jewish prayer preserved in the prayer which begins “A redeemer shall come to Zion” (*u-va le-Ziyyon go’el*):

"And has separated us from those who go astray...May He open our heart to (or: by) His Torah… to do His will and serve Him with a perfect heart (*be-levav shalem*). “

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As has been noted, a letter sent from Jerusalem to Egypt in the 2nd century BCE preserved in 2 Maccabees (1:3-5) consists of a supplication with a very close wording to the synagogue prayer:

May He give you all a heart to worship him and to do his will with a big heart and a willing spirit (καρδίᾳ μεγάλῃ καὶ ψυχῇ βουλομένῃ). May He open your heart in [or; ἐν] His law and His commandments, and may He bring peace (καὶ εἰρήνην ποιήσαι). May He hear your prayers...

Comparing the phraseology of the Quranic verse with the Jewish supplications, islām in Q 6:125 seems at first glance to be the counterpart of “His Torah.” We have seen, however, that in other cases islām is the counterpart of šlem ו_IDLE_ל_ש_ם_ ("wholeheartedly") in Jewish texts, and the Jewish parallels to Q 6:125 contain this component as well.81

**Conclusion**

The Quranic passages examined in this article demonstrate a striking similarity to Jewish sources. In some cases, it can be shown that the Quranic text reflects midrashic readings of specific biblical passages. While some of these readings are well attested in classical Jewish sources, in other cases the Quran contributes to our knowledge of the midrashic readings. The counterpart of islām in the parallel Jewish sources is be-lev šalem or hislim, a term that accrued two meanings typical of the Jewish usage: worshipping the Lord wholeheartedly, and delivering the soul to God while accepting His authority and surrendering to Him.

I do not wish to argue, however, that the Quranic term islām was borrowed from Judaism. We do not find in the Quran the phrases we would expect in light of rabbinic usage, اسلام قلبti _aslama qalbahu (his heart) or اسلام نفس _aslama nafsahu (his soul). Instead, the Quran actually has اسلام وجه _aslama wajhahu (his face), for which I am unaware of a Jewish parallel.82 To this, one may add the testimony of the pre-Islamic Arab talbiya.83 The word islām may have been in circulation before the Quran. It seems,

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81 It is even possible that one variation of this supplication included the verb ἐσπερά ("may he bring peace"); see 2 Maccabees.
82 See Q 2:112, Q 3:20, Q 4:125, and Q 31:22.
83 See above, n. 5.
however, that Jewish sources contributed to several passages in the Quran in which the words *aslama* and *islam* occur, and – as I said at the outset of the present article – these Jewish texts shed some light on the shades of meaning that this term has accrued.