# The influence of Jewish Noah-traditions on the Qur'ān and later Islamic literature

Short paper to be presented at the OTSEM Plenary Conference
Göttingen, 18–21 October 2009

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## 1. Introduction

It is the biblical report given in the Book of Genesis we usually think of first of all, when the name of Noah is mentioned. The story which is told there in the chapters 6 to 9 belongs to the most famous ones of the Old Testament or even of the entire Bible, and accordingly cover pictures of children's editions of the Bible show in the very most cases all sorts of animals boarding his Ark or another scene taken from the story of the Flood. In comparision to the narration of the Torah non-biblical reports on the Deluge play a rather small part in our minds, though there are many of them. The most famous example from the Ancient Near East is certainly the tale of Utnapishtim in the epic of Gilgamesh, but the Sumerian legend of Ziusudra and the Old-Babylonian Epic of Atramḫasis should also be mentioned. Among the later sources we have among others for example the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, many texts from the Qumran scrolls or the abundant commentaries on the Torah compiled by Jewish scholars. Nevertheless, they are all in the shade of the relevant four chapters of the Book of Genesis. In this respect, the Qur'ān shares the same fate, for hardly anybody in the Western World – apart from orientalists of course – is familiar with the Qur'ānic version of the report on Noah. This paper shall give a general idea of the main characteristics of the Qur'ānic report on Noah and a brief outlook at the Flood-story in later Islamic literature. The subject is part of my postdoctoral project "The figure of Noah in Jewish, Christian

and Islamic Tradition" (working title) with the aim of "Habilitation" in Semitic Studies as well as in Arabic and Islamic Studies.

## 2. Noah in the Qur'ān

The story of Noah and the Flood is mentioned in the Qur'ān ten times altogether. The shortest references consist of only two verses, while the longest contains the entire surah 71, which therefore bears Noah's name. Altogether, the text being concerned with Noah amounts to a total of 110 verses. The complete course of events as known from the Bible is given in the Qur'ān more or less completely only once, that is to say in surah 11, verses 25–49. Since it is the basic text for the following remarks, I quote this passage in full length: [1]

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِه إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ أَنْ لاَ تَعْبُدُوا إِلاَّ ٱللهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَقَالَ ٱلْمَلأُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِه مَا نَرَاكَ إِلاَّ بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ ٱتَّبَعَكَ إِلاَّ ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ ٱلرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَى لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَآتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِه فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنُلْزِمُكُمُوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَيَا قَوْمِ لاَ أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْه مَالاً إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلاَّ عَلَى ٱللهِ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ ٱلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُلاَقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَيَا قَوْمِ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ ٱللهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَلاَ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ ٱللهِ وَلاَ أَعْلَمُ ٱلْغَيْبَ وَلاَ أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلاَ أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ ٱللهُ خَيْرًا ٱللهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنِّي إِذًا لَمِنَ ٱلظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوا يَا نُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ ٱلصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُمْ بِه ٱللهُ إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلاَ يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدتُّ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ ٱللهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْه تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ ٱفْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنِ ٱفْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَيَّ إِجْرَامِي وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَى نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلاَّ مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ فَلاَ تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَٱصْنَعِ ٱلْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلاَ تُخَاطِبْنِي فِي ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُغْرَقُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَيَصْنَعُ ٱلْفُلْكَ وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْه مَلأٌ مِنْ قَوْمِه سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيه عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيه وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْه عَذَابٌ مُقِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ ٱلتَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا ٱحْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ ٱثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلاَّ مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْه ٱلْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلاَّ قَلِيلٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَقَالَ ٱرْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ ٱللهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَٱلْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ٱبْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ٱرْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلاَ تَكُنْ مَعَ ٱلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ سَآوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ ٱلْمَاءِ قَالَ لاَ عَاصِمَ ٱلْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ ٱللهِ إِلاَّ مَنْ رَحِمَ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا ٱلْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُغْرَقِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ٱبْلَعِي مَاءَكِ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ ٱلْمَاءُ وَقُضِيَ ٱلأَمْرُ وَٱسْتَوَتْ عَلَى ٱلْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ ٱلظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ٱبْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ ٱلْحَقُّ وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ ٱلْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلاَ تَسْأَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِه عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِه عِلْمٌ وَإِلاَّ تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنْ مِنَ ٱلْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ قِيلَ يَا نُوحُ ٱهْبِطْ بِسَلاَمٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى أُمَمٍ مِمَّنْ مَعَكَ وَأُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمْ مِنَّا

[1] In this paper, all translations of Qur'ānic verses are taken from Richard Bell's edition (Bell, The Qur'ān), but the verse numbering follows the text now generally known as the "Cairo" or "Egyptian" official version of the Qur'ān.

عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنتَ وَلاَ قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَـٰذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

25. We sent Noah to his people (saying): "I am for you a warner clear. 26. Serve not (any) but Allah; verily I fear for you the punishment of a painful day." 27. The nobility who disbelieved of his people said: "We do not see thee to be anything but a human being like ourselves, and we do not see that any follow thee but the basest of us, strange in opinion; we do not see that ye have any superirity over us; nay, we think ye are lying." 28. He said: "O my people, have ye considered – if I stand upon an Evidence from my Lord, and He hath bestowed upon me a mercy from Himself, and it has been withheld from your sight, shall we cause you to adhere to it, though ye be to it averse? 29. O my people, I ask you not for wealth in return for it; no one is responsible for my reward but only Allah, and I am not going to drive away those who have believed , verily they are destined to meet their Lord, but I see you to be a people who are ignorant. 30. O my people, who will help me (to escape) from Allah if I drive them away? Will ye not then be reminded? 31. I say not to you that the treasuries of Allah are with me, nor do I know the unseen; I say not that I am an angel; but I do not say to those whom your eyes contemn that Allah will not give them good – Allah best knoweth what is in them – verily in that case I should be among the wrong-doers." 32. They said: "O Noah, thou hast disputed with us and disputed much with us, so bring us what thou promisest us, if thou art of those who speak the truth." 33. He said: "Allah will bring it to you if He so willeth, and ye will not frustrate (it). 34. My good counsel will not profit you – if I wish to give you good counsel – if Allah willeth to mislead you; He is your Lord and to Him will ye be made to return." 35. Or do they say: "He has invented it"? Say: "If I invent, upon me is my sin, and I am clear of the sins which ye commit." 36. It was suggested to Noah: "No more of thy people will believe than have believed already, so be not distressed at what they have been doing. 37. Make the Ark under Our eyes and Our suggestion, and make no addresses to Me in regard to those who have done wrong; verily they are to be drowned." 38. And he was making the Ark, and whenever the nobility of his people passed by him they made fun of him; he said: "If ye make fun of us, verily we shall make fun of you, as ye have been making fun. 39. So one day ye will know upon whom comes a punishment that humiliates him, and upon whom there is let loose a punishment that remains"; 40. until when Our affair came and the oven boiled, We said: "Put on board of it pairs, two of each kind, and thy household – except him upon whom sentence has already passed – and whoever has believed"; but there had not believed with him more than a few. 41. He said: "Embark ye therein; in the name of Allah its course and its harbourage! Verily my Lord is forgiving, compassionate." 42. It was running with them among waves like mountains, and Noah called his son, who was in a place apart: "O my son, embark with us, and be not with the unbelievers." 43. He said: "I shall betake myself to a mountain which will defend me from the water"; he said: "There is no defender to-day from the affair of Allah, except (for) him upon whom He has mercy." The waves came between them and he was among the drowned. 44. A voice came: "O earth, swallow up thy water, and cease, O sky"; and the water subsided, the affair was finished, and it stood firm an al-Jūdī; a voice came: "Away with the wrong-doing people!" 45. Noah called to his Lord and said: "O my Lord, my son is one of my household, and verily Thy promise is the truth; Thou art the worthiest to judge of those who judge." 46. He said: "O Noah, he is not of thy household; verily it is a deed not upright, so do not ask Me what thou hast no knowledge of; I admonish thee not to be one of the ignorant." 47. He said: "O my Lord, I take refuge with Thee from asking what I have no knowledge of; if Thou dost not forgive me and have mercy upon me, I shall be one of the losers." 48. A voice came: "O Noah, disembark with peace from Us, and blessings upon thee and upon communities of those who are with thee; (other) communities We shall give enjoyment of life, and then will affect them from Us a punishment painful." 49. That is one of the stories of the unseen, which We give thee by inspiration; thou didst not know it, neither thou nor thy people before this; so endure, verily the result is to those who show piety.

This text clearly shows that the audience addressed by the Qur'ānic revelations is assumed to be well acquainted with the story of Noah and the Flood. Without any previous knowledge one could hardly understand the report given in surah 11, because it indicates only the rough outlines of the events, or rather hints at them. Like all the other Qur'ānic passages dealing with Noah the text concentrates on different points of emphasis: Noah is described as a prophet, who calls upon his contemporaries to turn away from idolatry and tries to bring them

to the worship of Allah, the one true God. Threatening those of his people who disbelieve and cannot be admonished with severe punishment Noah is in the Qur'ān the first prophet within a long succession of warners including Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot, Šuʿayb and many more. The last one of this line, thus the "seal of the prophets" (in Arabic: *ḫātam an-nabīyīn*) as he is called in surah 33:40, is finally Muhammad.

The Qur'ān does not give full details about the reason why the prophet Noah was sent. In most places it is just stated that he was sent to his people, with the exhortatory speech following immediately afterwards, for example at the beginning of the section cited above and in a similar way in surah 7:59 or 23:23 or at the beginning of surah 71:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١﴾ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢﴾ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَطِيعُونِ ﴿٣﴾ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى إِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ إِذَا جَاءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

1. Verily, We sent Noah to his people: "Warn thy people before there come to them a punishment painful." 2. He said: "O my people, lo, I am for you a warner clear. 3. Serve Allah, and show piety towards Him, and obey me, 4. And He will forgive you your sins, and defer you to a stated time; verily. the time of Allah, when it comes, is not to be deferred, if ye only knew."

But the reasons for this punishment remain still unclear, and we do not hear explicitly, why God made his decision to "destroy man … from the face of the earth" (Genesis 6:7).[2] In surah 51:46 however we find some indication:

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

And (also) the people of Noah, formerly; lo, they were a people reprobate.

Though Noah urges his contemporaries most strongly to "serve not (any) but Allah" as it is stated in surah 11:26 and several other places (e.g. 7:59 or 23:23), his words did not count for very much with them, and the nobility of his people rejected his admonitions pointing out that he was only a human being like themselves and calling him a liar (see surah 11:27 above). In surah 7:60, they reproach Noah:

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٦٠﴾

Said the nobility of his people: "Verily we think thou art in manifest error."

In surah 23:24, it says subsequent to Noah's speech:

فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلاَّ بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[2] The translation of all biblical quotations in this paper follows the King James Version.

24. But the nobility, those of his people who disbelieved said: "This is only a man like yourselves who wishes to gain pre-eminence over you; if Allah had willed, He would have sent angels; we never heard of this among our fathers of old."

In a very similar way Muḥammad as well was confronted with the objection, that God – if he had only wanted to – could have sent angels as messengers instead of human beings (which probably would have been much more impressive), for example in surah 17:94:

وَمَا مَنَعَ ٱلنَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ ٱلْهُدَى إِلاَّ أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ ٱللهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولاً ﴿٩٤﴾

Nothing prevents the people from believing when the guidance has come to them, but that they say: "Hath Allah sent a human beeing as messenger?"

But in the following verse, Muḥammad is asked to answer (surah 17:95):

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ مَلاَئِكَةٌ يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَسُولاً ﴿٩٥﴾

Say: "If there were in the earth angels walking about contentedly, We should send down to them from the heaven an angel as messenger."

In several places in the Qur'ān Noah is called a "warner clear" (in Arabic: *naḏīr mubīn*, see e.g. surah 11:25 or 71:2 above). The same applies to Muḥammad, for example in surah 22:49:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

Say: "O ye people, I am simply for you a warner clear."

Other places are surah 7:184, 15:89, 29:50, 38:70, 46:9, 51:50 f. or 67:26. Besides, both Noah and Muḥammad have in common that they do not claim any reward for their mission. Thus Noah says in surah 10:72:

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلاَّ عَلَى ٱللهِ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

"If then ye turn away, I have asked you for no reward; to reward me falls upon no one but Allah, and I have been commanded to be one of those who surrender themselves."

Wordings like this are also found in surah 11:29 or in surah 26:109. Corresponding, Muḥammad is requested in surah 34:47:

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلاَّ عَلَى ٱللهِ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

Say: "Any reward I have asked you for is for your own sakes; to reward me rests only upon Allah; He of every thing is a witness."

In the Qur'ān, it is characteristic of prophets to renounce any kind of reward, and none of the other warners mentioned above – Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot, Šuʿayb and so on – lays claim to it. In contrast with them the magicians of the Pharaoh, who pretend for occupational reasons to have

access to a higher kind of knowledge as well, do ask for reward when they are challenged to compete with Moses in surah 7:113:

وَجَاءَ ٱلسَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوا إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ ٱلْغَالِبِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾

The magicians came to Pharaoh; said they: "Surely there is a reward for us if it is we who are the victors."

Though this listing of parallels between Noah's mission and the prophethood of Muḥammad could easily be continued, the examples I have quoted may be sufficient to show that in the Qur'ān Noah is the prototype of a prophet. In that capacity he had to struggle against the same difficulties as Muḥammad. The same applies – it is true – to all the other prophets who were sent as admonishers to their respective peoples, but Noah plays a very prominent role, because he is the first within the succession of warners. And furthermore the consequences for those who turn a deaf ear to Noah's admonitions are especially severe, for which punishment could be more painful than the Deluge?!

There is still another example: In surah 71:23, the people fling Noah's adminitions to the winds saying:

وَقَالُوا لاَ تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلاَ تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلاَ سُوَاعًا وَلاَ يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا ﴿٢٣﴾

[And they] have said: "Do not leave your gods; do not leave Wadd nor Suwāʿ, nor Yaghūth, and Yaʿūq and Nasr."

These deities belong to the pagan pantheon of the Arabian peninsula in the age of Ǧāhiliyya, the period of "Ignorance" prior to the preaching of Islam, and were still worshipped in the days of Muḥammad.[3] But here in surah 71 they are dated back – as it were – to Noah's time. This again emphasizes the correspondence between Noah's and Muḥammad's mission.

The story of Noah and the Flood as reported in the Qur'ān does not only show parallels relating to the circumstances of Muḥammad's prophethood, in addition there is an important correspondence with regard to the content of their warning and preaching: This is pointed out by means of the episode of Noah's fourth son in surah 11:42–47 (quoted above), who refuses to board the ark and finally was among the drowned.

On the basis of this tale it becomes exceedingly clear, that it is the right faith in the one true God which saves from drowning, and not kinship to Noah as in Genesis 9:8–9:

8 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נֹחַ וְאֶל־בָּנָיו אִתּוֹ לֵאמֹר׃ 9 וַאֲנִי הִנְנִי מֵקִים אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְאֶת־זַרְעֲכֶם אַחֲרֵיכֶם׃

8. And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9. And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.

3 For more information on these deities cf. Fahd, Panthéon, p. 182 ff., 154 ff., 191 ff., 194 ff. and 132 ff. respectively.

In the Qur'ān, however, God establishes his covenant with those who believe with Noah, not with his descendants, and even Noah's own son is drowned because he disbelieved and could not be admonished. In this regard, the story told about Noah again corresponds to Muḥammad's mission: Preaching Islam, Muḥammad changes the traditional social structure with the standing of a person being dependent on criteria like consanguinity and membership of a certain tribe or family, and right faith in the one true God and early profession of Islam become decisive instead. The wrong-doing people in the Qur'ānic report about Noah stand for those of Muḥammad's contemporaries who do not believe; and like the former were drowned on account of their transgressions and made to enter a Fire, as it says in surah 71:25, the latter are facing the painful punishment of a mighty day as well. This evident parallel to Noah's mission gives special emphasis to Muḥammad's admonitions.

In summary, one can say that the story of Noah and the Flood is re-interpreted in the Qur'ān: The biblical report brings God's covenant with Noah and his descendants into focus, whilst in the Qur'ānic revelations Noah represents the prototype of a prophet and therefore stands for Muḥammad himself. Since the text does not intend to tell a new story but aims to give a new meaning to a well-known story, there are some details missing in the Qur'ānic Flood report. I only give a listing of the most striking ones:

- The Qur'ānic report neither gives a description of the ark nor of its measures.
- It is just said that Noah should "put on board of it pairs, two of each kind" (surah 11:40), without giving any further explanation.
- We do not get any information about the date and the duration of the Flood.

These details are known to the audience anyway or do not contribute to the theological concept of the Qur'ānic flood report, therefore they can be omitted without any harm to the message of the text. Strictly speaking, the course of events is in fact described only by some hints given in the verses 37, 38, 40, 42 and 44 of surah 11 (quoted above). To put it another way, nearly the total of the 110 Qur'ānic verses dealing with Noah applies to Noah's acting as admonisher and warner and at last to the message that the only path to salvation is the right faith in the one true God. In comparision, the biblical report shows a clear narrative structure, but leaves much less space for its theological message, namely God's covenant with Noah and his descendants.

## 3. Influences of Jewish tradition on the Qur'ānic Flood report

We have already seen that the Qur'ān addresses an audience well-acquainted with the Flood story. But the story that is assumed to be known to everyone is obviously not only the biblical

version, since there are some remarkable details in the Qur'ānic report which we do not find in Gen 6–9, but in later Jewish tradition.

a) Noah as a warner and admonisher

The biblical Noah has quite enough to do with building the ark and boarding the animals. He does not talk to anybody about the things God commanded him to do, and why should he? There is no point in doing that anyway, for God has already decided "the end of all flesh" (Gen 6:13). Nevertheless, the idea of Noah being a warner and admonisher is not a Qur'ānic innovation, though typical and characteristic of the Islamic concept of prophethood. It occurs already in post-biblical Jewish tradition, for example in the tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 108 b): [4]

מַאי דִּכְתִיב לַפִּיד בּוּז לְעַשְׁתּוֹת שַׁאֲנַן נָכוֹן לְמוֹעֲדֵי רָגֶל מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהָיָה נֹחַ מַצְדִּיק מוֹכִיחַ אוֹתָם וְאוֹמֵר לָהֶם דִּבְרִים שֶׁהֵם קָשִׁים כְּלַפִּידִים וְהָיוּ (בוזים) [מְבַזִּין] אוֹתוֹ אָמְרוּ לוֹ זָקֵן תֵּיבָה זוּ לָמָּה אָמַר לָהֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מֵבִיא עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת הַמַּבּוּל

**What is the** meaning of **that which is written:** ***A flame is scorned by*** *[those with]* ***complacent dreams, destined to stumbling feet.*** (Job 12:5) **This teaches that the righteous Noah would rebuke them and say to them words that are harsh as flames, but they would scorn him. They said to him: "Old man! What is this Ark for?" He said to them: "The Holy One, Blessed is He, is going to bring the *Mabbul* upon you."**

In Genesis Rabbah XXX, 7 we find the following explanation: [5]

׳אִישׁ׳ כָּל מָקוֹם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר ׳אִישׁ׳ צַדִּיק וּמוּמְחֶה

[NOAH WAS IN HIS GENERATIONS] A MAN [RIGHTEOUS AND WHOLE-HEARTED]. Wherever *'a man'* occurs, it indicates a righteous man who warned [his generation].

The explanation refers to Genesis 6:9:

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֶּךְ־נֹחַ׃

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

According to Ecclesiastes Rabbah, which may date only between the sixth and eighth century but uses to a great extend earlier Midrashic literature, Noah does not only warn his people, they also mock at him (Ecclesiastes Rabbah IX, 14, § 1 – 15, § 1 [cf. Genesis Rabbah XXX, 2]): [6]

א. (יד) ׳עִיר קְטַנָּה׳ זֶה הָעוֹלָם ׳וַאֲנָשִׁים בָּהּ מְעָט׳ זֶה דּוֹר אֱנוֹשׁ וְדוֹר הַמַּבּוּל ׳וּבָא אֵלֶיהָ מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל וְסָבַב אֹתָהּ׳ זֶה מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא ׳וּבָנָה עָלֶיהָ מְצוֹדִים גְּדֹלִים׳ כְּמָנוֹן וַעֲקַמּוֹן.

[4] Sanhedrin (Schottenstein Edition), p. 108b[1]. For a variant translation see Neusner, Sanhedrin, p. 199.
[5] Text: Steinberger, Genesis Rabbah, p. 5. Translation: Freedman, Genesis Rabbah, p. 235.
[6] Text: Steinberger, Ecclesiastes Rabbah, p. 509 f. Translation: Cohen, Ecclesiastes Rabbah, p. 249 f.

א. (טו) ׳וּמָצָא בָהּ אִישׁ מִסְכֵּן וְחָכָם׳ זֶה נֹחַ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בראשית ז, א) ׳כִּי אֹתְךָ רָאִיתִי צַדִּיק לְפָנַי בַּדּוֹר הַזֶּה׳ ׳וּמִלַּט הוּא אֶת הָעִיר בְּחָכְמָתוֹ׳ הַדָּבָר אָמַר לְהוֹ וַוי רֵקָנְיָא לְמֵחַר מַבּוּלָא אָתֵי עַבְדּוּן תְּתוּבָא וַהֲווֹ אָמְרִין לֵיהּ אַן מְשָׁרְיָא פּוּרְעָנוּתָא מִן בַּייתֵיהּ דְּהַהוּא גַּבְרָא מְשָׁרְיָא כְּיִנָּן שֶׁמֵּת מְתוּשֶׁלַח אָמְרִין לֵיהּ לָא מַבְּיתֵיהּ דְּהַהוּא גַּבְרָא מְשָׁרְיָא פּוּרְעָנוּתָא ׳וְאָדָם לֹא זָכַר אֶת הָאִישׁ הַמְּסַכֵּן הַהוּא׳ אָמַר לְהוֹן הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אַתּוּן לָא אַדְכַּרְתּוּנֵיהּ אֲנָא מַדְכַּר לֵיהּ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שם ח, א) ׳וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְגוֹ׳.

THERE WAS A LITTLE CITY (IX, 14): i.e. the world, AND FEW MEN WITHIN IT: i.e. the generation of the Flood. AND THERE CAME A GREAT KING AGAINST IT, AND BESIEGED IT: i.e. the supreme King of the kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, AND BUILT GREAT BULWARKS AGAINST IT: i.e. craft and guile.
NOW THERE WAS FOUND IN IT A MAN POOR AND WISE (IX, 15): i.e. Noah, as it is stated, *For thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation* (Gen. VII, 1). AND HE BY HIS WISDOM DELIVERED THE CITY: for he said to the people, 'Woe, ye foolish ones! To-morrow a flood will come, so repent.' They answered him, 'If punishments begin, they will begin with your house.' When Methuselah died, they said to Noah, 'Have punishments not begun with your house!' YET NO MAN REMEMBERED THAT SAME POOR MAN: the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them, 'You have not remembered him, but I will remember him,' as it is stated, *And God remembered Noah* (*ib.* VIII, 1).

Unceasingly Noah tried to admonish his people: His mission lasted 120 years before the inescapable punishment finally came, as we learn from Midrash Tanhuma (Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Noah 5): [7]

עשה לך תבת עצי גופר א״ר הונא בשם רבי יוסי ק״כ שנה היה מתרה הקב״ה בדור המבול שמא יעשי תשובה. כיון שלא עשו תשובה א״ל עשה לך תבת עצי גופר. עמד נח ועשה תשובה ונטע ארזים והיו אומרין לו ארזים אלו למה. אמר להן. הקב״ה מבקש להביא מבול לעולם ואמר לי לעשות תיבה כדי שאמלט בה אני וביתי. והיו משחקין ממנו ומלעיגין בדבריו והיה משקה אותן ארזין והן גדילין. והיו אומרים לו מה אתה עושה. ומשיב להן כענין הזה. והיו מלעיגין עליו. לסוף ימים קצצן והיה מנסרן והיו אומרים לו מה אתה עושה. ואומר להן כך והיה מתרה בהן. כיון שלא עשו תשובה מיד הביא עליהן מבול שנאמר וימח את כל היקום׃

Make yourself an ark acacia-wood (Gen. 6:14). R. Huna said in he name of R. Yosé: The Holy One, blessed be He, forewarned the generation of the flood to repent its misdeeds for one hundred and twenty years. When they refused to repent, He commanded Noah to build an ark of acacia-wood. Then Noah arose, repented his sins, and planted cedar trees. They asked him: "What are these cedars for?" "The Holy One, blessed be He, intends to bring a flood upon earth, and He has ordered me to build an ark so that I and my family might escape," he replied. They laughed at him and ridiculed his words. Nevertheless, he tended the trees till they grew large. Once again they asked him: "What are you doing?" He repeated what he had told them previously, but they continued to mock him. After some time, he cut down the trees and sawed them into lumber. Again they inquired: "What are you doing?" He warned them once again as to what would happen, but they still refused to repent. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, brought the flood upon them, as it is said: And they were blotted out from the earth (Gen. 7:23 [not 27:23, as Berman has]).

b) Deluge of hot water

In surah 11:40 (quoted above) and once more in surah 23:27, there is mention of "the oven" (in Arabic: *at-tannūr*) used to heat up the water of the flood. The idea that the water of the flood was hot seems to have been quite common for the audience addressed by the Qur'ānic

[7] Text: Midrash Tanhuma, Vol. I, p. 14. Translation: Berman, Tanhuma-Yelammedenu, p. 52.

revelations. It goes back to Jewish tradition, too, as again the Babylonian Talmud shows (Sanhedrin 108 b): [8]

תַּנְיָא מֵימֵי הַמַּבּוּל קָשִׁים כְּשִׁכְבַת זֶרַע שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר נָכוֹן לְמוֹעֲדֵי רָגֶל
אָמַר רַב חִסְדָּא בְּרוֹתְחִין קִלְקְלוּ בַּעֲבֵירָה וּבְרוֹתְחִין נִידּוֹנוּ

**It taught in a Baraisa: THE WATERS OF THE FLOOD WERE HARSH,** i.e. hot and viscous, **LIKE SEMEN, AS IT IS STATED:** ***DESTINED TO STUMBLING FEET*** (Job 12:5).
**Rav Chisda said:** It was **with** a **boiling** substance (semen) that **they acted corruptly**, that is, by engaging **in immortality, and** it was therefore **with boiling** water that **they were punished.**

Ecclesiastes Rabbah quotes Rabbi Joḥanan[9] (c. 180 – c. 279) who was known for holding tannaitic sources in high esteem (Ecclesiastes Rabbah IX, 4): [10]

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן כָּל טִפָּה וְטִפָּה שֶׁהוֹרִיד הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא עַל דּוֹר הַמַּבּוּל הָיָה מַרְתִּיחָהּ וְאַחַר כָּךְ מוֹרִידָהּ עֲלֵיהֶם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (איוב ו, יז) ׳בְּעֵת יְזֹרֵבוּ נִצְמָתוּ׳ זְרִיבָתָן חַלְטָנִית הָיְתָה.

R. Joḥanan said: Every drop which the Holy One, blessed be He, rained down upon the generation of the flood He made to boil before letting it fall upon them; as it is stated, *What time they wax warm, they vanish* (Job VI, 17), i.e. their [destruction by] scalding was absolute.

c) Renunciation of reward

As we have already pointed out, Islamic prophets renounce any recompense, for it is up to God allone to reward his messengers. This reminds one very much of a corresponding saying ascribed to Simeon the Righteous (Pirqe Avot I, 3): [11]

אַנְטִיגְנוֹס אִישׁ סוֹכוֹ קִבֵּל מִשִּׁמְעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר. אַל־תִּהְיוּ כַּעֲבָדִים הַמְשַׁמְּשִׁין אֶת־הָרַב עַל־מְנָת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס. אֶלָּא הֱווּ כַּעֲבָדִים הַמְשַׁמְּשִׁין אֶת־הָרַב שֶׁלֹּא עַל־מְנָת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס וִיהִי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם׃

Antigonus of Soko received from Shime'on ha-Çaddiq. He used to say, Be not as slaves that minister to the lord with a view to receive recompense; but be as slaves that minister to the lord without a view to receive recompense; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.

These examples may be sufficient to show that there obviously was quite a variety of Jewish traditions circulating in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula in the beginning of the seventh century, and it is remarkable that the Qur'ānic revelations take up many of them without any reservation.

## 4. Later Islamic literature

In later Islamic literature the influence of post-biblical midrashic embellishments is even stronger. Qur'ān commentators, theologians, historians and especially the authors of the liter-

8 Sanhedrin (Schottenstein Edition), p. 108b[1]. For another translation see Neusner, Sanhedrin, p. 199.
9 Joḥanan ben Nappaḥa, see EJ[2], Vol. 11, p. 370–372.
10 Text: Steinberger, Ecclesiastes Rabbah, p. 467. Translation: Cohen, Ecclesiastes Rabbah, p. 228.
11 Text: Hirsch, Pirqe Avot, p. 6. Translation: Taylor, Pirqe Avot, p. 13.

ary genre of "tales of the prophets" expand considerably on the story of Noah and the Flood and give additional information which proves that they are quite familiar with Noah-traditions of Jewish origin.

a) The *History* of aṭ-Ṭabarī

One of the most important sources for additional information on the story of Noah and the Flood is the famous *History of the Prophets and Kings* (in Arabic: *Ta'rīḫ ar-rusul wa-l-mulūk*) by the polymath 'Abū Ǧa'far Muḥammad b. Ǧarīr b. Yazīd aṭ-Ṭabarī (839–923)[12], a universal history from the Creation to Muhammad and then proceeding annalistically up to the year 915.

At the beginning of the chapter dealing with Noah aṭ-Ṭabarī makes only a short reference to the reason for the Flood, although he usually discusses everything in great detail. Just pointing out the idolatry of Noah's people (cf. surah 71:23, quoted above) he hardly gives more information than the Qur'ān itself. In contrast to this, Jewish tradition has more information why God decided to bring the Flood, for instance in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, where it says concerning the fallen angels (I Enoch 106:14–17): [13]

> 14. ወነየሙ ፡ ይገብሩ ፡ ኀጢአተ ፡ ወየኀልፉ ፡ ሥርዐተ ፡ ወምስለ ፡ እንስት ፡ ተደመሩ ፡ ወምስሌ ሆን ፡ ይገብሩ ፡ ኃጢአተ ፡ ወአውሰቡ ፡ እምኔሆን ፡ ወእምኔሆን ፡ ወለዱ ፡ ደቂቀ ። 17. ወይወልዱ ፡ ዲበ ፡ ምድር ፡ እለ ፡ ያርብኅ ፡ አኮ ፡ ዘመንፈስ ፡ አላ ፡ ዘሥጋ ፡ ወይከውን ፡ መቅሠፍት ፡ ዐቢ ይ ፡ ዲበ ፡ ምድር ፡ ወትትኀፀብ ፡ ምድር ፡ እምኵሉ ፡ ሙስና ። 15. ወሐጕል ፡ ዐቢይ ፡ ይከውን ፡ ዲበ ፡ ኵሉ ፡ ምድር ፡ ወማየ ፡ አይኅ ፡ ይከውን ፡ ወሐጕል ፡ ዐቢይ ፡ በአሐዱ ፡ ዓመት ። 16. ወይ ከውን ፡ ዝውእቱ ፡ ወልድ ፡ ዘተወልደ ፡ ለከሙ ፡ ውእቱ ፡ ይተርፍ ፡ ዲበ ፡ ምድር ፡ ወሠለስቱ ፡ ደቂቁ ፡ ይድኅኑ ፡ ምስሌሁ ፡ ሶበ ፡ ይመውቱ ፡ ኵሉ ፡ ሰብእ ፡ ዘዲበ ፡ ምድር ፡ ይድኅን ፡ ውእ ቱ ፡ ወደቂቁ ።
>
> 14. And behold they commit sin and transgress the law, and have united themselves with woman and commit sin with them, and have married some of them, and have begot children by them. 17. And they shall produce on the earth giants not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh, and there shall be a great punishment on the earth, and the earth shall be cleansed from all impurity. 15. Yea, thereshall come a great destruction over the whole earth, and there shall be a deluge and a great destruction for one year. 16. And this son who has been born unto you shall be left on the earth, and his three children shall be saved with him: when all mankind that are on the earth shall die [he and his sons shall be saved].

This report is also found in the Dead Sea scrolls, for instance in 4Q204 = 4QEn$^c$ ar, frag. 5, col. II, 20–24.

The Book of Jubilees has a very clear version of this story (Jub 5:1–5): [14]

> 1. ወኮነ ፡ አመ ፡ ወጠኑ ፡ ደቂቀ ፡ እጓለ ፡ እመሕያው ፡ ይብዝኑ ፡ ዲበ ፡ ገጸ ፡ ኵላ ፡ ምድር ፡ ወአዋልድ ፡ ተወልዳ ፡ ሎሙ ። ወርእይዎን ፡ መላእክተ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ በአሐቲ ፡ ዘእዮቤልዉ ፡ ዝ ንቱ ፡ እስመ ፡ ሠናያት ፡ ለርእይ ፡ እማንቱ ፡ ወነሥእዎን ፡ ሎቶን ፡ ሎሙ ፡ አንስትያ ፡ እምኵሎ ን ፡ እለ ፡ ኀረዩ ፡ ወወለዳ ፡ ሎሙ ፡ ውሉደ ፡ ወእሙንቱ ፡ ረዓይት ። 2. ወልህቀት ፡ ዐመፃ ፡ ዲ በ ፡ ምድር ፡ ወኵሉ ፡ ዘሥጋ ፡ አማሰነት ፡ ፍኖታ ፡ እምሰብእ ፡ እስከ ፡ እንስሳ ፡ ወእስከ ፡ አራዊ ት ፡ ወእስከ ፡ አዕዋፍ ፡ ወእስከ ፡ ኵሉ ፡ ዘያንሶሱ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ምድር ፡ ኵሎሙ ፡ አማሰኑ ፡ ፍኖቶ

[12] EI$^2$, X, p. 11–15.

[13] Charles, Enoch (Text), p. 221 f.; Charles, Enoch (Translation), p. 267 f.

[14] VanderKam, Jubilees (Text), p. 28–30; VanderKam, Jubilees (Translation), p. 31–33.

ሙ ፡ ወሥርዓቶሙ ። ወእኅዙ ፡ ይትባልዑ ፡ በበይናቲሆሙ ፡ ወዐመፃ ፡ ልህቀት ፡ ዲበ ፡ ምድር ፡ ወ ኵሉ ፡ ኀሊና ፡ አእምሮ ፡ ለኵሉሙ ፡ እኅለ ፡ እመሕያው ፡ ከመዝ ፡ እኩይ ፡ ኵሎ ፡ መዋዕለ ። 3. ወርእያ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ ለምድር ፡ ወናሁ ፡ ማሰነት ፡ ወአማሰነት ፡ ኵላ ፡ ዘሥጋ ፡ ሥርዓታ ፡ ወአእከየ ፡ ኵሎሙ ፡ ቅድመ ፡ አዕይንቲሁ ፡ ኵሉ ፡ ዘሀሎ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ምድር ። 4. ወይቤ ፡ ይደመስ ሶ ፡ ለሰብእ ፡ ወኵሉ ፡ ዘሥጋ ፡ ዘመልዕልተ ፡ ገጸ ፡ ምድር ፡ ዘፈጠረ ። 5. ወኖኅ ፡ ባሕቲቱ ፡ ረከ በ ፡ ሞገሰ ፡ በቅድመ ፡ አዕይንቲሁ ።

1. When mankind began to multiply on the surface of the entire earth and daughters were born to them, the angels of the Lord – in a certain (year) of this jubilee – saw that they were beautiful to look at. So they married of them whomever they chose. They gave birth to children for them and they were giants. 2. Wickedness increased on the earth. All animate beings corrupted their way – (everyone of them) from the people to cattle, animals, birds, and everything that moves about on the ground. All of them corrupted their way and their prescribed course. They began to devour one another, and wickedness increased on the earth. Every thought of all mankind's knowledge was evil like this all the time. 3. The Lord saw that the earth was corrupt, (that) all animate beings had corrupted their presrcibed course, and (that) all of them – everyone that was on the earth – had acted wickedly before his eyes. 4. He said that he would obliterate people and all animate beings that were on the surface of the earth which he had created. 5. He was pleased with Noah alone.

Josephus summarizes the events as follows (AntJud I, 73–75): [15]

73. πολλοὶ γὰρ ἄγγελοι θεοῦ γυναιξὶ συνιόντες ὑβριστὰς ἐγέννησαν παῖδας καὶ παντὸς ὑπερόπτας καλοῦ διὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ δυνάμει πεποίθησιν· ὅμοια γὰρ τοῖς ὑπὸ γιγάντων τετολμῆσθαι λεγομένοις ὑφ' Ἑλλήνων καὶ οὗτοι δράσαι παραδίδονται. 74. Νῶχος δὲ τοῖς πραττομένοις ὑπ' αὐτῶν δυσχεραίνων καὶ τοῖς βουλεύμασιν ἀηδῶς ἔχων ἔπειθεν ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτοὺς καὶ τὰς πράξεις μεταφέρειν, ὁρῶν δ' οὐκ ἐνδιδόντας, ἀλλ' ἰσχυρῶς ὑπὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς τῶν κακῶν κεκρατημένους, δείσας μὴ καὶ φονεύσωσιν αὐτὸν μετὰ γυναικῶν καὶ τέκνων καὶ τῶν τούτοις συνοικουσῶν ἐξεχώρησε τῆς γῆς. 75. Ὁ δὲ θεὸς τοῦτον μὲν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἠγάπησε, κατεδίκαζε δ' οὐκ ἐκείνων μόνων τῆς κακίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶν ὅσον ἦν ἀνθρώπινον τότε δόξαν αὐτῷ διαφθεῖραι καὶ ποιῆσαι γένος ἕτερον πονηρίας καθαρόν, ἐπιτεμόμενος αὐτῶν τὸν βίον καὶ ποιήσας ἐτῶν οὐχ ὅσα πρότερον ἔζων, ἀλλ' ἑκατὸν εἴκοσιν, εἰς θάλασσαν τὴν ἤπειρον μετέβαλε.

73. For many angels of God, consorting with women, fathered children who were insolent and despisers of every good thing because of the confidence that they had in their power. For, according to tradition, they are said to have committed outrages comparable to those said by the Greeks to have been done by giants. 74. Nochos, disgusted with their actions and being displeased with their endeavors, tried to persuade them to improve their attitude and to change their actions. But seeing that they did not give way but were vehemently overpowered by the pleasures of evils, fearing lest they even slay him with his wives and children and those who were dwelling with him, he withdrew from the land. 75. God loved this man because of his righteousness, but did not condemn the others alone for their wickedness; but since it seemed best to Him to destroy also all humanity, as many as there were at that time, and to create another race free of knavery, cutting short their lives and establishing their life expectancy not as formerly but at 120 years, He changed the dry land into sea.

This tradition is very well attested in the literature of the Jewish Hellenistic milieu of the Second Temple period and seems to have been quite popular. Since many Muslim scholars were quite well acquainted with Jewish tradition and often made use of material from apocryphal biblical sources there is no question that even this story was known to them. But it simply does not fit at all in the Islamic concept of the Flood story as described above, and therefore it is not connected with the warner and admonisher Noah in Islamic tradition and consequently not mentioned in the relevant chapter of the *History* of aṭ-Ṭabarī.

[15] Text: Thackeray, Josephus AntJud, p. 34. Translation: Feldman, Josephus AntJud, p. 26–29.

In the next section of his report on Noah aṭ-Ṭabarī quotes a whole lot of different and contradictory traditions concerning Noah's age at the time of the Deluge, among them the following: [16]

بعث الله نوحا إليهم وهو ابن أربعمائة سنة وثمانين سنة ثم دعاهم في نبوته مائة وعشرين سنة وركب السفينة وهو ابن ستمائة سنة ثم مكث بعد ذلك ثلثمائة وخمسين سنة .

God sent Noah to them when he was 480 years old. He then called them (to God) during his prophethood for 120 years. When he was 600 years old, he boarded the ark. He lived thereafter for another 350 years.

This corresponds exactly to the details given in the Midrash Tanhuma (Noah 5, quoted above) and in Genesis 7:6:

וְנֹחַ בֶּן־שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וְהַמַּבּוּל הָיָה מַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ׃

And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

The same is true of the *Commentary on Genesis* from Qumran (4Q252 = 4QcommGen A, col. I, 1–4): [17]

1 [ב]שנת ארבע מאות ושמונים לחיי נוח בא קצם לנוח ואלוהים 2 אמר לא ידור רוחי באדם לעולם ויחתכו ימיהם מאה ועשרים 3 שנה עד קץ מי מבול ומי מבול היו על הארץ *vacat* בשנת שש מאות שנה 4 לחיי נוח ...

1. [In] the year four hundred and eighty of Noah's life, Noah reached the end of them. And God 2. said: "My spirit will not reside in man for ever. Their days shall be fixed at one hundred and twenty 3. years until the end of the waters of the flood". And the waters of the flood burst over the earth. *Blank* In the year six hundred 4. of Noah's life (…)

According to aṭ-Ṭabarī's own opinion however, Noah stayed among his people for 950 years as it is said in surah 29:15. Nevertheless, aṭ-Ṭabarī does not even try to harmonize the contradictory traditions, although he has a clear preference. This is quite typical of his method which aims at giving exhaustive information on the respective topic.

As for the dimensions of the ark, aṭ-Ṭabarī cites again different traditions. One of them agrees completely with the biblical report: [18]

ذكر لنا أن طول السفينة ثلثمائة ذراع وعرضها خمسون ذراعا وطولها في السماء ثلاثون ذراعا وبابها في عرضها .

It has been mentioned to us that the ark was 300 cubits long and fifty cubits wide, and its height in the sky was thirty cubits. Its entrance was on the wide side.

[16] Text: aṭ-Ṭabarī, History I, p. 123. Translation: Rosenthal, History of al-Ṭabarī I, p. 355.
[17] Martínez/Tigchelaar, Vol. I, p. 500 f.
[18] Text: aṭ-Ṭabarī, History I, p. 124. Translation: Rosenthal, History of al-Ṭabarī I, p. 356.

Genesis 6:15 f.:

15 וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אַמָּה אֹרֶךְ הַתֵּבָה חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה רָחְבָּהּ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אַמָּה קוֹמָתָהּ׃
16 צֹהַר תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה וְאֶל־אַמָּה תְכַלֶּנָּה מִלְמַעְלָה וּפֶתַח הַתֵּבָה בְּצִדָּהּ תָּשִׂים תַּחְתִּיִּם שְׁנִים וּשְׁלִשִׁים תַּעֲשֶׂהָ׃

15. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 16. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

We have already seen – for example from the Midrash Tanhuma and from the Qur'ān – that the people laughed at Noah and mocked him, but this seems to be only half of the truth: The affair was even worse, as aṭ-Ṭabarī tells us: [19]

كانوا يبطشون به يعني قوم نوح بنوح فيخنقونه حتى يغشى عليه فإذا أفاق قال اللهم اغفر لقومي فإنهم لا يعلمون .

They – Noah's people – used to grab him – Noah – and choke him until he became unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he said: O God! Forgive my people for they do not know!

This is clearly a quotation from Luke 23:34:

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἔλεγεν· πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν. διαμεριζόμενοι δὲ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἔβαλον κλήρους.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

I just could not withhold this remarkable detail here, although the influence of Christian traditions is not the topic of this short paper.

It's a bit of a problem to answer the question how long the Flood in fact lasted and on wich date it began. Even the biblical report in Genesis 6–9 lacks consistency in this respect and contains at least three different chronological systems.[20] In later Jewish tradition we find a great variety of contradictory dates and numbers, and the same is true for the Islamic literature. Since this is a separate issue all to itself we can't go into that in more detail now, but the following example from the *History* may give at least an impression of how Muslim tradition suited the dates and numbers to the Islamic calendar system: [21]

فركبوا فيها لعشر ليال مضين من رجب وخرجوا منها يوم عاشوراء من المحرم فلذلك صام من صام يوم عاشوراء ... فسارت بهم السفينة فطافت بهم الأرض كلها في ستة أشهر لا تستقر على شيء حتى أتت الحرم فلم تدخله ودارت بالحرم أسبوعا ورُفع البيت الذي بناه آدم عليه السلام رُفع من الغرق وهو البيت المعمور والحجر الأسود ... فلما دارت بالحرم ذهبت في الأرض تسير بهم حتى انتهت إلى الجودي وهو جبل بالحضيض من أرض الموصل .

[19] Text: aṭ-Ṭabarī, History I, p. 125. Translation: Rosenthal, History of al-Ṭabarī I, p. 358.
[20] Kratz, Komposition, p. 236–238 (English translation: p. 235–237).
[21] Text: aṭ-Ṭabarī, History I, p. 128. Translation: Rosenthal, History of al-Ṭabarī I, p. 362.

> They boarded the ark on the tenth of Rajab, and they left it on the ʿĀshūrā Day, (the tenth day) of al-Muḥarram; therefore, all those people fast on the ʿĀshūrā Day. (…) The ark carried them around the entire earth in six months. It did not come to rest anywhere until it came to the Sacred Territory (of Mecca and Medina). However, it did not enter the Sacred Territory but circled around for a week. The House built by Adam was lifted up – lifted up, so as not to be submerged – "the inhabited House" with the Black Stone. (…) After the ark had circled around the Sacred Territory, it traveled with (those aboard) over the earth and eventually reached al-Jūdī – a mountain whose foot is in the land of Mosul.

Rağab is the seventh and al-Muḥarram the first month of the Islamic calender. The holy month of Rağab is regarded as a month of peace.[22] In Sunni Muslim tradition, the tenth of al-Muḥarram – the ʿĀshūrā Day[23] – is a voluntary fast-day which Muhammad adopted from the Jews. For Shii Muslims, ʿĀshūrā is a day of mourning, since in the year 680 Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī was killed in the Battle of Karbala on the tenth of al-Muḥarram.

As for the route of the ark, aṭ-Ṭabarī has even more detailed information than given above: [24]

> ورفعت من عين وردة يوم الجمعة لعشر ليال مضين من رجب وأرست على الجودي يوم عاشوراء ومـــرت بالبيـــت فطافت به سبعا وقد رفعه الله من الغرق ثم جاءت اليمن ثم رجعت .
>
> [The ark] took off from ʿAyn Wardah on Friday, Rajab 10th. It anchored upon al-Jūdī on the ʿĀshūrā Day. It passed by the House, which had been lifted up by God so it would not be submerged, and circumnavigated it seven times. It went to the Yemen, and then returned.

Thus, the ark performed one of the rituals of Muslim pilgrimage, the so called *ṭawāf* (= "circumambulation"): Pilgrims are to walk seven times round the Kaʿba in a anticlockwise direction. Once more I would like to give an instructive parallel from Christian tradition, taken from the Book of the Cave of the Treasures in fact, which gives another description of the route: [25]

> ܗܘ ܕܐܪܟܐ ܥܠ ܟܢܦܝ ܪܘܚܐ ܥܠ ܦܪܫ ܡܝ ܡܒܘܠܐ ܡܢ ܡܕܝܢܚܐ ܕܡܥܪܒܐ ܘܡܢ ܕܪܘܡܐ ܠܕܪܘܡܐ ܘܡܢ ܕܣܛܪܐ ܠܕܣܛܪܐ ܘܥܒܕ ܒܡܝ ܐܝܟ ܨܠܒܐ ܚܕ ܒܡܝ ܡܒܘܠܐ .
>
> And the Ark flew on the wings of the wind over the waters of the flood from east to west, and from north to south, and it marked out [by its path] a cross on the waters.

However, I don't dare to decide which version is more probable from a nautical point of view.

b) The *Tales of the Prophets* ascribed to al-Kisā'ī

Especially the authors of the literary genre of "tales of the prophets" (in Arabic: *qiṣaṣ al-'anbiyā'*) expand considerably on the story of Noah and the Flood and tell lots of wondrous legends. One of the most popular works of this genre is a compilation of stories ascribed to an author named al-Kisā'ī, whose identy is not clear.[26] In this work, it is also mentioned that the

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22 EI$^2$, VIII, p. 373–375.
23 EI$^2$, I, p. 705 f.
24 Text: aṭ-Ṭabarī, History I, p. 131. Translation: Rosenthal, History of al-Ṭabarī I, p. 367.
25 Text: Bezold, Schatzhöhle, p. 98. Translation: Budge: Cave of Treasures, p. 114.
26 EI$^2$, V, p. 176.

Kaʿba was lifted up during the flood, and, furthermore, we learn why the Stone of the Kaʿba is black: [27]

وأمر الله الملائكة أن تحمل البيت الحرام إلى السماء الدنيا وكان الحجر الأسود يومئذ أشدّ بياضا من الثلج فيقال إنـــه سُوِد من خوف الطوفان وفي رواية أخرى سُوِد من ذنوب العباد .

God commanded the angels to lift the Kaaba into the sky. At that time the Black Stone was whiter than snow; it is said that it became black from fear of the deluge. According to another report it turned black because of the sinfulness of God's servants.

Many embellishments of the Flood story in the *Tales of the Prophets* ascribed to al-Kisāʾī pick up motifs known from Jewish tradition. To give one last example, I first have to quote a miracle story about the newborn Noah as it is told in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch at the beginning of chapter 106 (probably a fragment of a Noah Apocalypse): [28]

1. **ወእምድኅረ ፡ መዋዕል ፡ ነሥአ ፡ ወልድየ ፡ ማቱሳላ ፡ ለወልዱ ፡ ላሜክ ፡ ብእሲተ ፡ ወፀንሰት ፡ እምኔሁ ፡ ወወለደት ፡ ወልደ ። 2. ወኮነ ፡ ሥጋሁ ፡ ጸዓዳ ፡ ከመ ፡ አስሐትያ ፡ ወቀዩሕ ፡ ከመ ፡ ጽጌ ፡ ረዳ ፡ ወጸጕረ ፡ ርእሱ ፡ ከመ ፡ ፀምር ፡ ጸዓዳ ፡ ወድምድማሁ ፡ ሠናይ ፡ አዕይንቲሁ ፡ ወሶ በ ፡ ከመ ፡ ፀሐይ ፡ አዕይንቲሁ ፡ አብርሀ ፡ ኵሎ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ከመ ፡ ፀሐይ ፡ ወፈድፋደ ፡ በርሀ ፡ ኵሉ ፡ ቤ ት ። 3. ወሶበሂ ፡ ተንሥአ ፡ እምእዴሃ ፡ ለመውሰዲት ፡ ወከሠተ ፡ አፋሁ ፡ ወተናገረ ፡ ለእግዚአ ፡ ጽድቅ ።**

1. And after some days my son Methuselah took a wife for his son Lamech, and she became pregnant by him and bore a son. 2. And his body was white as snow and red as the blooming of a rose, and the hair of his head and his long locks were white as wool, and his eyes beautiful. And when he opened his eyes, he lighted up the whole house like the sun, and the whole house was very bright. 3. And thereupon he arose in the hands of the midwife, opened his mouth, and conversed with the Lord of righteousness.

Obviously, Noah was able to speak right after his birth. This can be found in the *Tales of the Prophets* ascribed to al-Kisāʾī as well: [29]

فلمّا وضعته هناك وأرادت أن تتصرّف ... فكلّمها نوح ... وقال لا تخافي عليّ من أحد يا أمّي فإن الذي خلقني هو يحفظني .

After Noah's mother had given him birth, she desired to move freely again. Noah spoke to her and said, "Have no fear on my account, mother; for He who created me will watch over me."

## 5. Conclusion

Within this short paper presentation, we could only cast a quick glance at some of the most important points. Nevertheless, the examples given above make clear that the Qur'ānic revelations are addressed to an audience which is already quite familiar with the story of Noah and the Flood. The version assumed to be known is based on Jewish tradition. Since the Qur'ānic

[27] Text: Eisenberg, Vita Prophetarum, p. 95 f. Translation: Thackston, Tales of the Prophets, p. 102.
[28] Charles, Enoch (Text), p. 219 f.; Charles, Enoch (Translation), p. 264 f.
[29] Text: Eisenberg, Vita Prophetarum, p. 86. Translation: Thackston, Tales of the Prophets, p. 92.

Flood report does not intend to tell a new story but aims to give a re-interpretation of a well-known one, many details of the course of events are omitted. The only section with a narrative structure clear enough to be understood without any previous knowledge is the episode of Noah's fourth son in surah 11:42–47. This story is inserted into the text to illustrate and to stress the new meaning of the report, and I think we may understand surah 11:49 as a hint that this episode goes beyond the already known events. In summary, one can say that the Qur'ānic Flood report follows a very clear theological concept: Noah is descibed as the prototype of a prophet and therefore stands for Muḥammad himself, and the fist priority is to show that only those find salvation who believe in the one true God.

In contrast, later Islamic literature adopts a large variety of narratives and legends from Jewish (and Christian) tradition, suiting them to Islamic ideas and concepts, of course, and trying to give full details on every aspect of the story.

It goes without saying that oral tradition is of crucial importance for the process of adopting motifs, especially in the period of early Islam. In particular the contribution of liturgical texts has been underestimated so far. Although it is very difficult to make statements on the influence of oral traditions for lack of verifiability, it would be a methodological mistake to leave it out of consideration. That is, however, beyond the scope of this short paper, but maybe the discussion at the conference will give the opportunity of exchanging views and experiences on this topic.

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