Muḥammad the Prophet and Arabia

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Photo: Adi Sagi, Tel Aviv.
Quraysh and Their Winter and Summer Journey: 
On the Interpretation of Sūra 106

1 Preface

A most extensive study of the Islamic tafsīr ("exegesis") of Sūra 106 has been published by Harris Birkeland in 1956. In 1984 I have published my own study of the sūra, and in 1987 Patricia Crone discussed the tafsīr materials pertaining to Sūra 106 in a monograph about the Meccan trade.

What seems to be missing from these studies is an attempt at reading the sūra within its own internal qur'ānic context, i.e. in comparison with parallel qur'ānic passages that contain the same ideas as well as vocabulary. In the following discussion, which forms a revised and updated version of my 1984 article, the internal qur'ānic evidence will be taken as a starting point for the re-evaluation of the significance of Sūra 106, and then the evidence of post-qur'ānic tafsīr will be revisited in order to show that rather than being adventitious guesswork, as maintained by Crone, it faithfully represents concepts and ideas of Muslims who projected them back into their own reading of the Qur'ān. These ideas deserve serious attention because they are most revealing with respect to the image of Quraysh as perceived by generations of Muslims.

2 The internal qur'ānic context of Sūra 106

1. li-fālā Qurayshīn
2. lāfāhim riḥlatu l-shitā'ī wa-l-ṣayfī
3. fa-i-ya budū rabbā hādhā l-bayti
4. lādhi aṣ-ṣamahum min jā' in wa-ṣamahum min khawfīn

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4 I was able to prepare the present version during my stay in 2009/10 as a Research Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I thank Prof. Michael Lecker for reading a draft of this version and for his useful comments, suggestions and corrections.
In the traditional chronological lists of the qur'ānic revelations, Suṣra 106 appears among the Meccan Suṣras, and usually as the 28th. Passages contained in other Meccan Suṣras are most relevant to the issues addressed in this Suṣra and especially in its second part (vv. 3–4) where the key words are jā, “hunger,” and khawf, “fear.” These are two kinds of hardship against which God is said to have protected Quraysh, and on this idea several Meccan passages have a direct bearing.

To begin with, in a somewhat later Meccan passage (q 16:112–14), a parable is recounted about a town safe and secure to which its means of subsistence came in abundance from every quarter; but it disbelieved (kaftarat) in God’s favors, therefore God made it taste the utmost degree of hunger (al-jā) and fear (al-khāwif). There came to them an apostle from among them, but they rejected him, so the punishment overtook them while they were unjust. The disbeliever (kufr) that is condemned in this parable stands for refusal to recognize Allāh as the ultimate source of the prosperity and security that are enjoyed in a town into which provisions are brought from “every quarter.” The idea of the parable is of a sacred locality that prospers from incoming pilgrims, but its inhabitants are not taking this prosperity as a sign of God’s favors and do not believe in him.

In other Meccan passages the divine blessing that the local inhabitants ignore is associated with the idea of the haram, i.e. a territory encompassing a town consecrated by God within which bloodshed is forbidden. Thus in q 29:67 Muḥammad’s contemporary unbelievers are condemned for not seeing that it is God who has given them a secure haram “while people all around them are snatched away.” The verse goes on to assert that their kufr consists in disbelieving in God’s benevolence (ni’ma) while preferring to believe in “vanity” (bātīl), i.e. idols other than God. Implicit here is the notion that the protection enjoyed within God’s haram should lead its inhabitants to believe in him alone and abandon all other deities who fail to protect their own followers wherever they are. In q 28:57 the same audience is denounced again for ignoring the fact that it was God who has established for them a secure, sacred territory (haraman al-ṣāliḥ) to which fruits of every kind are being brought as a sustenance from us.” This verse encompasses the full dimensions of the idea of the haram, i.e. not only security but also prosperity derived from incoming pilgrims and merchants. But the addressees, i.e. the Meccans, are so unsure that all the benefits of the haram come from God that they refuse to follow Muhammad lest they should be “carried off from our land.” In the following verse (q 28:58) God draws their attention to the deserted vestiges of old generations of idolaters in towns other than Mecca who prospered and were then destroyed by God. This implies that God’s power superseded that of the local idols who failed to save their followers from extinction.

These passages indicate that the conflict between Muhammad and his Meccan contemporaries stemmed from different attitudes towards the status of Mecca as a prosperous and secure haram. While the Prophet presents to them a monotheistic demand to see in Allāh the ultimate origin of their worldly welfare and security, the unbelievers are not convinced that this is so and do not abandon the worship of other deities, such that are worshipped also by idolaters outside Mecca.

The qur’ānic monotheistic approach to the idea of the haram, i.e. that Mecca owes its prosperity and security exclusively to God, is connected in another Meccan passage with the figure of Abraham. In q 14:37 Abraham prays to God saying that, i.e. Abraham, has made his offspring dwell in a region originally “unproductive of fruit,” near God’s sacred house (inba baytika l-muḥarrami) so that they “may keep up prayer.” Then Abraham implores God to “make the hearts of people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful.” Abraham’s prayer is reiterated in a Medinan passage (q 2:126) where he asks God to make Mecca a secure town (baladyan al-ṣāliḥ) for those who believe in God and in the Last Judgment, and provide them with fruits. Abraham’s prayer is here the ultimate trigger for the benevolence of God who has let the Meccans prosper near his house, i.e. the Ka’ba, thanks to provisions brought in by pilgrims. This implies that to believe in God as the ultimate source of all the benefits derived from Mecca’s being a haram means to believe in the monotheistic legacy of Abraham.

The same monotheistic approach to the idea of the haram is reiterated in Suṣra 106. Here the idea is condensed into the demand put to Quraysh to “worship the lord of this house who has fed them against hunger and secured them from fear” (vv. 3–4). The title “lord of this house,” as also “lord of this town” which occurs in another Meccan Suṣra (q 27:91), means that he and no other deity is the origin of the sacred status of Mecca as a haram frequented by pilgrims coming to the Ka’ba. The request that Quraysh worship him means that they must treat him in the proper
monotheistic way and abandon the worship of other deities who cannot provide their followers with prosperity and protection. Not only do the Quraish deny that Allah is the lord of the Ka’ba and hence the only origin of the benefits of their haram, they are not even content with those benefits and look elsewhere for more sources of income and prosperity, far away from Mecca. In so doing they turn their back on God and his haram. This condemnation is inherent in the opening passage of Surah 106 which revolves around the theme of riḥlat al-shīta wa-l-sayf, “the winter and summer journey” (vv. 1–2).

The term riḥla that denotes “journey” occurs only once in the Qur’an but is nevertheless one out of many other indications that Muhammad’s Meccan contemporaries were engaged in travelling. The other indications as well appear in Meccan sūras, in admonitions addressed to the unbelievers in request to draw the proper religious conclusion from the fate of ancient generations of idolaters whose dwellings were destroyed by God, and their remnants can be seen daily by the Meccans who pass by them when they travel. The Qur’an refers to the abode of these extinct generations as qurā (sing. qayyā), i.e. towns, and asserts that they are located “around you.” The Qur’an also states that the Meccans use to pass by these places and reproaches them for not drawing the proper lesson from what they see there. Most explicit is q 20:128 as well as q 32:26, in which it is stated that the Meccan unbelievers go (yamshāna) through the dwelling-places of the sinful ancient generations (al-qurān). The Qur’an mentions among these generations the people of Thamūd about whom it is stated: “So these are their houses fallen down because they were unjust. Most surely there is a sign in this for people who know” (q 27:52; cf. q 28:58). In q 29:38 the same audience is told that the fate of ‘Ad and Thamūd “has become clear from you through their deserted dwelling places (masākin),” which again means that the Meccans may see them with their own eyes (see also q 14:45).

The vestiges of the Thamūd are located in the area known to us as Mada’in Salih, about 600 km north-west of Mecca. More or less the same area is known in the classical sources as Wādī l-Qurā, and it is usually explained that “from beginning to end the valley was made of villages arrayed one after the other.” However, the name may just as well denote “the valley of the [ruined] cities,” because according to a report recorded by Yaqūt, Wādī al-Qurā – in the vicinity of al-Hijr and on the pilgrims’ road from Syria to Mecca – was inhabited in the remote past by ‘Ad and Thamūd; God destroyed them there, and their remnants have survived “till now.”

The Qur’an refers to the vestiges of the “dwellers of al-Ayka” [= Leuke Kome] as well. These are also situated “on a manifest roadway” (wa-innāh la-bi-imāmin mubin; q 15:79), and since they are mentioned in juxtaposition with the deserted ruins of the people of al-Hijr (q 15:78), their abode, too, must be located on the road to Syria. The Meccans frequented the vestiges of the town of Lot as well (q 29:35; 51:37); the Qur’an tells the unbelievers that “you pass by them (la-tamurrūna ‘alayhim) in the morning and in the evening” (37:137-138). In another verse the Meccans simply “see” its remains (q 25:40). The remnants can be seen because they are “on a road yet remaining” (wa-innāh la-bi-sabīlin muqām; q 15:76).

In view of this explicit evidence as to the northbound long-distance journeys of the Meccans, one may safely assume that the riḥla of Sūrah 106 is yet another allusion to the same journeys. Their aim was undoubtedly trade, because what purpose other than trade could the Meccans have when going on the roads across Wādī al-Qurā which took them to the north, hundreds of kilometers away from their hometown?

In Sūrah 106 the Qur’an defines the Meccan travels as “winter and summer journey.” For such a description we have no direct clue within the Qur’an, therefore we must look at other classical Arabic texts that can throw light on the context in which winter and summer are usually

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6 On the idea of the “lord of the Ka’ba” in connection with the Meccan pre-Islamic polytheism see further, Pavel Pavlovitch, “On the problem of the pre-Islamic lord of the ka’ba,” Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies 2 (1998/99), 49-74. Pavlovitch holds that Allah was not always regarded as the lord of the Ka’ba and that this shrine was originally dedicated to other deities.

8 See Uri Rubin, s.v. “Remnant,” Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an, (Brill, 2003), IV, 425.


12 This does not necessarily mean that they pass there twice a day but rather that it is located on their way to and from Syria.

13 Croce maintains that the idea that the winter and summer journey is connected with trade is “simply exegetical interpretation of 106:2, and only one out of many.” See Patricia Crone, “How did the Qur’anic pagans make a living?”, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 68 (2005), 395, n. 28.
mentioned. As it turns out, winter and summer often occur in the context of the weather conditions that are associated with them. For example, the Qurashi Abū 'Abdārya b. Abdallāh b. Zam'a (grandson of Muḥammad's wife, Umm Salama) reportedly used to look after some Khārijīs and give him whatever provisions he needed, and each year he provided him with food supplies and clothes (kiswa) for winter and summer. In the expression kiswa al-shīta wa-l-sayf, "clothing for winter and summer," which recurs in various sources, the conditions of frost and heat are indeed meant rather than the seasons per se. Similarly, in the Qur'ānic expression rihlat al-shīta wa-l-sayf, the respective conditions of frost and heat in which the journeys are taken are primarily meant rather than their calendrical season. This does not mean that Quraysh really set out for their journeys in the least suitable time to do so, only that this is how the Qur'ān looks at the journeys, as if to deplore the obsession of Quraysh with such endeavor which they will not give up even in the heat of summer or in the frost of winter.

The Qur'ān has chosen to describe the involvement of Quraysh in their journeys by means of the word li-ilāf. This is the canonical reading that stands for the verbal noun of alafa (form IV); it may denote the same as form l (alafa), i.e. "to resort habitually (to a place)." This identical sense of forms I and IV seems to be the reason why in some non-canonical variant readings, the word li-ilāf appears without the letter ya: li-ilāf or even li-ilf (verbal nouns of form I). This is also the case even in the standard 'Uthmānic codex where the second occurrence of the same verbal noun (v. 2) appears without the ya: ilāhim. In any case, ilāf or ilāf or ilīf seem to refer to the habitual engagement of Quraysh in the winter and summer journey.

The context of the allusion to the winter and summer journey is the same as that of the rest of the sūra, i.e. the haram as a monotheistic value ignored by the unbelievers. In such a context the journey can only be mentioned in a tone of disapproval, to deplore Quraysh whose winter and summer journey has become their chief preoccupation, while ignoring the benevolence of the lord of the Ka'ba who has provided for all their needs within their own haram. This means that in the eyes of the Qur'ān, the repeated winter and summer journey was too excessive and marked the compulsive engagement of Quraysh in an improper habit that stemmed from avaricious pursuit of worldly advantages outside Mecca which contradicted their religious duties. This seems to be the reason why the noun ilāf or ilāf is twice reiterated (li-ilāf ... ilāhim) so that the sense of compulsive repetition is intensified. In this manner Sūra 106 emerges as yet another admonition denouncing the kufr of the Meccans, which, as in the other verses mentioned above, stems from their dissatisfaction with the benefits of the haram in which they live. Instead of being grateful to God for the prosperity and security derived from the position of Mecca as a pilgrimage center, Quraysh are immersed in trade journeys outside the city while the Ka'ba and its lord are not their primary concern. In more practical terms this means that they should be more engaged in prayer and other religious duties than in worldly matters like burdensome long-distance journeys in pursuit of worldly gains.

With this we reach the prefixed preposition li which is annexed to the term ilāf: When this preposition is used in order to draw attention to something out of the ordinary, it is usually called by the grammarians lām li-l-ta'ājub, and is explained in the sense of "O you, wonder at..." in the case of Sūra 106 the ta'ājub expresses reservation, which can also be conveyed by means of waylun li. In view of these considerations the sūra may be thus translated:

1. Wonder you at the habitual preoccupation of Quraysh.
2. Their preoccupation with journeying in (the cold of) winter and (the heat of) summer.
3. Let them worship (instead) the lord of this house.
4. Who has fed them hunger and secured them from fear.
In this context Sūra 102 is also most relevant. In the traditional chronological lists it appears 15th among the Meccan sūras, and in its very beginning it condemns the Meccans for being preoccupied and distracted (alḥākum) by takāthir, i.e., greedy competitive strife to gain all the more profits. Medinan passages are even more explicit; they delineate an outright contrast between trade and piety. Thus in q 24:37 the Qur‘ān praises “people whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of God and the keeping up of prayer and from paying the alsms.” In q 62:11 people are condemned, who “when they see merchandise or diversion they scatter off to it, and leave you [i.e. the Prophet] standing.”22 Sūra 106 shows how already in the Meccan period the Qur‘ān has disapproved of trade journeys when grown into a compulsive engagement that distracts one from profound religious devotion.

3 The post-qur‘ānic taṣāfir

The post-qur‘ānic exegetes were already aware of the new status of Islam which after the death of the Prophet had defeated mighty empires outside of Arabia. As a result of this historical development, the image of Muhammad, and with him the image of his own tribe, Quraysh – to which the caliphs who succeeded him belonged as well – gained new dimensions in the mind of the believers, far and beyond their qur‘ānic limits. However, the involvement of Quraysh in the opposition to Muhammad as documented in the Meccan sūras could not be concealed, but much could nevertheless be done with respect to their pre-Islamic ancestors who had lived before Muhammad became a prophet and so played no part in the opposition against him. These ancestors, and especially those belonging to Muhammad’s immediate ancestry, could easily be presented as righteous and even as proper Muslims way before the Qur‘ān was ever revealed to their offspring.

The reshaped image of Muhammad’s Quraysh progenitors is reflected in a series of post-qur‘ānic traditions asserting that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Muhammad’s grandfather, as well as the latter’s father, Hāshim, as well as the latter’s father, ‘Abd Manāf, never worshipped an idol.23 Several figures belonging to the more remote parts of Muhammad’s Qurayshī lineage are also presented in the traditions as righteous monotheists, followers of the religion of Abraham.24 Many of them were even described as bearing in their bodies Muhammad’s pre-existent luminous entity that shined on their foreheads.25 Their collective pre-existent entity was said to have been placed as light in front of God two thousand years before the creation of Adam.26

Sūra 106 was most appropriate for the back projection of the reshaped image of Quraysh. Among the numerous traditions about the virtues (fatā’il) of Quraysh, one finds the following in the commentary of al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1035). It is transmitted by Muhammad’s wife ‘Umm Hānī‘ on the authority of the prophet himself: “Allāh elevated Quraysh through seven virtues, which were not, nor will be, granted to anyone else: I am from them; the prophethood is from them; the hizāba (custodianship of the Ka‘ba) is with them; the saqlāya (providing water for pilgrims) is with them; they were given victory over the elephant; they had worshipped Allāh ten27 years before anyone else; a Qur‘ānic sūra was revealed concerning them, in which no one is mentioned but them.”28

A particular virtue of Quraysh, namely their caliphs, was explicitly read to the exegesis of the sūra; in a tradition attributed to ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭalib, the words “he secured them from fear” (q 106:4) were explained as though meaning that Allāh protected Quraysh from the fear of losing the khilāfa.29 This interpretation was designed to delegitimize any attempt at denying the authority of the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid caliphs, and therefore the interpretation was deliberately put into the mouth of ‘Ali, the classic hero of the anti-Umayyad and anti-‘Abbāsid Shi‘ī opposition.

Another bold example of reading the sūra in accordance with the virtues of Quraysh is provided by al-Rāzi (d. 607/1210) who suggests

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22  Ibid., 77-8. The most notable among them are Mu‘āṣir, al-Ya‘yis, Mu‘add, Nizār, Khuzayma, Kināna and Ka‘b b. Lu‘ayy.
23  Ibid., 91–2.
24  Ibid., 102.
25  Printed: ‘ishrīn (“twenty”) which is erroneous.
that verse 4 could be understood in the sense that God has fed Quraysh against the hunger for knowledge by means of the qu'ranic revelation (to Muhammad), and protected them from the fear of erring by means of guiding them to the right path. Thanks to these favors they were no longer inferior to the “people of the book” (the Jews and the Christians), because they themselves became known as “people of the knowledge and the Qur‘ân,” while the others were known as “the ignorant Jews and Christians.”

The process of reading into Sûra 106 new meanings is manifest already in the earliest available tafsîr sources, and mainly in the interpretation of the winter and summer journey. In spite of the straightforward wording of the phrase, it was interpreted in a variety of ways which were designed to deal with the potential danger to the image of Quraysh posed by the idea that the journey represented a compulsive preoccupation that stood in contrast to religious duties.

In what follows the manner in which the post-qu‘ranic exegesis tried to “improve” the context of the winter and summer journey so as to make it more favorable to Quraysh will be examined through three tafsîr sources stemming from the first and second Islamic centuries (see Appendix). They will be analyzed and compared with later tafsîr as well as some historiographic sources.

3.1 Tanwîr al-miqbâs

We begin with a source containing a commentary attributed to the Prophet’s cousin Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687–8). It is named Tanwîr al-miqbâs min tafsîr ibn ‘Abbâs. The material is related on the authority of Muhammad b. al-Sâ‘ib al-Kalbî (d. 146/763), from Abû Sâlih (Bâdhâm, mawla of Umm Hâni’, d. 100/719), from Ibn ‘Abbâs. Even if the attribution to Ibn ‘Abbâs is questionable, the names of al-Kalbî and Abû Sâlih seem to indicate that we are dealing with a tafsîr stemming from the first Islamic era.29

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Wonder you at the engagement of Quraysh in these travels, and their turning away from the worship of Allah! Then [Allah] ordered them to engage in worship, and made it known to them that he is the one who fed them and protected them, not their travel. The message is therefore that they should worship him who has fed them in response to Abraham’s prayer when he said, ‘Provide them with fruits’ (q 14:37), and he protected them in response to [Abraham’s] prayer when he said: ‘God, make this city a protected haram’ (q 14:35). Therefore they should not be diverted by their travels which are merely a pursuit of profits and a passing matter of this world.”

The reference to Abraham’s prayer in this interpretation keeps the message of the sūra well within its wider qur'ānic context, in line with the idea of Mecca as a prosperous and safe haram that owes its position to incoming pilgrims who contribute to its wealth and prosperity.

Other traditions as well note the relationship of the sūra, and mainly verse 4, to the position of Mecca as a haram; they too allude to Abraham’s prayer in which this position originates and thanks to which God fed its inhabitants against hunger and secured them from fear. A short version of the same perception is provided by al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1035) on the authority of the Basran grammarian al-Akhhaf (d. 210/825):

The lâm is lâm al-ta‘ajub. God says: ‘Wonder you at the habitual engagement of Quraysh in the winter and summer journey and their turning away from the worship of the lord of this house.’ Then he ordered them to worship him.

The same tone of reproach as conveyed by the lâm al-ta‘ajub is retained in the tradition about the Medinan Companion woman Asmā’ bint Yazīd b. al-Sakān who is said to have heard Muhammad say: “Woe to you (wayyakum), Quraysh, worship the lord of this house who has fed them against hunger and secured them from fear!” The Anṣārī (Medinan) origin of the narrator of this tradition may explain her readiness to transmit a prophetic utterance that is anything but flattering to Quraysh.

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35 Tha‘labī, Kāshf, X, 300.
38 Māwīḍ, Nukat, VI, 346; Qurṭub, Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān, XX, 202; Suyūṭī, Durr, VI, 397.
40 uḏhur ŋi-māṭi` al-Allāh Qurayshih li-yā lafī`  مجلة  al-tawḥīdī kā-šāhīm rhīša l-shīf i wa-l-sayf.
41 Ṭabarī, Jámi‘ al-bayān, XXX, 198. See also Ibn ʿAbd al-Hātim, Tafṣīr, X, 3467 (no. 19486). This is also the interpretation of Sufyān b. Ḫayyān (d. 9/811) as recorded in Bukhārī, Sahih, 9 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), VI, 219 (Tafṣīr [65], Sūra 106).
Jubayr (Kufan d. 95/713-14) from Ibn ‘Abbás. Mujahid adds that Quraysh became habitually occupied with the journey so that no winter or summer journey was too hard for them. It is implied here that God has made the journey easy for them.

The sense of the winter and summer journey as signaling divine favor could even be maintained with the perception of the prefixed li of li-illaf as expressing wonder. Al-Farrā’ (d. 207/823) says: “Wonder you, Muhammad, at the benvolence of Allah towards Quraysh...so let them not be diverted by it from following you, and from believing in Allah.” This time the wonder expresses admiration.

The transformation of the winter and summer journey from a compulsive engagement into a non-problematic routine, or, as put in al-Mawardi’s (d. 450/1058) tafṣīr, al-‘āda al-ma’lāfa, “the customary habit.” is reflected in further interpretations recorded in the tafṣīr sources. Qatāda (d. 117/735) maintains that illāf stands for the habit (‘āda) of Quraysh in taking the winter and summer journey.44 According to ‘Abi b. Abi Taḥla (Himsi d. 143/760) from Ibn ‘Abbás, illāf means luzām, i.e. the cling of Quraysh to their caravans, or, according to al-Farrā’, their engagement in the preparation of the winter and summer journey. It was explained that Quraysh had to worship Allah in order to be able to prepare their journey, so that it would proceed uninterruptedly.

Some commentators emphasized the idea of the winter and summer journey as representing divine benefaction by having recourse to a grammatical reinterpretation according to which the term li-illāf is not merely transitive, as in form 1 (“to resort habitually to a place”), but ditransitive (“to cause someone to resort habitually to”), so that it governs two objects, Quraysh and rihla, the subject being God. The syntactic role of Quraysh has thus been changed from subject to object in the sense that God has blessed them in habituating them to the winter and summer journey.

This sense is suggested in the interpretation of Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) who says that God’s intention was to habituate Quraysh to the two journeys.45 He goes on to explain that the two journeys were the origin of Mecca’s livelihood and therefore God ordered them to thank him, saying: “Let them worship the lord of this house”.46 In Ibn Qutayba’s perception, the winter and summer journey rather than the status of Mecca as a āhram is the origin of the prosperity mentioned in verse 4, and for which Quraysh are instructed to thank God by worshipping him. In this case the prefixed li in li-illāf is perceived as if used li-lītaillī, i.e. to indicate the reason or the cause. As put by al-Zajjāj (d. 311/924): “Let them worship the lord of this house because of their illāf.”47

The perception of the winter and summer journey as a sign of divine blessing is reflected also in the notion that Quraysh had two trade journeys a year, each to a different destination. We have already met the idea above in one of ʿIkrīma’s versions according to which Quraysh were accustomed to frequenting Būṣrā and Yemen in the winter and in the summer. Such a perception takes the expression “winter and summer journey” in its literal meaning, as if denoting two seasonal travels. This perception eliminates the insinuation of excessive engagement in a compulsive activity. The appearance of Yemen in the traditions as a destination equally regular as that of Syria expands the scope of the journeys which in the Qurʿān are mainly northbound (see above), and hence of the divine blessing.
The literary role of the Syria-Yemen space becomes even clearer in early Islamic traditions in which this pair of zones marks the idealized northern and southern borders of the Islamic domain. Thus Muhammad’s mother, Āmina, sees, when giving birth to Muhammad, light emerging from her that illuminates the whole region between Syria and Yemen.\(^{56}\) The adjustment of the scope of the Qur’ānic winter and summer journey to the same boundaries turns it into yet another sign predicting the Islamic expansion that was set in motion in a blessed act of God.

Coming back to the Tanwīr al-miqbās, Syria and Yemen are mentioned again in the subsequent comments, but this time the journey is bound for Yemen in the winter and for Syria in the summer. This particular timing conveys a specific aspect of blessing which is clarified in further sources telling us that in the frosty winter Quraysh could find warmth in the south, and in the hot summer they could enjoy the cool weather of the north. This is stated in so many words in a tradition recorded by al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Ibn Zayd (Medinan d. 182/798) to the effect that in winter they could not travel to Syria because of the cold and therefore they went to Yemen.\(^{57}\) Ibn Abī Ḥātīm (d. 327/938) has a tradition on the authority of Ikrīma that envisions their pleasurable journeys differently: in winter they used to travel by sea to Ayla and thence to Palestine, seeking warmth, and in summer they betook themselves to Buṣrā and Adhīrāt for coolness.\(^{58}\) According to Abū Ṣāliḥ as well, both their journeys were to Syria; in winter they went to its warmer regions and in summer – to its cooler zones.\(^{59}\) As for the Tanwīr al-miqbās, here we find a further assertion of the pleasurable nature of the winter and summer journey: “Some say that monotheism shall not be difficult (la yashaquqa) for Quraysh, just as the winter and the summer journey was not difficult for them.”

Further on, the Tanwīr al-miqbās explains that the statement that God has fed Quraysh against hunger (v. 4) means that he sated them after a seven-year famine. The idea of God’s protection against hunger has thus been detached from the general idea of the haram and the pilgrims that pour into it with provisions, and was connected instead to a specific event of divine intervention that has terminated a seven-year famine. The number seven is symbolic and occurs elsewhere in the Qur’ān (q 12:48) in connection with the seven years of drought at Joseph’s time. Besides, a seven-year drought is mentioned in widely-current traditions relating that Quraysh persecuted Muḥammad and rejected him as an impostor and therefore the Prophet prayed and invoked upon them seven years of drought like Joseph’s years. In the famine that ensued they were forced to eat carrion.\(^{60}\) These traditions retain a less flattering aspect of Quraysh who, when Muḥammad was already acting as a prophet in Mecca, offered him tough opposition. This did not prevent al-Rāzī from including the episode in his commentary of q 106:4, explaining that Quraysh rejected Muḥammad and therefore the prophet invoked a seven-year drought upon them, like those of Joseph, and when they repented, Muḥammad prayed again and they regained their prosperity.\(^{61}\) But the Tanwīr al-miqbās is more sensitive to the image of Quraysh and therefore has censored the circumstances of the famine so that the attention is focused exclusively on its termination thanks to God’s benefaction unto Quraysh. No mention is made of the fact that the famine was a divine retribution for their disbelief in Muḥammad.

The same explanation is repeated by al-Farrāʾī who adds some significant details. He says that the famine in Mecca was terminated when the Syrians who possessed abundance of corn brought provisions to the region of Mecca (al-Abtah), and so did the Yemenites who carried their food supplies to Jedālah. In this manner God provided Quraysh with provisions from two regions sparing them the trouble of the winter and summer journey (wa-kasāhumu l-riḥlatayn). At this point al-Farrāʾī reverts to Muḥammad’s own times saying that if Quraysh follow Muḥammad and stay close to the house (vä the Ka’ba), God will again spare them the trouble of the two journeys as he did before.\(^{62}\)

This explanation reads into the sûra the idea that already before its revelation, way back in pre-Islamic times, Quraysh could afford to give up the winter and summer journey and thus not neglect their religious duties as regards God and the Ka’ba. This was a divine benevolence extended to them through the Syrians and the Yemenites.

In more versions the favors done by the Yemenites unto Quraysh are expounded, which betray a political interest to praise this particular

\(^{56}\) Rubin, "Pre-existence," 88–9.
\(^{57}\) Ğabarānī, jaˈmī’ al-bayān, XXX, 199.
\(^{58}\) Ibn Abī Ḥātīm, Taťṣī, X, 3467 (no. 19491).
\(^{59}\) Taḥlābī, Kuhf, X, 302.
\(^{62}\) fa-in itiḥāda` ala wa-lażīmū l-bayt, kasāhumu l-riḥlatayn ayyān ka-ma kašāhum.
against the cold of winter, and a cool resort to protect them against the heat of summer. Allâh reminded them of this blessing.”

The next interpretation recorded in the Tanwîr al-miqdâbâs keeps to the same line, saying that Quraysh used to travel twice each year, to Yemen in winter and to Syria in summer, and God warded (da'â'a) this trouble off them.

A more explicit version of the same interpretation has been recorded by al-Tabari with the family isnaâd of the Kîfân 'Aṭîyya b. Sa'd al-'Awfi (d. 111/729) from Ibn 'Abbâs:

He (i.e. God) forbade them to travel, and he ordered them to worship the Lord of this house, and he spared them the trouble. Their journey took place in winter and in summer, and they did not have rest during winter nor during summer.

Afterwards he provided them with food against hunger, and protected them from fear; and (henceforth) they journeyed at their pleasure (wa-alîf fî l-rîfâlata) i.e. if they wished they set out, and if they wished they stayed (at Mecca). This belonged to the benefaction of God unto them.

Here, as in the Tanwîr al-miqdâbâs, God is kind enough to spare the Meccans the trouble of traveling and provides for their sustenance and security, but this time the origin of the prosperity is not in al-Tâîf, but rather within Mecca itself. This is implied in the assertion that only after Quraysh were used to being absent from Mecca, God intervened and provided them with food and protection. This seems to mean that he turned Mecca into a pilgrimage destination and a protected haram, thus enabling Quraysh to stay home when they felt like it. This interpretation reflects a transition in the perception of the haram from an age-old state dating back to Abraham's time to a more recent development, but still old enough to have liberated Quraysh from the burden of the winter and summer journey way before the revelation of Sûra 106.

The next passage of the Tanwîr al-miqdâbâs reverts to the idea that the winter and summer journey signals divine blessing, but now it is part of a wider benefaction that starts in Sûrat al-Fil (105). This Sûra deals with the defeat of the "people of the elephant," whom the exeges identify with the army of Abraha, the Ethiopian leader who besieged Mecca and planned to destroy the Ka'ba. The Tanwîr al-miqdâbâs says that God

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63 The Yemenite pre-Islamic ancestors, too, like the Quraish ones, are presented in the traditions as righteous Muslims. See Rubin, "Pre-existence," 79–80.


65 Qurṭûbî, Ahkâm al-Qur'ân, XX, 209.


68 Ṭabarî, Jâmi' al-bayân, XXX, 198.
has secured Quraysh from the fear of the Ethiopian Najâshî and asserts that Sûra 106 is adjoined (ma’âfī) to the pervious sûra (al-Fîl). This explanation implies that God has defeated the people of the elephant in order to protect and maintain the winter and summer journey of Quraysh. This is stated in so many words by Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/767) who quotes the two sûras in one sequence, explaining that the defeat of the people of the elephant protected Quraysh against any change in their state, due to God’s favorable purpose regarding them, if only they subsequently believed.79

The same interpretation is repeated in al-Farrâ’î’s commentary where it is explained that the prefixed li in li-Ilâf is synonymous with Ilâ, which denotes addition of something to something else; as if the divine benevolence described in Sûra 106 has been added to the one recounted in Sûra 105.71 But the prefixed preposition was also explained as denoting purpose (= káz), as if God destroyed the people of the elephant in order to maintain the consolidation of Quraysh and their mutual solidarity as well as their winter and summer journey.72

The combination of Sûra 105 and 106 into one is just another exegetical attempt at reading the sense of divine benevolence into the winter and summer journey and does not seem to represent the original state of the qur’anic text, as suggested by Shahid.73 In fact, in the early chronological lists, Sûra 105 and 106 are never subsequent, and in ‘Aţâ’ al-Khurâsânî’s list, for example, Sûra 105 is the 18th, whereas Sûra 106 is only the 28th.

The attachment of Sûra 106 to Sûra 105 is only one aspect of the historical impact attributed in post-qur’anic tradition to the defeat of the people of the elephant. A further aspect is revealed in Ibn Ishaq’s report to the effect that “when Allâh turned back the Ethiopians from Mecca and inflicted upon them his vengeance, the Arabs admired Quraysh and said: they are the people of Allâh. He has fought for them, and spared them the trouble of their enemies.”74 A report of Ibn Jurâjî (d. 150/767) maintains that this was the stage when Quraysh started to be aware of the sacredness of Mecca and, in due course, they established a special din of their own, known as hums, which was marked by its profound devotion to the Ka’ba and to the sacred haram of Mecca. Accordingly, they confined all their religious ceremonies to this sacred territory.75 In this exposition Quraysh emerge as the most devoted Arabian group to God’s house at Mecca, way before the revelation of Sûra 106.

The same message is conveyed in the report of al-Thâlibî (d. 429/1038) to the effect that originally Quraysh used to trade only with merchants coming during the sacred months to the markets near Mecca; Quraysh did not leave their abode and did not go out of their haram because they were devoted to their din and loved their haram and their bayt, and used to serve the incoming pilgrims. Only afterwards they obtained security pacts from the tribes and could travel safely beyond the boundaries of the haram.76 In this formulation the contrast between the winter and summer journey and the injunction to worship “the lord of this house,” as put forward in Sûra 106, has been eliminated.

In sum, the Tanwîr al-miqbâs has recorded a whole range of exegetical approaches that were designed to read into the Qur’ân the post-qur’anic idea of the constant righteousness of Quraysh whose conduct was guided by God’s blessed benevolence. In some interpretations the idea of divine benevolence was applied to the winter and summer journey that has thus changed from a distracting preoccupation that must be given up into a sign of divine blessing which God himself helped Quraysh go on with since pre-Islamic times. In other interpretations, the winter and summer journey has retained its sense of a habitual preoccupation with worldly matters, which accords with the internal qur’anic context of the sûra, but God himself is said to have already spared Quraysh the trouble of the

journey, helping them to forgo it thanks to provisions brought to them from outside. This implies that already before the revelation of the sūra they have changed their priorities and became sufficiently religious and righteous.

Let us now proceed to our second tafsīr source.

3.2 Muqātil b. Sulaymān

In the Tafsīr of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), the winter and summer journey is again a burdensome preoccupation, and the divine benevolence consists once again in helping Quraysh give it up, way before the revelation of the sūra. But the details of the divine help are new. Muqātil says that Quraysh were merchants who in winter procured provisions in Jordan and Palestine because the route along the seashore was warmer, and in summer they abandoned that route because of the heat and went to Yemen for provisions. But then the matter became arduous for them and therefore there was no more trade and they were cut off of provisions. This is the meaning of the words ilāfihi rihlati l-shātī fī wa-l-sayf. Muqātil goes on to say that God eventually put it into the heart of the Ethiopians to carry food on ships and sell it in Mecca. So they carried it to the Meccans and the latter set out towards them on camels and donkeys and procured their food in jeddah, at a distance of only one or two days from Mecca. This went on for years and so God has spared them the trouble of the winter and summer journey. Further on Muqātil says that the term ilāf is derived from the trouble of moving between different places.

Muqātil's reference to the Ethiopians represents a tendentious bias rather than a historical development. They appear here as the agents of God's benevolence unto the Meccans, and this seems to have been designed to improve the image of the Ethiopians in Islamic society, especially in view of the negative role played by them in the traditions about Abrahā's expedition to Mecca. This strategy becomes clear in another version found in al-Māwardī's Tafsīr, according to which Quraysh suffered of famine in the jahiliyya, so God put it into the heart of the Ethiopians to carry food for them. They brought it along but the Meccans thought that they had come to wage war, and set out fully armed only to find out that the Ethiopians had come with food for them. The Ethiopians went on assisting them with food supplies and this is the meaning of the words (v. 4): "He fed them against hunger." The apologetic message of the story is clear: the Ethiopians were not only enemies of God's haram (in the expedition of the elephant) but also the saviors of its inhabitants. Such propaganda served the interests of Muslims of East-African origin.

Muqātil goes on to explain that the instruction in verse 3 that Quraysh worship the lord of this house means that he spared them the trouble of fear and hunger, therefore they should become habitually occupied with his worship as they had been habituated to the Ethiopians whose help they did not anticipate. As for verse 4, he explains that God has secured Quraysh from fear by making them secure within their haram.

In sum, Muqātil too has preserved the initial meaning of the winter and summer journey as a burdensome preoccupation, and this time the Ethiopians appear as the agents of the divine help which rendered Quraysh independent of the journey, thus enabling them to make God and the Ka'ba their chief priority.

3.3 Ibn Ishāq
Ibn Ishāq is best known for his Sīra, i.e. the biography of Muhammad, but his compilation contains plenty of tafsīr material that sheds light on the earliest stages of the Islamic Qur'ān exegesis. As already seen above, Ibn Ishāq treats the winter and summer journey as a sign of divine blessing bestowed on Quraysh together with the destruction of the people of the elephant. But Ibn Ishāq links the origin of the winter and summer journey to a time much earlier than the expedition of the elephant, to the glorious deeds of Hāshim, father of Muhammad's grandfather and ancestor of the 'Abbāsid caliphs.

Hāshim's magnification as the initiator of the winter and summer journey was designed not only to glorify Muhammad and the 'Abbāsids, but also to disparage the Umayyads, descendants of 'Abd Shams, brother of Hāshim. Ibn Ishāq has accomplished this task most efficiently. He praises Hāshim for both aspects of the winter and summer journey as perceived by the exegetes. On the one hand he says that Hāshim was rich and used to stay in Mecca to look after the affairs of the pilgrims, God's guests who had come to worship Allāh at the Ka'ba, in contrast to 'Abd Shams who, Ibn Ishāq says, was given to traveling and hardly ever stayed
in Mecca. With such a description Ibn Ishāq has managed to present Hāshim as extremely devoted to God and to the Ka'ba as well as to the pilgrims coming to it, much in anticipation of the demand put to Quraysh in Sūra 106. In this manner Hāshim has been isolated from the rest of Quraysh, the sinful ones, who only traveled and turned their back on God and the Ka'ba.

On the other hand, Ibn Ishāq also praises Hāshim for being the first to have established for Quraysh the winter and summer journey. Ibn Ishāq has thus remained faithful to the idea that the winter and summer journey signaled divine blessing, and did not fail to credit Hāshim with this merit as well. Ibn Ishāq has been able to adduce for this twofold virtue of Hāshim some poetic verses on the authority of an anonymous poet. They praise ‘Amr ( = Hāshim) for being the first to provide the famished Meccans with tharīd (crumbled bread in broil) well as credit him with the initiation of each of the two seasonal journeys. Implicit here is the idea that the prosperity and welfare of Quraysh as stated in q 106:4 did not originate solely in the inner sphere of Mecca as a haram but also in the outer sphere of the winter and summer journey.

4 Pacts of Security

The perception of the winter and summer journey as the main or even sole origin of the Meccan prosperity and security has already been encountered above in Ibn Qutayba’s commentary; further traditions expressing the same idea add more details that revolve around the theme of the pacts of security that were reportedly obtained for Quraysh during the journeys. These traditions are recorded in historiographical and lexico-graphical sources.

One of these traditions has been recorded in al-Ṭabarī’s Taʾrīkh on the authority of Kalbī (d. 146/763) as quoted by his son, Hishām b. Muḥammad (d. 204/819). Ibn al-Kalbī relates that after the death of Abū Manafrī, his four sons – Hāshim, Abū Shams, Nawfal and al-Muṭṭalib – ruled Quraysh together, being called al-mujabbirūn, “those who restore people from poverty to wealth.” The four of them were the first to obtain for Quraysh pacts of security (iṣām) from the leaders of Syria, Ethiopia, Persia and Yemen, respectively, which enabled them to set out safely for journeys outside the haram.

This as well as other traditions about the four brothers elaborately on q 29:67 which, as seen above, speaks about the secure haram with which God has blessed the Meccans, “while people all around them are snatched away.” Ibn al-Kalbī’s tradition maintains that Quraysh were protected even outside the haram thanks to the pacts of security obtained for them by Abū Manafrī’s magnificent sons.

In further versions the root ‘l.f. emerges being used to describe the relations established between the four brothers and the leaders of the neighboring states. This is the case with Abū Ubayd al-Harawi (d. 224/838) who explains that Sūra 106 alludes to pacts (iṣām) obtained by the sons of Abū Manafrī who established friendly relations (yaẗālifū) with each of the neighboring non-Arab kings. According to al-Baladhwī’s version of the report of Ibn al-Kalbī, Hāshim was called šāhib iṣāfī Qurayshīn al-riḥlataynī, “the one who habituated Quraysh to the two seasonal journeys.” This formulation is based on the perception of the Qur’anic word li-līf in its ditransitive sense and turns Hāshim into the agent of God’s benevolence unto Quraysh in habituating them to the winter and summer journey.

The tradition goes on to say that Hāshim and his brothers obtained

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1 Ibn Hishām, Sira, 1, 143.
2 Lcc. cit.: azwāda man sanna l-riḥlataynī li-Quraysh.
4 This is the figurate meaning of the verb jāhara, which literally means to set a bone, reduce it from a state of fracture. See Ibn Manṣūr, Usūn al-arba‘ s.v. jāhara (vol. I, p. 536 col. 2). The title al-mujabbirūn recurs in the saying: awfād min al-mujabbirūn, “more given to visiting than the mujabbirūn.” See Ibn Sa‘d al-Andalusī, Nashawat al-tarāf fī tārīkh jāhiliyyat al-‘Arab, ed. Nasrāt Abū al-Rahmān, 2 vols. (Amman, 1982), I, 329. This means that Quraysh became a prototype of the international traveler. The same title recurs in the saying: aqraṣ min al-mujabbirūn, “more unflying than the mujabbirūn,” which elaborates on the name Quraysh as denoting consolidation (ibid., I, 328).
5 For an extensive survey of these reports see Kister, “Mecca and Tamīm,” 116ff.
security pacts from the neighboring kings and consequently they were all habituated to the two journeys (fa-‘adāf l-rīḥālataynī).  

Most significant are the versions that use the definite form al-‘ilāf as an independent technical term denoting the pacts of security, thus being synonymous with terms like ‘ahd, ḥabl, etc. This form appears, to begin with, in a report about Hāshim as recorded by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) in his epistle, Fadl Hāshim ‘alā ‘Abd Shams.  

Al-Jāḥiẓ says that Hāshim was the first to have obtained the ilāf for Quraysh before any of his brothers, and this is the meaning of q 106:4, “and he secured them against fear,” i.e. their fear of the tribes and the enemies in whose territories they passed. The idea that Hāshim was the first to obtain the ilāf recurs in a tradition attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās as quoted in the lexicographical sources. It is explained here that ilāf means pact (‘ahd) and protection (dhīmān).  

Al-‘ilāf is also the name given to the security pacts in the traditions about the four brothers. For example, the term is used in the tradition of Muhammad b. Ziyād, d. 231/845) who says that ‘Abd Manāf’s four sons were ashāb al-‘ilāf, “initiators of the ilāf.” They were called al-mujālîn, “provides of jiwār,” i.e. protection, because they used to “put the jiwār together” (yūl ilāfina l-jiwāra), i.e. “to provide it in one sequence” (yaṭb‘una ba ṭaḥa ba ṭa‘am). In this report the term al-mujālān has been changed into al-mujārān which, without the diacritics, looks the same as al-mujārān.  

The term al-‘ilāf recurs also in a further version of Ibn al-Kalbī’s tradition which has been recorded by Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245/859) in his Munammag. It is explained here that al-‘ilāf means that Quraysh were secure when passing through the territory of those who granted them the ilāf without the need for alliance (ḥilf). According to another version, Quraysh were isolated within the ḥarām, being prevented by the hostile Arabs from setting out to procure provisions. When the four sons of ‘Abd Manāf came of age they became leaders of the Arabs and they managed to open up the road for the Qurashi merchants and invented the ilāf that God has mentioned in the Qur’ān.  

The ilāf emerges also in poetic verses attributed to Maṭrūd b. Ka‘b in praise of the sons of ‘Abd Manāf. Here we find sometimes the assertion that they possessed security pacts in all the surrounding lands and took the journey of the ilāf. In fact, from further sources we learn that the sunna, i.e. precedent, of the ilāf became a kind of topos which could be used for praising anyone of Quraysh, as was for example, Dirār, son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, in verses attributed to his own mother.  

4.1 The pacts and Sūra 106  

In spite of the clear tendentious shaping of the traditions and poetic verses about the ilāf agreements, the mere idea of the pacts of security may well be historical. Moreover, it may well be, as maintained by Kister and others, that the pacts were indeed known as ilāf or ilaf. The traditions to this effect do not seem to owe their existence to tafsīr because they almost never appear in the tafsīr sources, only in the lexicographical and the historiographical ones.  

If this is really the case, i.e. the pacts of security were indeed known as ilāf, then we gain a better insight into how these pacts were used in Sūra 106. We have seen above that the internal context of this sūra indicates that it disapproves of the high priority allotted to trade journeys by Quraysh, and now we can observe that to express this disapproval the Qur’ān has borrowed one of the best-known names of the pacts — ilāf — and has given it a new context, deliberately downgrading it to a verbal noun meaning compulsive engagement in an improper enterprise. The same disapproval is conveyed through the downgrading of the commercial caravans into

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18 Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 67; Ya’qūbī, Tārīkh, I, 244: al-‘iklāfīn l-‘ahda min āsāfīhā/ wa-l-rīḥālatīn li-rīḥālat l-‘ilāf.  
20 Crane (Meccan trade, 212) says: “The proposition that Quraysh had agreements known as ilaf can also be rejected. If ilaf had been a technical term for an institution of central importance for the Meccans, as also for the tribes with which they were in contact, it would have been a very familiar word. Yet later scholars, many of them Meccans, were puzzled by it. They disagreed over its pronunciation and also over its meaning, and where some took it to be a singular, others understood it as a plural. All this shows clearly enough that this was a word that they had never encountered before.” But the term ilaf is indeed a very familiar word, as is clear from the traditions just seen about Hāshim and his brothers. If the Muslim scholars are “puzzled” at all, it is regarding the reading (qir‘āt) of the Qur’ānic text, not regarding the very idea that the pacts were known as ilaf. The issue of the variant readings of the Qur’ān has dynamics of its own which are not relevant to the question of how the pre-Islamic security pacts were called.
something absurdly burdensome and superfluous, a mere “winter and summer journey.”

Furthermore, the function of the term ḥāf in ancient Arabic is not confined to pacts of security but is used also in the sense of protection provided by God.97 This is indicated in the expression ḥāf līhā which is explained as ṣāmi ḥāh, “God’s safeguard.” God’s Protection was usually granted within a sacred territory defined as haram which was considered as God’s sacred zone. In view of this we may surmise that the request in Sūra 106 that Quraysh worship the lord of this house means that they are instructed to shift from a human ḥāf to a divine one. This could only be achieved by giving up the habitual preoccupation with trade journeys and with temporal ḥāf agreements that were seldom observed.98 All this should be abandoned in favor of a monotheistic devotion to Allāh and to his ḥāf as symbolized in his Meccan sanctuary.

4.2 The pacts and the exequettes

As noted above, the traditions about ‘Abd Manāf’s sons and their pacts of security are widely current in the historiographical as well as the lexicographical sources, but are almost entirely missing from the classical tafsīr sources. Here they are seldom used to illustrate the manner in which the winter and summer journey represented divine blessing.99 This calls for explanation.

It seems that much as the exequettes were sensitive to the image of Quraysh, their primary aim in interpreting the Qurʾān was to draw from it didactic, moral and religious lessons relevant to the community of believers. The pacts of security could not serve this aim because as soon as Islam spread throughout Arabia the pacts became superfluous and irrelevant. More urgent was the need to praise the status of Mecca which became one of the three most sacred Islamic cities, as well as to elevate the value of the pilgrimage which became one of the pillars of Islam. This


98 See Kister, “Mecca and Tānīm,” 119: “... the ḥāf agreements had not been actually carried out. Quraysh feared that some tribes might refrain from carrying out the terms of the pacts.”

99 Hāshim is mentioned in Ṭālīf, Ṭālīf, X, 303, as well as in al-Wāhidī’s (d. 468/1075) al-Wāḥidī al-Qurʾān al-majid, ed. ‘Ādī Ahmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd et al., 4 vols. (Beirut, 1994), IV, 557. The four brothers are mentioned in Qurṭūbī, Ṭaburqī al-Qurʾān, XX, 204-5. See also Suyūṭī, Durr, 398.

was the reason why the pacts were left out of the tafsīr and why other traditions were preferred, which glorify the idea of the haram and the pilgrimage.

One of the earliest manifestation of this approach is provided in the interpretation of Qatāda to the effect that the protection of Quraysh when travelling outside the haram was based on their sacred status as people of God’s haram.100 As for the pilgrimage, this was presented as the ultimate source of the Meccan prosperity instead of the pacts. Accordingly, it was explained that the two seasonal journeys were actually the hajj and the umrā, i.e. the travelling of non-Meccans into Mecca. This forms part of the wider perception of the pilgrimage as the main origin of Mecca’s livelihood.101 Another variant of the same idea appears in the tafsīr of the Shi’ī commentator al-Qummi (d. 307/919). He explains that at first Quraysh depended on their trade journeys which were their blessed origin of livelihood, and then Muhammad appeared as a prophet and people began coming to him as well as going on pilgrimage to Mecca, and so Quraysh could give up their own trade journeys.102 Here the status of Mecca as a pilgrimage center begins only in Islamic times, as a result of the prophetic charisma of Muhammad, and is taken to be a blessing that surpassed the blessing of the trade journeys.

The wish to find in Sūra 106 confirmation for the elevated status of Mecca eventually went beyond the sphere of trade and economical welfare. Thus, for example, when al-Farrāʾ explains the fear from which God has protected Quraysh (v. 4), he says that it is leprosy (jūdham).103 This indicates that Muslim exequettes have read into Sūra 106 the virtues (fadāʾil) of Mecca as a protected haram whose inhabitants were immune

100 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, Tafsīr, II, 398; Tabarqī, Ṭaburqī al-bayān, XXX, 200; Ibn ‘Abī Hātim, Tafsīr, X, 3467 (no. 19490).


102 This perception of the hajj is expressed in traditions recorded in the commentaries on q 9:28; they state that the Meccans used to get their food supplies mainly from the non-Meccan pilgrims who frequented the Ka‘ba. See e.g. Tabarqī, Ṭaburqī al-bayān, X, 75, 76; Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 226. Most characteristic in this context is the statement of ‘Umar who was once asked by his mawāḍ whether Quraysh used to trade during the hajj in pre-Islamic times. ‘Umar’s answer was: “their livelihood was (gained only during the hajj)” (Tabarqī, Ṭaburqī al-bayān, II, 165: ṭaburqī al-bayān, II, 165: wa-ha-kān ma’ay shihum illā fi-l-hajj).


104 Farrāʾ, Māʾānī l-Qurʾān, III, 294.
against serious kinds of illness. Similar traditions are found in the fadā'il of Medina, the second Islamic haram of Arabia; for instance, the statement ascribed to the Prophet to the effect that Medina was immune against the ṭāʻūn ("plague").

5 Epilogue: The dating of Sūra 106

Although Sūra 106 appears in the chronological lists among the Meccan sūras, some scholars of the first Islamic century reportedly held that it was revealed in Medina. Their view seems to preserve the initial sense of the winter and summer journey as an improper habit, and its dating to the Medinan period seems to have been designed to find in the sūra divine justification for Muhammad’s attacks on the Meccan caravans which were launched after the hijra when the Prophet was already operating from Medina. As if to say that since the Qur’ān deplores the winter and summer journey, Muhammad in Medina was fully justified in attacking the Meccan caravans. With this re-dating the exegetes merely extended to the Medinan period a religious monotheistic message that was already delivered in Mecca.

Muqāṭil b. Sulaymān on Sūra 106 [IV, 861-63]

(Sūra 106, q. 1: (بِلِ الْقُرْآنِ قَرِّنْتُكُمْ وَرَبِّي مِنْ بَعْدِ الْقُرْآنِ رَبِّي قَدْ نُزِّلَتْ مَا نَزَّلْتُ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ تَأْمُرِي حَتَّى نَرَى مَا نَزَّلْتُ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ تَأْمُرِي (bīl ʾal-ʾQurʾānī qarrīntūkum wa rabbī min bādīl ʾal-ʾQurʾānī rabbī qad nazzālat mā nazzālat ʾīlīyikum min tāʾmūriḥti ġattā nāri mā nazzālat ʾīlīyikum min tāʾmūriḥti).)
MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS IN EARLY ISLAM

To my teacher, Prof. M.J. Kister, on his seventieth birthday.

Preface

Western scholars have already noticed that according to Muslim sources, before the five daily prayers became part of the “pillars” of Islam, the Muslims used to pray only twice a day. Goldziher states that “before the duty of prayer was extended to five times a day, the Muslims are said to have observed only two canonical times of prayer: morning and afternoon...”.1 Other scholars, like Mittwoch, for instance, who studied the evidence of Muslim sources, maintained that the first two prayers which the Muslims reportedly used to pray daily were šalāt al-fajr (before sunrise), and šalāt al-‘isha’ (after sunset).2

In the present study various reports and traditions are examined which may give us a better insight into the evidence of Muslim sources concerning the first times of prayer in Islam, their special significance, and their position in relation to other times of prayer.

I. Šalāt al-ḏuḥā

A. The first report to be examined was recorded on the authority of al-Wāqidī (d. 207H/823), by al-Baladhrī (d. 279H/892).3 This report was quoted from al-Baladhurī by Ibn Ḥajar,4 and it was also reproduced by al-Maqrizi,5 who in turn was quoted by al-Halabi.6 The most coherent version of this report of al-Wāqidī is that of al-Maqrizi. It reads: