

## QS 31 Q 36:13 – 27

36.13 Strike for them the parable of the people of the town, when Messengers arrived.

36.14 We had sent them two but they called them liars, so We backed them up with a third, and they said: "We are Messengers to you."

36.15 They said: "You are merely human beings like us. The All-Merciful has revealed nothing. You are nothing but liars."

36.16 They said: "Our Lord knows that we are sent as Messengers to you."

36.17 Ours is only to convey a manifest declaration."

36.18 They said: "We hold you to be an evil omen. If you do not desist, we will stone you and a most painful torment will touch you from us."

36.19 They said: "Your evil omen is upon you. Is it because you have been sent the Remembrance? You are indeed a people far gone in sin."

36.20 A man came running from the other end of the city, saying: "O people, follow the Messengers."

36.21 Follow him who asks you no wage. These men are guided aright.

36.22 How can I not worship Him who created me, and to whom you shall return?

36.23 Am I to take other gods instead of Him? If the All-Merciful wishes me ill, their intercession will not benefit me in the least, nor will they be able to save me.

36.24 I would then be in manifest error.

36.25 I believe in your Lord, so listen to me."

36.26 It was said to him: "Enter the Garden." He said: "If only my people knew

36.27 how my Lord forgave me and placed me among the honored!"

36.13 Donne-leur comme exemple les habitants de la cité, quand lui vinrent les envoyés.

36.14 Quand Nous leur envoyâmes deux [envoyés] et qu'ils les traitèrent de menteurs. Nous [les] renforçâmes alors par un troisième et ils dirent: «Vraiment, nous sommes envoyés à vous».

36.15 Mais ils [les gens] dirent: «Vous n'êtes que des hommes comme nous. Le Tout Miséricordieux n'a rien fait descendre et vous ne faites que mentir».

36.16 Ils [les messagers] dirent: «Notre Seigneur sait qu'en vérité nous sommes envoyés à vous,

36.17 et il ne nous incombe que de transmettre clairement (notre message)».

36.18 Ils dirent: «Nous voyons en vous un mauvais présage. Si vous ne cessez pas, nous vous lapiderons et un douloureux châtiment de notre part vous touchera».

36.19 Ils dirent: «Votre mauvais présage est avec vous-mêmes. Est-ce que (c'est ainsi que vous agissez) quand on vous [le] rappelle? Mais vous êtes des gens outranciers!»

36.20 Et du bout de la ville, un homme vint en toute hâte et dit: «O mon peuple, suivez les messagers:

36.21 suivez ceux qui ne vous demandent aucun salaire et qui sont sur la bonne voie.

36.22 et qu'aurais-je à ne pas adorer Celui qui m'a créé? Et c'est vers Lui que vous serez ramenés.

36.23 Prendrais-je en dehors de Lui des divinités? Si le Tout Miséricordieux me veut du mal, leur intercession de me servir à rien et ils ne me sauveront pas.

36.24 Je serai alors dans un égarement évident.

36.25.[Mais] je crois en votre Seigneur. Ecoutez-moi donc».

36.26 Alors, il [lui] fut dit: «Entre au Paradis». Il dit: «Ah si seulement mon peuple savait!

36.27....en raison de quoi mon Seigneur m'a pardonné et mis au nombre des honorés».

سورة يس  
وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (13) إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَهُكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ (14) قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا

بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنزَلَ الرَّحْمَنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ (15) قَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَلِّمْنَا لَنَا لِيَكُونَ لَكُمْ لِمَرْسُلُونَ (16) وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (17) قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجِمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَ عَذَابِ الْيَوْمِ (18) قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ أَئِنْ ذُكِّرْتُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّشْرِقُونَ (19) وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (20) اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُّهْتَفُونَ (21) وَمَا لِي لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (22) أَلَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِنْ يُرْدُنِ الرَّحْمَنُ بِضُرٍّ لَا تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُون (23) إِنِّي إِذَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (24) إِنِّي آمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمِعُونِ (25) قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ (26) بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ (27)

### Azaiez

Ce passage se caractérise par une narration dialoguée avec échange de points de vue contradictoires. La présence de plusieurs protagonistes dans l'échange de paroles n'est pas inédite. La singularité de ce passage viendrait plutôt de l'absence d'une voix divine (sauf peut-être l'ellipse v. 26 notée par Guillaume Dye) et qui rapproche ce récit de ceux mettant en scène Noé face à son peuple (sourate 71). Par ailleurs, ce passage révèle une des fonctions argumentatives du *maṭal*: suggérer que la mission de l'allocutaire coranique est à l'image de la mission des messagers antérieurs. Cette relation est possible selon trois modalités que sont 1. la concomitance des désignations (la désignation de *mursalīn* donnée à fois à l'allocutaire coranique au v. 3 et aux protagonistes du récit, v. 13) ; 2. la concomitance du message transmis (on remarque, en l'occurrence, une forme de métatextualité implicite avec l'expression *balāḡ al-mubīn* au verset 17 qui vient en écho des expressions *imām mubīn* au v. 2 et *Qur'ān al-mubīn* au v. 68) ; et enfin, la concomitance des formes de contre-discours (les objections des adversaires sont de même nature pour l'allocutaire coranique et les adversaires des envoyés, cf. QS 10).

### Dye

Texte extrêmement allusif et, hormis sa morale, difficilement compréhensible. Le sous-texte exact reste mystérieux. La tradition musulmane rapproche souvent cet épisode du martyre d'Agabus (devenu Ḥabīb al-Naḡḡār), mais cela ne semble pas très convaincant. Il est peu probable que les « envoyés » soient des disciples de Jésus : on attendrait plutôt ici *ḥawārīyy* au lieu de *mursal*. Le lien avec Gen 19 est peut-être plus naturel, mais il reste très hypothétique, et cela ne nous dit rien sur la personne qui vient *min aqsā al-madīna* (v. 20). Il paraît donc difficile de rapprocher ce passage (qu'il conviendrait, comme l'indiquent d'autres commentaires, de poursuivre jusqu'au v. 32) d'épisodes bibliques *précis* et reconnaissables.

L'hypothèse de la jonction de deux récits initialement séparés (vv. 13–19 et vv. 20–27), voire trois récits, n'est pas à écarter, mais elle ne s'impose pas vraiment non plus. Plus généralement, il s'agit d'un « exemple » (sens de *maṭal* dans ce contexte) de l'anéantissement d'un peuple – *topos* qui revient constamment dans le Coran (cf. vv. 28–29). D'une certaine manière, l'identité exacte des protagonistes

importe peu : ce qui compte, c'est l'attitude des uns et des autres, et les conséquences qui en découlent.

Comment comprendre le contraste entre *qarya* (v. 13) et *madīna* (v. 20) ? « Ville » versus « région » (district administratif), ou « village » versus « ville » ?

On notera l'ellipse au début du v. 26. *Qui* dit à l'homme d'entrer au Paradis ? L'homme s'adresse aussi bien aux habitants de la cité qu'aux envoyés. Si ce sont les habitants de la cité qui parlent, c'est une façon cynique de lui annoncer qu'ils entendent le mettre à mort. Si ce sont les envoyés : est-ce dit comme une promesse d'entrée au Paradis pour sa foi ?

### El-Badawi

I would extend this passage to include vv. 28–32, in which case the entire narration seems to merge the function of parable (*maṭal*; e.g. Q 18:32) with that of didactic stories (*qaṣaṣ*; cf. Q 26; 37). The passage's lesson concerning a people who reject simultaneous messengers, to their own peril, retells the parable of the 'landowner and his vineyard' (Matthew 21:33–41; Mark 12:1–11; Thomas 65). Parallels made to Acts 11:27–30 are secondary at best.

The terminology is striking in places. Is the function of *mursalūn* (messengers; cf. Q 6:48) the same as *rusul* (apostles? Cf. Q 2:87, 253)? It seems the "village people" (*aṣḥāb al-qarya*) and messengers both worship al-Raḥmān—acknowledged by the messengers as "our Lord" (*rabbānā*) and by the believing man in v. 22 as "the one who originated me" (*allaḏī faṭaranī*)—where the former disbelieve in the prophecy of the latter because they are human (*baṣar*), i.e. not angels. Q 14:10–11 illustrates a similar scene where Allah is evoked instead of al-Raḥmān. What change took place in the audience or author to allow for the shift from al-Raḥmān to Allah, or vice versa (cf. Q 1:1; 27:30; 17:110)? Is al-Raḥmān Himself the savior, i.e., the only source of "abundance/intercession" (*afā'a*; cf. Syr. *sēp'ā*) without whom we are all "lost" (*ḏalāl*, *ḏalāla*) as implied by Q 19:95 (cf. Q 78:38)? If so, then this passage and others may provide clues to a rather intricate Qur'ānic soteriology.

The trope of "the man running out of the city" occurs in Q 28:20 where he cautions Moses about the conspiracy to kill him and stands in contradistinction, as Andrew Rippin implies, to the "village." (This further resembles the story of city warners who precede the capitulation of cities to the Muslim armies in the *tārīḥ*/*maḡāzī* literature.) In the didactic stories of the Qur'ān, good people often live in the "city" (*madīna*) and evil people live—without exception—in "villages/towns" (*qarya*, pl. *qurā*; i.e., destroyed cities?, ruins?; e.g., Q 2:58; 21:74). V. 26 suggests the believing man entered paradise after dying; his martyrdom is not explicit in this passage although it is suggested in the *Tafsīr* literature.

The word *mukramūn* here means "pruned" (i.e., hand-picked, special; cf. Syr. *K-R-M*) and points back to the parable in the Gospels. More specifically it describes those who believe and are rewarded in paradise (*al-ḡanna*) by al-Raḥmān. This imagery is confirmed by Q 21:26 (which implies that al-Raḥmān occupies the place of

the “Father” in Christian theology) and, furthermore resonates with fruit of the garden in Q 37:42; 70:35 and the angels of Q 51:24 (i.e., while disbelievers ask for angels in this life, believers become angelic in the afterlife).

On the stoning of messengers see the case of Šu‘ayb in Q 11:91.

### Grodzki

This passage is rather polymorphic in terms of language and structure, as other Qur’ānic *amthāl* (parables or examples) with their typical function of admonition/paraenesis, evokes for me the question about the ways and methods by which the Qur’ānic *sūras* were edited and composed to receive their final shape. To the two different uses of *iq* in two consecutive verses (13–14), the problem of town/village (*qarya*) in v. 13 versus city (*madīna*) in v. 20 along with other problematic syntactical and semantic issues raised by Rippin (below), I would tentatively add the numerous repetitions of *qāla/qālū/qīla* used to initiate vv. 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 26 which may perhaps give “the impression of mechanically linked prophetic *logia*” (Wansbrough 1977: 115) where two or more independent narratives could have been combined together. The hypothesis is that the mechanism of insertions by the means of syntactical instruments such as *iq* or *qāla* (in its different forms) etc., although typical of the narrative style, may have well been developed by the Islamic masoretes to link together sub-canonical materials into one uniform text. Another example of this phenomenon would be the abrupt changes from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> person sing. as in Q 16:51 *wa-qāla Allāhu lā tattahīdu ilāhayni ithnayni, innamā huwa ilāhun waḥidun fa-ıyyāya farhabūna* (cf. the shift to the 1<sup>st</sup> person in Q 36:22).

### Hawting

The messengers and *qarya* alluded to in this “exemplum” (*maṭāl*) are so anonymous that it is difficult to agree with any of the suggestions about a Biblical referent. Various themes and motifs occur elsewhere in the Qur’ān in other narratives about the rejection of God’s messengers by the people to whom they have been sent: the messengers are rejected on the grounds that they are merely men; the opponents say that God (al-Raḥmān) has not sent down anything; the messengers are accused of lying (falsely claiming to be messengers); they say that a messenger’s duty is only *al-balāḡ*; a formula similar to the opponents’ words in vv. 18–19 about *taṭayyur* appears in Q 27:47 regarding the rejection of Šālīḥ by ʿĀmūd (cf. the reaction of the sailors to Jonah in the Bible, Jonah 1:7); as for the incident of the man who comes hastening from the furthest part of the town and exclaims his belief (v. 20), the same phrase, “a man came hastening from the furthest part of the town,” occurs in the story of Moses at Q 28:20 (cf. also Q 80:8); the messengers ask for no recompense (*aḡr*); the believer denies the ability of gods other than al-Raḥmān to intercede.

### Khalfallah

Ce récit de la sourate XXXVI appelle celui qui se trouve dans les Actes des Apôtres, de 11 à 26. Toutefois, dans le Coran, ce récit est présenté comme un *maṭal* (exemple, récit sapientiel, histoire exemplaire, modèle...) ; et est reproduit avec un peu plus de détails sur la conversation qui eut lieu entre Paul et Barnabé d'une part et les habitants de la Cité (Antioche ?) d'autre part. La question qui se pose concerne les modalités discursives par lesquelles le Coran reprend des phrases, thèmes et motifs qui seraient exprimés par les Apôtres non-arabophones. Deux pistes se dessinent :

Il s'agirait de la reproduction (*ḥikāya*) fidèle de cette conversation, mais en langue arabe. Il pourrait s'agir – cette hypothèse est plus problématique – de la retraduction non seulement arabe, mais aussi islamique de leurs propos. C'est-à-dire, le discours coranique reprend à son compte les propos qu'auraient prononcés les divers protagonistes de ce récit et les revêt d'un habillage islamique après les avoir moulés selon les structures sémantiques et narratives de l'arabe. Pour étayer cette hypothèse, je cite les thèmes suivants : [a] Le nom *al-Raḥmān* que même les Qurayšites ne connaissaient pas ; [b] La notion de *ṣafā'a* (intercession) que les mu'tazilites nient ; [c] la notion de *risāla* (Apostolat)...

Cette seconde piste pourrait s'appliquer à tous les récits coraniques où des événements anciens ont été reportés et des conversations reproduites... Elle permettrait d'observer, de manière minutieuse et sur des mini- thématiques, les parallèles entre les diverses traditions...

### Madigan

Certainly the *mathal* here seems more 'example' than 'parable.' However, whether we can trace a connection to Gen 19 and Lot seems to me doubtful. As several colleagues have noted, there is little to this story beyond the usual tropes of prophetic rejection. The two-messengers-then-three confusion (is it a confusion?) seems tantalizingly close to Genesis (where it is three messengers in Gen 18 then two in Gen 19). However, the fact that others can see in it a reference to Paul, Barnabas and the third, John-also-known-as-Mark, in Acts indicates just how much of a stretch it is to see a relation to Genesis. We might ask ourselves whether when we read of Barnabas, Paul and the third lesser companion in Acts it immediately suggests to us an echo of the Abraham/Lot cycle. I doubt that it does. That should warn us against claiming too much here.

In teaching I use *sūrat Yā Sin* as a whole, since it seems to me to contain the Qur'ānic thought world in a relatively short space; and it has the stylistic elements and the vocabulary that are so characteristic of the text as a whole. You could say I use it as a *mathal*.

The man running from the furthest part of the city is the model believer – it is striking that, though he is not himself *min al-mursalīn* he actually preaches to his townsfolk the message that the two-then-three *mursalūn* did not preach—God as creator to whom we will all be brought back; the futility of seeking the help of other

powers; error and guidance; faith, following, worship. Their message, on the other hand, seems to have been just the claim to have been sent; and the conflict with them centered not on the doctrine of God, but on messengerhood and prophecy. Did the man from the furthest part of the city not understand that you can warn people as much as you like, but they will not believe (v. 10)?

### Rippin

V. 13 through (perhaps) v. 27: does this passage consist of a single story or is it composed of two stories joined together? A simple observation (made by others): v. 13 refers to the people of the town (*qarya*) while v. 20 refers to the people of the city (*madīna*). However, it could even be more complicated than simply two stories that follow one after the other (somewhat modified to make them flow together). Vv. 13–14 seems to combine two narrative elements, with the announcement of *al-mursalūn* in v. 13, followed by mention of two men and then a third man in v. 14. The presence of two uses of *id* (vv. 13 and 14) reinforces the sense of two stories right at the beginning. Then a third version seems to start in v. 20 with the introduction of yet another person who brings something of a similar message.

### Stefanidis

[1] The familiarity with which the proselyte addresses the villagers (*ya-qawmī*, v. 20) contrasts with the emissaries' formal tone and could be understood to imply that the latter are foreigners. Foreign envoys are unusual in the Qur'ān and, as it is well known, many verses insist on the "ethnocentric position of prophets" (Wansbrough 1977: 53). (The pious Egyptian addressing his people in Q 40:28–45 serves a similar literary function to Q 36:20–25 since Moses himself does not belong to Pharaoh's people). If, as Zellentin suggests, this passage somehow draws on Gen 19, the emissaries' alien origin could reflect an angelic nature. What then should we make of the unbelievers' reply in v.15: *mā antum illa basharun miṭlunā*? Should it be understood as an oblique allusion to Lot's people menace of rape (of men)? It seems, however, clear that the Qur'ān is here taking part in sectarian disputes on the nature of God's messengers (Crone 2011). Moreover, Qur'ānic retellings of Gen 18 (Q 11:69–73; 15:51–56; 51:24–30) are explicit about the angelic nature of Abraham's visitors who, while on their way to Lot's people, refuse to eat food (Reynolds 2010: 94–5). Overall, it is difficult to make sense of the ambiguous origin of the *mursalūn*. If there was indeed a Biblical subtext (or many), its traces seem to have been blurred. This might have been done deliberately in order to present the narrative as exemplary.

[2] In v.18, the unbelievers warn the messengers of a "painful punishment" (*ʿaḏāb alīm*). The use of common vocabulary to refer both to the divine sphere and to those who reject it is a striking literary device. Other examples include Q 26:19 (where Pharaoh rebukes Moses for being *min al-kāfirīn*), Q 7:127 (where Pharaoh's circle (*mala'*) call upon him not to let Moses and his partisans *yufsidū fī l-arḍ*), Q 27: 23

(describing the throne of the Queen of Sheba as *'arš 'aẓīm*). As with the rich narrative of the Queen of Sheba (QS 27), one could argue that this mirroring rhetoric complicates and maybe even subverts the otherwise straightforward dualistic worldview of the Qur'ān. In any case, it subtly underlines the thinness of the line that separates the "right path" from that of "perdition" and, consequently, the human need for divine guidance.

### Tengour

Dès le début de la sourate trente-six, le discours qui est ici tenu par le dieu coranique pose Muḥammad comme « avertisseur de périls » (v. 6). Jusqu'au v. 13, le verbe *'andara*, *yundīru* se répète cinq fois. Mais l'on notera également une évolution vers un statut plus défini pour Muḥammad qui, dans le v. 3, est reconnu comme faisant partie des messagers/transmetteurs désignés par la Divinité, *'inna-ka la-min al-mursalīn*. Dans la séquence formée des versets 13 à 27, le mot *mursalūn* va se répéter quatre fois.

Je m'arrêterai sur le mot *'ağr* dont il est question au v. 21 et qui signifie la récompense attribuée en échange d'un travail accompli. Ce mot compte cinquante-quatre occurrences dans le Coran, réparties dans trente-et-une sourates où il ne désigne pas toujours une récompense dans l'au-delà. C'est le cas dans ce passage, comme dans quatorze autres, tous mecquois, où le mot *'ağr* est associé de manière significative à l'avertissement (*'indār*) et/ou au rappel (*dīkr*). Il s'agit là d'un thème particulièrement tribal, celui des rétributions octroyées aux devins comme aux sorciers pour leurs prédictions car, à l'évidence, celles-ci n'étaient pas gratuites.

On peut, à cet égard, se demander quel rapport prévaut entre les mots *'ağr*, *'indār* et *dīkr* et pourquoi la parole coranique exclut une rétribution de l'avertisseur en échange de son avertissement. Pour y répondre, il faut se souvenir que durant la période mecquoise, la parole de Muḥammad est mise en échec par sa tribu et que l'une des raisons de ce rejet est son assimilation à un devin, à un sorcier, à un poète et à un homme sous l'emprise d'un mauvais djinn.

Dans la mentalité des tribus arabes, devins, sorciers et poètes étaient en effet considérés comme étant en relation avec le monde invisible des djinns puisque les djinns étaient perçus comme des médiateurs de l'inspiration, qu'elle ait été bonne ou mauvaise, et du destin qu'il fallait connaître pour en déjouer les mauvais coups annoncés.

Lorsque la parole coranique écarte la rétribution de l'avertisseur c'est donc pour mieux signifier à ses interlocuteurs mecquois que celui-ci n'a rien à voir avec les autres médiateurs que sont les devins et les sorciers ou les poètes. Ce qui se profile derrière ce dispositif étant l'arrière plan de l'accusation d'une mauvaise emprise djinnique sur Muḥammad. Une accusation qui s'inscrit dans le contexte plus global de la polémique l'ayant opposé à sa tribu.

### Younes

I agree with Rippin that the narrative may in fact be based on three stories, but with a different division: vv. 13–19, 20–21, 22–27. The use of the word *madīna* (v. 20) as opposed to *qarya* marks the transition from the first to the second story, and the shift to the first person in v. 22 marks the transition to the third story.

In terms of its language, the passage is clear and the grammar is straightforward.

Having said that, the verses demonstrate the importance of rhyme in the language of the Qurʾān, which plays a stronger role than case and mood endings (often dropped to maintain the rhyme scheme) and some other aspects of the grammar. In order to rhyme with the previous verses, the final object pronoun of v. 25 *ī* is dropped: *fa-smaʿūnī* is spelled *fa-smaʿūn*.

### Zellentin

The passage indeed alludes to the Qurʾān's own versions of the story of Lot and Sodom (but not so much to Gen 19) as well as possibly to Matt 21:33–41 (see also El-Badawi), yet in a way that is more complex and more specific than it may first appear. The Qurʾān combines these two scriptural narratives—both about endangered servants sent to a sinful place which is in turn destroyed—in a way that illustrates its key hermeneutical strategy to read the Torah and the Gospel jointly as *one* text (see also my comments on QS 3 & 34), all the while building on the midrashic reading of Genesis in *Genesis Rabbah* and thereby allowing a grasp of its intricate intertextuality.

The Qurʾān, however, recasts the Gospel narrative in light of its own reading of Genesis 19, the story of the destruction of Sodom, with which the present passage shares three crucial elements. First, in Q 51:24–37, Lot's town is the only specific singular place destroyed in the Qurʾān that remains unnamed (to the best of my knowledge), the only other singular place that is destroyed is the town in the simile in our passage. While one should not argue *ex silentio*, the lack of specificity in *sūras* Q 36 and Q 51 alone certainly invite reading one in light of the other. Second, in only two of the Qurʾānic stories of warning and destruction of a town more than one warning messenger appears at one time: the unspecified group of messengers that visit Abraham and then continue on to Lot and his people, and in the case of three messengers who call the people to repentance in our simile. (This holds true even in light of the often-repeated phrase that the people “impugned the prophets,” see e.g. Q 26:123). While the plurality is telling, the difference between “several” and “three” remains noteworthy. Third, the locution “rather, you are a profligate people” in v. 19 points to the similar accusation against Lot's people in Q 7:81. The unnamed man in our simile, however, speaks not about his people's homosexuality, as does Lot, but about *širk*, pleading to his contemporaries that there is no sense in taking gods besides God since their intercession will not avail him anything. Intriguingly, this fact jibes with the rabbis' view of the Sodomites as worshipping the sun and the moon.

The rabbis insist that Sodom, here compared to a *mdynh* (“province”) was idolatrous, the citizens expect their deities to intercede for them on the day of judgment (*Genesis Rabbah* 50:12, see also 50:4); in the Qur’ān, the man from the city (*madīna*, Q 36:20) likewise insists that he must not take gods beside God, that intercession will not occur, and that none will come to rescue his compatriots (Q 36:23; sun and moon are mentioned later in the sūra as subservient to God, see Q 36:40). Lot is of course the man who has to hurry in Genesis (19:15 and 22), and the rabbis calculate how fast he could have walked, and even speculate that the angels straightened the way for him (*Genesis Rabbah* 50:10); the man in the Qur’ān also hurries (v. 20). The rabbis relate that Lot prayed for the Sodomites all night, seeking mercy (*ṛḥmn*) for them, yet from the moment that they seek to rape the angels, Lot is not allowed to defend them any more (*Genesis Rabbah* 50:5); in the Qur’ān, the man from the city pleads with, not for, his people, evoking his faith in *al-raḥmān*, and we learn that after him, no host came to them from heaven, and nothing else, either (v. 28, a difficult passage). The overlap is too vague to speak of a specific, rather than a broader oral affinity. The similarities, as well as the lexical affinity, it is true, are rather general, yet they are close enough to safeguard that anyone familiar with rabbinic similes would feel an uncanny sense of familiarity when hearing the Qur’ānic one. The simile in our passage, hence, remains an autonomous simile, but invites its audience to hear it in dialogue with Lot’s narrative in the Qur’ān and with the rabbinic tradition.