QS 34 Q 38:17 – 26

38.17 Be patient with what they say,
And remember Our servant David, a man of great power, a man of constant penitence.
38.18 We made the mountains submit and, with him, glorify God at evening and dawn,
38.19 And the birds too, mustered from all sides – all turn in penitence to Him.
38.20 And We buttressed his rule, and granted him wisdom and overpowering eloquence.
38.21 Has there come to you news of the disputants, when they climbed up the entrance gate?
38.22 Remember how they entered upon David, and he was frightened of them.
They said: "Be not afraid. Two disputants are we, and one has done the other wrong. So judge between us in justice, and do not be biased, but guide us to an upright path.
38.23 This, my brother, has ninety-nine ewes and I have but one. And yet he says to me: 'Place her in my charge', and he overcomes me in argument."
38.24 He said: "He has done you wrong by badgering you to add your ewe to his. Indeed, many who own in common transgress against one another – save those who believe and do good deeds, and they are few in number."
And David imagined that We had put him to the test. So he sought his Lord's forgiveness, fell in prostration, and repented.
38.25 And We forgave him that act; to Us he shall be drawn near, and shall have a goodly place to rest.
38.26 O David, We appointed you a deputy on earth, so judge between people in truth, and follow not your caprice, for this will lead you astray from the path of God. Those who stray from the path of God shall meet with terrible torment, for they forget the Day of Reckoning.

38.17 Endure ce qu'ils disent; et rappelle-toi David, Notre serviteur, doué de force [dans l'adoration] et plein de repentir [à Allah].
38.18 Nous soumîmes les montagnes à glorifier Allah, soir et matin, en sa compagnie,
38.19 de même que les oiseaux assemblés en masse, tous ne faisant qu'obéir à lui [Allah].
38.20 Et Nous renforçâmes son royaume et lui donnâmes la sagesse et la faculté de bien juger.
38.21 Et t'est-elle parvenue la nouvelle des disputeurs quand ils grimpèrent au mur du sanctuaire!
38.22 Quand ils entrèrent auprès de David, il en fut effrayé. Ils dirent: «N'aie pas peur! Nous sommes tous deux en dispute; l'un de nous a fait du tort à l'autre. Juge donc en toute équité entre nous, ne sois pas injuste et guide-nous vers le chemin droit.
38.23 Celui-ci est mon frère: il a quatre-vingt-dix-neuf brebis, tandis que je n'ai qu'une brebis. Il m'a dit: «Confie-la-moi» et dans la conversation, il a beaucoup fait pression sur moi».
38.24 Il [David] dit: «Il a été certes injuste envers toi en demandant de joindre ta brebis à ses brebis». Beaucoup de gens transgressent les droits de leurs associés, sauf ceux qui croient et accomplissent les bonnes ouvres – cependant ils sont bien rares -. Et David pensa alors que Nous l'avions mis à l'épreuve. Il demanda donc pardon à son Seigneur et tomba prosterné et se repentit.
38.25 Nous lui pardonnâmes. Il aura une place proche de Nous et un beau refuge.
38.26.«O David, Nous avons fait de toi un calife sur la terre. Juge donc en toute équité parmi les gens et ne suis pas la passion: sinon elle t'égarera du sentier d'Allah». Car ceux qui s'égarent du sentier d'Allah auront un dur châtiment pour avoir oublié le Jour des Comptes.

سورة ص

اصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (17) إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (18) وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ (19) وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ (20) وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَصْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (21) إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُودَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصْمَانِ بَغَى بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ (22) إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِيَ نَعْجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ (23) قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعْجَتِكَ إِلَى نِعَاجِهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْخُلَطَاءِ لَيَبْغِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

DOI 10.1515/9783110445909-039,

وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَا هُمْ وَظَنَّ دَاوُودُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ (24) فَغَفَرْنَا لَهُ ذَلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفَى وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (25) يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ (26)

Azaiez

Cette péricope autour de la figure davidique est l'occasion d'interroger la spécificité formelle et structurelle de la narration coranique. On relève plusieurs caractéristiques qu'il est très fréquent de retrouver dans nombre de textes narratifs :

[1] Présence d'un allocutaire (injonction de patienter: *āṣbir ʿalā mā yaqūlūna* et interpellation interrogative : *wa-hal ʾātāka nabaʾu al-ḫasmi*).

[2] Formulation introductive type (injonction de se remémorer : *wa-āḏkur*).

[3] Dialogisme (échange de paroles au style direct omniprésence de la racine *Q-W-L*).

[4] Disdacalies (description minimaliste de l'action, *ʾIḏ daḫalū ʿalā Dāwūda fa-fazi'a minhum*).

[5] Formulations répétitives et partagées dans d'autres récits coraniques. Les similarités lexicales sont frappantes avec le récit de marial (Q 19:18) et adamique (Q 2:30 – 39). L'effet est double : donner une unité stylistique au récit coranique, relier les récits entre-eux en créant une histoire continue du salut.

Récit marial: *sabbiḥū bukratan wa ʿašīyā* (Q 19:11) / Récit davidique : *yusabbiḥna bi-l-ʿašīyi wa-l-išrāqi* (38 :18) ; Récit adamique: *ʾinnī ǧāʿilun fī-l-ʾard*^{i} *ḫalīfatan* (Q 2:30) / Récit davidique : *ʾinnā ǧaʿalnāka ḫalīfatan* (Q 38:26).

[6] Langage performatif (l'acte de pardonner : *faǧafarnā lahu*).

[7] Absence ou rareté des toponymes (*miḥrāb*)

[8] Temporalités multiples et unifiées (Temps du récit et de l'action des personnages liés aux didascalies, Temps référé et mythique induits par le pardon donné par Dieu, Temps eschatologique avec la mention de *yawm*^{a} *l-ḥisāb*).

Il serait, en l'occurrence, très utile de comparer ces formes déterminées et répétitives avec les structures et formes des poèmes liturgiques syriaques que l'on appelle les *soghyata* (Brock 1991: 109 – 119).

Dye

Les caractéristiques structurelles et formelles de ce passage ont été bien analysées par Azaiez. Le texte fait écho à 2 Sam 12:1 – 16, avec bien sûr des différences. Ce n'est plus Nathan qui s'adresse à David, au moyen d'une parabole, mais « deux disputeurs » (v. 21) – justement les personnages de la parabole de Nathan – qui vont directement porter leur querelle auprès de David (situation qui évoque celle d'un autre personnage biblique, Salomon). Noter que David n'est pas présenté comme étant simplement chez lui (2 Sam 12:1), mais (implicitement) comme se trouvant dans le *miḥrāb* (v. 21).

Vv. 18–19 : l'idée selon laquelle les montagnes et les oiseaux louent Dieu en compagnie de David apparaît à plusieurs reprises dans le Coran (Q 21:79 ; Q 34:10). Comme le note Madigan, on a là une référence très nette à Ps 148:9–10 (voir aussi Dan 3:75, 80).

V. 21 : *miḥrāb* désigne très clairement le Temple de Jérusalem dans trois autres passages du Coran. Au singulier, le terme concerne soit Marie (Q 3:37), soit Zacharie (Q 3:39 ; Q 19:11). Ce sens pourrait bien être évoqué ici, même si c'est Salomon, et non David, qui est censé avoir construit le Temple. Naturellement, l'idée qu'il s'agisse de la « Tour de David » est pertinente, mais pourquoi le Coran emploie-t-il alors ce terme? Ce n'est peut-être pas un hasard si David est rapproché ici de Marie et Zacharie (intéressant rapprochement David/Jésus : Q 5:78).

V. 26 : *ḫalīfa* me semble dans ce verset avoir le sens de « lieutenant, vicaire de Dieu », et non celui de « successeur » (sur cette question, cf. Crone & Hinds 1986: 4–23). L'homme reçoit délégation de Dieu pour administrer la terre : l'insistance, dans ce contexte, sur les notions de péché et de repentance est à rapprocher, bien sûr, de « l'épisode inaugural » – à savoir la faute puis le repentir d'Adam, qui sont le « modèle » des fautes et repentirs postérieurs (on a là un autre exemple du monoprophétisme du Coran).

Les vv. 17–30 sont suivis, dans les vv. 31–40, d'une péricope sur Salomon. Comme souvent dans le Coran, la figure de David est liée à celle de Salomon (Q 4:163; Q 6:84; Q 21:78–82; Q 34:10–14).

Grodzki

The recurring refrain-like *fa-inna lahu ʿindanā la-zulfā wa-husna maʾābin* of v. 25 and v. 40 is not very smooth in terms of language or grammatical structure. *Zulfā* here is generally understood (mostly through its contextual juxtaposition with nine other Qurʾānic uses of this stem) as "a station of nearness" (translation by Ali Quli Qara'i), "a Near Approach" (Yusuf Ali), "access to [Our] presence" (Pickthall). Its oddity made some scholars raise the conjuncture (as Lüling 2003: 216–7) that in some of these instances it is a misread *Z-L-Q* stem, as suggested by the readings of Ibn Masʿud, Ubayy, and Ibn ʿAbbās in regard to Q 26:64 and 26:90. However, because of the peculiarity of Q 38:25, neither *zulfā* nor *zulqā* seem to help much with clarifying the semantic stratum of this verse.

Hawting

Why this story of David, with its – in the Qurʾānic perspective – unusual content, should occur here is not easy to understand. Earlier verses in this *sūra* have focused on the theme of the rejection of the Qurʾānic messenger by his opponents and references to earlier messengers who had been rejected by their people, presumably to comfort and reassure him. The opening of the passage under consideration with its imperative *iṣbir* suggests that more words of comfort will follow, but the story

of David does not follow the pattern of the punishment narratives, and its message is difficult to relate to what has preceded it.

Similar to the presentation of Solomon in Q 27, vv. 17–20 here portray David as the wise ruler not merely of men but of the natural world too. Then (vv. 21–25) there is the completely reworked but nevertheless still recognizable version of what in the Bible is the final part of the story of David's dealings with Uriah the Hittite and his adultery with Bathsheba: the prophet Nathan's reproving of him by means of a thinly disguised parable (2 Sam. 11:2ff.). Only the parable survives in the Qurʾān, and the absence of the earlier parts of the story (although some commentators obviously knew of it) led to much discussion of the nature of the sin for which David had to ask forgiveness from God (v. 24), especially when that was read in the light of later doctrines about the infallibility of prophets. Nathan's parable is presented here as a sort of legal contest between two disputants, reflecting the idea of David (and Solomon) as a wise judge and a *ḫalīfa* (v. 26).

Khalfallah

Certains termes de ce passage se prêtent à la méthode qui s'inspire de la sémantique historique (étude des évolutions du sens, omissions, manipulations, amplifications, rétrécissements collectifs et involontaire des lecteurs successifs des textes sacrés). Crucial dans la littérature sultanesque musulmane, le terme *ḫalīfa*, que le Coran attribue ici à David, mérite d'être exploré selon cette approche. Sur le plan morphologique, il ne s'agit pas d'un nom féminin, mais d'une forme intensive, exprimée par le *tāʾ* final. Ce verset ne fait pas donc de David un Roi ou Seigneur, mais un *ḫalīfa* (vicaire, successeur, remplaçant...). En effet, ce mot, construit selon le schème d'un adjectif, possède le sens d'un participe actif : « celui qui succède». Or, toute la question est de savoir : succéder à qui ou à quoi? Transférant la parabole de David dans le champ politique musulman ultérieur, les juristes ont fourni deux réponses : [1] Le *ḫalīfa* est l'ombre de Dieu sur terre. Il Le représente. [2] Le *ḫalīfa* est le successeur du Prophète et doit représenter la *umma*. La première réponse visait à renforcer les pouvoirs surnaturels des souverains. La seconde, plus humaine, est celle qui a constitué le dogme principal du sunnisme. Cependant, si on reste attaché au cadre historique du mot, son sens exact ne pourrait être révélé que par une étude examinant tous les dérivés de sa racine, ses corrélations et évolutions sémantiques. De même, une comparaison s'impose avec son équivalent biblique. Sans être spécialiste de la Bible, je note : « Je t'ai livré la maison de ton seigneur Saül, j'ai mis les femmes de ton seigneur dans tes bras et je t'ai établi chef sur Israël et sur Juda; et si cela était trop peu, j'étais prêt à y ajouter encore d'autres dons. » (2 Sam, 12) où l'on trouve le mot chef. Il serait enfin judicieux de comparer ces charges avec celles que suppose la « sémantique tribale » élaborée par Chabbi (2008), où elle limite les significations coraniques à l'univers tribal. Mais les sens des mots ne cessent d'évoluer. Le Coran lui-même se propose comme une rupture sémantique. Ibn Fāris en fut conscient. Il a consacré un chapitre aux *alfāẓ islāmiyya*...

Madigan

The Uriah and Bathsheba 'unpleasantness' is so far in the background here as to be virtually irretrievable. This, of course, raises the question of whether the passage was intended to evoke the memory of the adulterous affair and the murder, or whether long before those aspects may already have become disconnected from the story of David's repentance provoked by a 'parable' involving sheep. It is of the nature of liturgical readings that they are pericopes chosen from within a larger narrative for a particular purpose in preaching. On this subject, see Neuwirth 2006: 90–91. Interestingly this very story from 2 Samuel is used in the Roman Catholic lectionary in precisely this way. There is no recounting of the affair that called for repentance on David's part, just the moment of repentance itself. This snippet of text (2 Sam 12:7–10, 13) is paired with the gospel reading about the repentant woman who washes Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:36–8:3) since it announces the theme of repentance.

It is interesting that in the 2 Sam passage we have a prophet (Nathan) chastising a king, whereas in the Qurʾān's account the prophet disappears altogether (his parable becomes a litigation) and David straddles the categories of king and prophet.

As to the question of the submission of the hills and the birds to David in praise of their Lord, could this be an allusion to the psalm (Ps 148) attributed to David in which he calls on the mountains and also the birds (among other things) to praise the name of the Lord? The Canticle of the Three Children (Dan 3:52–90), which is rather similar to a psalm, has the same elements.

Pregill

A skillful recasting of Nathan's parable from 2 Sam 12, alluding only indirectly to the Bathsheba affair. The clandestine reference to David's sin here fits well into the larger pattern evident in this *sūra*, since its overarching theme is that of transgression and repentance. Skeptics who deny Muḥammad's message (vv. 2–8) are juxtaposed first with those who rejected earlier prophets (vv. 12–14), then with David and Solomon, who initially failed God's tests due to their arrogance, but were subsequently exalted by Him after they repented (vv. 17–26, 30–40), and finally with Iblīs, whose conceit led him to refuse to bow before Adam and rebel against the direct command of God (vv. 71–85). Significant linguistic and structural parallels between the various vignettes suggest that the *sūra* is a carefully composed unity.

The indirect allusion to the Bathsheba affair may be compared to the treatment of Aaron's sin in the Golden Calf episode in Q 20. In both cases the Qurʾān's delicacy in addressing the sin of a prophet or leader of Israel reflects late antique precursors, as well as anticipating the later articulation of the doctrine of *ʿiṣma*, which would in this case lead Muslim authors to wholly deny any wrongdoing on David's part, though early authors and traditionists did relate the story of David and Bathsheba with some candor (see Mohammed 2014). The story of David's sin is also linked in provocative ways with the story of Muḥammad and Zaynab, suggesting that the latter

is more likely to be a parable than actual history; cf. Pregill 2011b, to which should be added the authoritative treatment of the sources in Powers 2009.

V. 21: the *miḥrāb* is a place of seclusion in the Temple; cf. Solomon's *maḥārib* (Q 34:13) and the various references to the *maḥārib* of Mary and Zachariah. Here, David is either praying in the Temple or is actually imagined as dwelling therein; if the latter, this is perhaps a distant memory of the Antonia, the fortified palace structure built by Herod that was adjacent to the Temple Mount.

V. 26: David as *ḫalīfa*, enjoined to deal justly (as in v. 22 above). Note that in Q 2 Adam is created as *ḫalīfa* but subsequently sins and repents; here, David first sins (at least implicitly) and repents, and then is commissioned as *ḫalīfa*. Aaron is Moses' *ḫalīfa* in Q 7 and sins in Q 20. Why is *ḫilāfa* so consistently associated with sin and repentance?

Rippin

If we take this passage as a parallel to the parable of Nathan in 2 Sam 12, then the sense of the Qurʾān as "referential" is both apparent and complex. Vv. 23 and 24a recap the Biblical narrative in a somewhat abstract (referential) fashion. But the Qurʾān seems to tell this story as though it was an event in the life of David (as David himself reacts in 2 Sam 12:5–6, of course) and not a parable, as Nathan explains in 2 Sam 12:7. (And thus there emerges the identification of the two disputants of v. 22 as angels traditionally, especially because David was afraid of them). But then the Qurʾān moves to the meaning of the parable in v. 25 when David is told he is a *ḫalīfa* ("I anointed you king over Israel," 2 Sam 12:7). It makes for a complicated "parallel" mixing narrative and parable; one might well imagine that there are intervening stages in the transformation of the story and its meaning.

The use of *miḥrāb* in v. 21 is worthy of note, especially given the fact that it is spoken of as needing to be "scaled," *tasawwarū*, so it is obviously not a *miḥrāb* in its later sense. This has been looked at by Busse (1994) and understanding this *miḥrāb* as the "Tower of David" emphasizes that the passage is a part of the Bathsheba episode, once again in the Qurʾān as the faintest of allusions through this idea of being on "the roof of his palace" (II Sam 11:2). But as Busse points out, the word makes sense of accounts about ʿUmar and the conquest of Jerusalem and ʿUmar's going to the *miḥrāb* (the existing "Tower of David/Phasael"). As Busse says (1994: 155), we have a meaning that is "of an earlier date than 'place of prayer' or 'prayer niche'" as it becomes, likely (it seems to me) through contamination with this story of ʿUmar's conquest (and the later expectation that the first thing ʿUmar would have done is pray).

Zellentin

As Gobillot has shown convincingly (2013), the passage once again reads the Torah along with the Gospel (see my comments on QS 3 and 31). More specifically, the

Qurʾān reads 2 Sam 12:1–4 (“the rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb”) along with Matt 18:12–14 (“if a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?”). The number of sheep that appears in the Qurʾān and in the Gospel, ninety-nine plus one, along with the explicit discussion of David in 2 Sam and in the Qurʾān, makes this a very forceful example to appreciate how suggestive such combined exegesis of the two texts must have been to an audience that was familiar, or was supposed to become familiar, with both scriptural stories, and with their compatibility—the intended audience of the Qurʾān.