# The Alleged Debt of the Quran to the Old and New Testaments in the Works of Orientalists and its Context in al-Baydawi's Tafsir

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| | One of the most significant challenges within Orientalist studies is the claim that the Quran was influenced by Jewish and Christian texts—especially the Old and New Testaments. This issue, echoed in numerous Orientalist works, finds a pivotal argument in the use of al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis as an interpretive source. This paper poses two central questions: "On what bases and through which aspects of al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis do Orientalists argue for the borrowing hypothesis regarding the Quran's relationship with the biblical texts?" and "Are their interpretive and historical analyses methodologically sound?" To address these inquiries, the study scrutinizes contentious issues such as the interpretation of the term "Furqān," the origins of fasting regulations, the designation of Jesus as the "Word of God," the influence of potential pedagogues of the Prophet Muhammad, and the presence of the 'People of the Book' vocabulary in the Quran. Employing a method of interpretive content analysis alongside a comparative approach to Islamic and Orientalist sources, the research demonstrates that Orientalist references to al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis often rest on a superficial understanding of the Quran's historical context, an inadequate consideration of traditional Muslim exegetical methods, and a disregard for the underlying theological principles. The findings reveal that many of these claims lack sufficient scholarly grounding and are, at times, driven by ideological biases and distortions of Quranic concepts. Contrary to the Orientalists' assertions, al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis does not affirm the borrowing hypothesis but rather attests to the structural independence and intrinsic richness of the Quranic discourse in response to pre-Islamic religious traditions. |

## 1. Introduction

The Quran, the holy book of Muslims, has always been the focus of attention for religious scholars and researchers. One important topic that has been discussed and examined in this regard is the alleged borrowing of the Quran from the Old and New Testaments (the "*Aḥdān*"). This issue has been analyzed from different perspectives, particularly in the works of Orientalists and non-Muslim researchers. Orientalists, as individuals who approach the study of Islamic texts, especially the Quran, with a non-epistemological and scientific approach, attempt in some of their works to show that the Quran borrows from the Aḥdān. This doubt has been influential not only in academic fields but also in political and social discussions. One important source that Orientalists refer to is the Tafsir al-Baydawi. In this Tafsir, some points and topics, especially those related to the Quran's connection with the *Aḥdān*, are noteworthy. These include discussions of the Quran's alleged borrowings from the *Aḥdān* texts, differences in readings (*qirā'āt*), concepts such as the Satanic verses (*āyāt shaytāniyya*), non-Arabic vocabulary and terminology, and the possible influence of Jewish and Christian figures on the Prophet.

Al-Baydawi (1998), in his Tafsir, examines various verses of the Quran and, in some cases, refers to materials from the *Aḥdān*. These references can fuel the suspicion of the Quran's borrowing from the *Aḥdān* texts. On the other hand, Orientalists, based on these very points, attempt to adopt a critical approach to the Quran and justify its connections with the *Aḥdān*, suggesting that the Quran is a rewriting of earlier texts.

Some Orientalists believe that the existence of similarities and connections between the Quran and the *Aḥdān* indicates the Quran's borrowing from these texts. This theory is particularly observable in al-Baydawi's (1998)Tafsir and some other Tafasir. However, a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of this contention requires a more precise examination of the historical, cultural, and hermeneutical contexts of the Quran.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze the contention regarding the Quran's borrowing from the *Aḥdān*, examining al-Baydawi's (1998) Tafsir and its strengths and weaknesses in this regard. In this context, we will adopt a scientific and critical approach to the theories of Orientalists, extracting their arguments and addressing the influences of al-Baydawi's Tafsir and the nature of his references to the *Aḥdān* texts.

## 2. Research Background

Muhammad Ibrahim Fahd (1990) in his book, "Al-Tabari and His Influence on Orientalism," examines the influence of early Tafsir (exegesis), particularly Al-Tabari's Tafsir, on the views of Orientalists and analyzes their ideas regarding the Quran's alleged dependence on the Old and New Testaments.

Vincent (2005), in his book "The Quran and the Testaments: Relationships and Differences," specifically addresses the relationship between the Quranic texts and the Testaments as well as the challenges in interpreting them, indicating how Orientalists analyze these relationships and apply them in directly interpreting the Quran.

Zaynab (2012), in her book "Sayyid al-Baydawi's Tafsir: Cultural and Religious Influences," conducts a comparative study of al-Baydawi's Tafsir with narratives from the Testaments, indicating how al-Baydawi responds to these doubts and reflects the cultural and religious manifestations of his time in his interpretation.

The present research is the first to systematically analyze the Orientalists' citations of al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis in relation to the borrowing hypothesis concerning the Quran's relationship with biblical texts, whereas previous studies have primarily focused on al-Tabari's interpretation or on textual comparisons between the Quran and the biblical texts. Adopting a critical and analytical approach, this article demonstrates how al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis, whether intentionally or inadvertently, has served as the basis for some of the Orientalists' inferences. Through this pathway, it marks a novel step in elucidating the interaction between the Islamic exegetical tradition and Orientalist interpretations.

## 3. Orientalist References to Baydawi's Tafsir

Baydawi's Tafsir (exegesis) has been cited in various Orientalist works regarding the Quran's indebtedness to the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. We will examine some Orientalist references to Baydawi's Tafsir in the following:

### 3-1. The Word Furqan

According to Jeffery (2004), the word Furqan in most Quranic verses refers to the revealed book. However, in Surah Al-Anfal, this word is used in connection with the Battle of Badr. Raghb al-Isfahani, in Mufarradāt, defines it as the separation of the army of good from the army of evil. Jeffery (2004) suggests that this specific meaning of Furqan in the Quran may have been influenced by Jewish sources. He adds that in the story of Saul's victory over the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11:13) and in the Targum, the phrase in the Jewish text appears exactly as "Yawm al-Furqan" (the day of Furqan). Some Orientalists consider this to be influenced by the Book of Isaiah (49:8), interpreting Furqan as "salvation." However, Jeffery (2004) finds a closer correspondence between Furqan and the Aramaic equivalent of the word for deliverance or salvation. According to Geiger (1898), the origin of Furqan is this same word, understood in verse 29 of Surah Al-Anfal as God's salvation. Jeffery (2004) argues that this meaning of Furqan also corresponds to the Hebrew word found in the Targums and Psalm (3:9).

According to Bell (1953), the word Furqan appears seven times in the Quran. He argues that this word is derived from the Syriac purkana, which itself has originated from the Aramaic-Jewish purkan. However, the Quran only mentions the revelation of Furqan once. Bell (1953) links this to the Battle of Badr, asserting that the Prophet's reception of Furqan could not predate this battle. He suggests that a covenant was made with the Muslims: If their faith proved steadfast, Furqan would be given to them—a faith demonstrated at Badr. Furthermore, verse 50 of Surah Baqarah mentions Furqan being given to Moses. Another verse speaks of Moses receiving the tablets, where Furqan doesn't signify separation. However, even in this narrative, a separation exists between those who accepted God and others. Before Badr, Muhammad separated his path from Jews and Christians, forming a distinct religious community. Bell (1953) believes that the meaning of Furqan in verse 29 of Surah Anfal, signifying the separation of truth from falsehood, is derived from Christian sources. He argues that Jews had the Torah as a means of separating believers from non-believers, Christians had the Gospel, and now Muslims have the Quran. Therefore, the concept of Furqan in the Quran is influenced by both Judaism and Christianity.

Kies, like Orientalists such as Geiger and Bell, believes that "Furqan" in Surah Al-Anfal refers to the distinguisher between right and wrong, and in another verse, to the day of the Muslim victory at Badr. Since Furqan was revealed in Ramadan, based on the connection between the Jewish Yom Kippur fast, the victory at Badr in Ramadan, and the obligatory fasting of Muslims in Ramadan, he concludes that the Muslim fast of Ramadan is a form of adaptation or similarity to the Jewish fast of deliverance and victory over Pharaoh. He supports this by referencing Al-Baydawi's (1998) commentary, where he interprets Furqan as "salvation." This implies, according to Kies, that the Prophet Muhammad adapted the story of the Jewish deliverance from Pharaoh and applied it to the Muslim victory at Badr. Thus, Furqan in verse 29 of Surah Al-Anfal refers to the salvation of Muslims at the Battle of Badr, and in verses 49-50 of Surah Al-Baqarah, to salvation from Pharaoh when the sea parted for Moses. Therefore, by adopting the meaning of "salvation" for the word Furqan from Al-Baydawi's commentary and linking it to the revelation of Furqan in Ramadan, as well as the meaning of Furqan as salvation on the day of Badr, Orientalists attempt to suggest that the Muslim fast was adapted from the thanksgiving fast in Judaism. Kies also attributes the extension of the fast from ten days to thirty days to the influence of Judaism and Christianity on Islam.

Al-Baydawi (1998), in his commentary on verse 29 of Surah Al-Anfal, states that Furqan refers to the factor distinguishing right from wrong or victory, and the separation of the righteous from the wrongdoer or "salvation" (Al-Baydawi, 1998, Vol. 3, p. 56).

### 3-2. Fasting in Islam

According to Dere Hadad, initially, the Muslim fast was an imitation of the Jewish fast, without specific days being mentioned in the verse. "And upon those who are able to fast, there is a ransom (which is) the feeding of a poor person." Additionally, in the verse "So whoever witnesses (the month)

among you, let him fast," Ramadan fasting became obligatory. Darreh Haddad, in explaining the connection between Muslim fasting and fasting in Christianity, cites Baydawi (1998) who, in explaining the aforementioned verse, discusses the obligatory fasting of Christians and provides explanations regarding it (Darreh Haddad, n.d.). Darreh Haddad also states that fasting during the day is a custom of the People of the Book, Jews and Christians.

According to Dar al-Hadad, the Muslim tradition of fasting on the day of Ashura also existed among the Quraysh, as an adaptation of the Jewish Yom Kippur fast. The ritual practices of the Arabs of Hejaz, except for their outward appearance and expressions—which seemed polytheistic—had nothing left of paganism and had a monotheistic essence that had spread in that region by the People of the Book (Dar al-Hadad, Youssef, n.d.)

Bell (1953) highlights that fasting was not present in the teachings of the Meccan period of the Prophet and its establishment is linked to his relationship with the Jews at the beginning of the Medinan period. The influence of the Jewish fasting on the day of Ashura is evident from verse 179 of Surah Al-Baqarah. The following verse specifies Ramadan as the time for Muslim fasting, and the choice of a full month of fasting in Ramadan is likely influenced by Christianity. He further argues that the choice of Ramadan for fasting was probably related to the Battle of Badr, where Muslims triumphed over the polytheists.

Watt (1961) underscores that the Prophet, while in Mecca, was in direct contact with the Jews and attempted to establish Islam based on a Jewish model. Therefore, before the Hijra, he adopted Jerusalem as the qibla, in accordance with Jewish practice. Similarly, the fast on the day of Ashura, which corresponds to the Jewish Day of Atonement, was instituted in Medina, and the Muslim Friday prayer was associated with the preparation for the Sabbath eve of the Jews. Watt (1961) argues that the Prophet's subsequent hostility towards the Jews stemmed from their rejection of him, leading to a separation. The qibla was shifted from Jerusalem to Mecca, and the fast of Yom Kippur was replaced by Ramadan. He also connects the Battle of Badr with the fast of Ramadan, stating that just as the Jewish Day of Atonement commemorated their deliverance from Pharaoh and the victory of the Israelites, the fast of Ramadan commemorates the victory at Badr against the polytheists. Moreover, Watt (1961) agrees with scholars such as Geiger, Hirschfeld, and Kayser regarding the Jewish origin of the fast and its details, considering it derived from the thanksgiving fast of the Jews, citing the word "furqan" (deliverance) from Baydawi's (1998) Tafsir as evidence.

Baydawi (1998), commenting on verse 185 of Surah Baqarah regarding fasting in Islam, mentions that before the obligation of Ramadan fasting, Muslims fasted on Ashura and three days of each month. Furthermore, it is narrated that the fast of Ramadan was obligatory upon Christians; however, due to extreme heat or cold, the time shifted to spring, with ten days added as expiation for this change.

### 3-3. Potential Teachers of the Prophet

Sprenger (1851), in his book "Life of Mohammed from Original Sources," argues that the Prophet's religion was fabricated and that Jews and Christians were present in the Prophet's surroundings, in tribes in Yemen, as well as in Medina, Khaybar, Fadak, and Mecca. He mentions Jibr (a Roman slave), Yasar (a sword-maker), and Aisha among the People of the Book surrounding the Prophet. Noting Aisha's scholarship and possession of books, he suggests that the Prophet's teachings were derived from these individuals. He mentions that some Orientalists believe that Waraqah ibn Nawfal, Khadijah's cousin, translated the Gospel of Matthew, or an abridgment thereof, into Arabic. Furthermore, Sprenger (1851) points to the presence of the Greek word "nomos" in Waraqah's writings, suggesting that Waraqah may have at one time been Jewish. These points indicate the Prophet's connection to Waraqah, who was associated with both Christianity and Judaism and considered a scholar of the scriptures. Sprenger (1851) further claims that Waraqah played a role in confirming the revelation received by the Prophet, affirming the revelation when the Prophet was doubtful, stating that he had received the great "nomos," or the laws of the Sharia, similar to what Moses received. Khadijah then consulted the monk Bahira, who confirmed Waraqah's assessment. Bahira subsequently visited the Prophet. Sprenger's source for this account is the book Hayat al-Qulub wa Ma'araj al-Nubuwwah.

In other words, the Prophet interacted not only with Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who was a translator of the Gospel, but also with a monk named Adas. Springer (1851) states that although Ibn Ishaq, in his book, describes Adas as a Christian slave of Ibn Rabiah, he does not mention what is found in the book Hayat al-Qulub, namely, that Sergius the monk had a son named Adas. According to Springer (1851), Islamic traditions state that the Prophet had contact with Sergius himself from childhood. This imply that the Prophet was under the tutelage of Sergius the monk in his childhood, and during his adulthood and at the time of his prophethood, he was also in contact with and under the tutelage of Adas, Sergius's son, and likely he drew upon his information. He states that early Christian biographers believe that Muhammad received his religious teachings from Sergius, and the Prophet himself admits it in the Quran (16:105; 25:6) when accused by the polytheists. Springer (1851) mentions individuals such as Zayd, Waraqah, and Adas, who supported the Prophet and assisted him in writing the Quran, and then, states that Jewish scholars of Hejaz certainly conveyed their principles and beliefs to Muhammad. Springer argues that Islamic commentators, in their interpretations, have stated that he listened to the reading of the scriptures in Mecca from Jabr and Yasar, the sword-makers. Ibn Ishaq also mentions that he interacted with Abd al-Rahman, a Christian from Yamama. Springer (1851), in recounting the tradition of Adas and the topic of the "*Asāṭīr al-ʾAwwalīn*" (Ancient Myths), cites al-Bayḍāwī's commentary on verse 105 of Surah An-Nahl, as well as the Tafsir Jalalayn and al-Kashshaf, which mention the names of these teachers.

Baydawi (1998), regarding the reference in Quran in verse 4 of Surah Furqan, "And others have assisted him in it," states that, "this person was allegedly a Jew or a Jabr, Yasar, and 'Adas (Vol. 4, p. 118).

Rodwell in his translation of the Quran, extensively used Baydawi's commentary, as well as the commentaries of Zamakhshari, the Kitab al-Maghazi of Waqidi, the Tarikh al-Tabari, the Sirah Ibn Hisham, and other books such as the Sahih collections (Khatib, 2012). In the footnotes of his Quran translation, he draws parallels between Quranic verses and passages from the Bible. He did not limit himself to a mere translation of the Quranic verses. Through this approach, he implicitly suggests similarities between the Quran and the Bible, even implying that the Quran borrowed from them. Furthermore, Jones' arguments regarding the introduction to Rodwell's translation, which discuss the Quran's borrowing, are based on the Quran itself: Verse 85 of Surah Al-Baqarah, which mentions Abdullah ibn Salam, the learned Jew, and the Prophet's relationship with him and the Jews who knew the Prophet as their own sons: "Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons" (2:146). Additionally, other verses in the Quran about the Jews, as narrated by the Prophet, indicate that he had a deep relationship with the Jews. Another argument made by Jones is that it has been stated in the Quran itself that the Quraysh claimed that a human being taught the Prophet these verses (16:103). Another argument refers to the Prophet's instruction every morning and evening by teachers as well as the fact that the Prophet was aided in writing the Quran by "other people" (*al-qawm al-akhirūn*)! (Al-Khatib, 2012). These statements by Jones are similar to mentioning the names of the Prophet's possible teachers in other commentaries and Islamic books, such as Baydawi's commentary.

It has been argued that in the phrase, "Indeed, it is only a human that teaches him," human refers to the Jews. According to Baydawi (1998, Vol. 3), the "legends of the ancients" (*Asāṭīr al-awwalīn*) in the mentioned verse refer to the writings of previous peoples, which the Prophet wrote for himself or which his scribes wrote for him; these were dictated to him every morning and evening for him to memorize, since he was illiterate and could not personally read or write. Baydawi and Zamakhshari, in their commentary on verse 105 of Surah An-Nahl and verses 5-6 of Surah Al-Furqan, stated that Jabr, a Roman slave of Amir ibn Hazm, assisted the Prophet in compiling the Quran. He was a reader and scribe. Others have also argued that two slaves who worked in sword-making in Mecca assisted the Prophet, to the extent that they had some knowledge of recitation. Whenever the Prophet passed by them, he would stop and listen to what they were reciting. Aisha also said that the verse refers to the slave of Huyaytib ibn Abdul-Aziz, who also owned books.

Yusuf Dara Haddad (n.d.) in the explanation of verse 4 of Surah Furqan, "And others assisted him in it," as well as citing certain verses of the Quran, such as verses 101-103 of Surah An-Nahl, underscores the bringing down of the Quran by the Holy Spirit (*Ruḥ al-Qudus*), and that the Prophet's teachers could teach the Prophet in Arabic what the Holy Spirit had revealed in other languages (Ajami) in previous religions! It is said that Ibn Abi Hatim quoted Abdullah ibn Muslim, who recounted the story of two slaves, Yisar and Khair, who were non-Arabs and were reading their

scriptures. The messenger of God passed by them, heard their recitation, and sat down to listen. The author also cites the narrations mentioned by al-Baydawi in his commentary on verse 103 of Surah An-Nahl, explaining the story of Jabr and Yisar, two Roman slaves who taught the Prophet in Mecca.

According to Hirschfeld (1902), if the Prophet could not seek instruction from teachers in Mecca, he likely had gathered that information from another source, a finding that predates the revelation of the Quran. Sprenger (1851) also states that attention should be paid to the Prophet's Meccan period and his second journey to Syria to interact with Jews and Christians, as the Prophet likely engaged in religious discussions with his new acquaintances there.

Hirschfeld (1902) recounts a narration from Ibn Ishaq about the Prophet's childhood journey to Syria, where the monk Bahira saw signs of prophethood in him. He then describes the Prophet's second journey, during which the monk Nestorius saw him and inquired about him. In the third version of the narration, an unnamed monk sees signs of prophethood between the Prophet's shoulders. Hirschfeld (1902) states that these narrations blend several stories and sermons from different parts of the Bible. He further narrates that the Prophet also went to Medina as a child and witnessed numerous Jewish ceremonies. These experiences profoundly impressed him. This and subsequent experiences led to his analysis of Jewish and Christian beliefs and the creation of a new form of worship in his mind. Furthermore, visits to Jewish synagogues and the Jerusalem sanctuary, which contained no idols or stones for worship but rather religious communities who worshipped twice daily a God unseen by the eye, further impacted the bright young mind. The Prophet also visited Jewish Beit Midrash and heard expressions whose Quranic application is seen in the verb "darasat" in verse 105 of Surah An-Nahl.

Hersfeld (1902), regarding the teachers of the Prophet mentioned in the Quran who spoke in a foreign language (Ajami), states, refering to Baydawi (1998), that the word "Ajami" in this verse refers to the Greek language, and this is true as in the Arabian Peninsula at that time, Jews and Christians were not called Ajami. The names of these teachers in Hersfeld's book is sourced from Baydawi's commentary on verse 105 of Surah An-Nahl.

According to Bell (1953), the Prophet had freedom of action in choosing his teachers. Initially, it seemed that his teachers were Christian, but later, elements of the Old Testament prominently appeared in the Jewish traditions of the Quran, which were largely oral sources. He states that in Medina, the Prophet was in close contact with the Jews, and in the early period, Jewish influence on the Quran was highly strong. Bell's source regarding the accounts of potential teachers is the accounts mentioned in Islamic commentaries such as Baydawi's.

Khadijah had a Christian cousin named Waraqah, who is said to have confirmed the revelation to the Prophet and described the revelation similar to what existed among Jews and Christians (Watt, 1961). According to Watt, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who was familiar with the scriptures, along with Khadijah, allayed the Prophet's anxieties and doubts about the revelation. However, at that time, Christian Arabs probably did not have direct access to the biblical texts, and this may also be true of Waraqah. Watt (1956) identifies Waraqah ibn Nawfal as the Prophet's first teacher. In his view, the Prophet of Islam had numerous meetings with Waraqah, learned much from him, and Islamic teachings were greatly influenced by and modeled on Waraqah's thoughts.

Nöldeke (2004) mentions individuals such as Salman, Jabr, Yasar, Ya'ish, and Balaam as teachers of the Prophet. The exegetical work of Baydawi serves as Nöldeke's source for the narrations about these teachers.

### 3-4. Laws Derived from the Torah
Baydawi (1998), in his commentary on verse 179 of Surah Baqarah, highlights the law of retaliation which was already present in the Torah and was not abrogated by the Quran. Furthermore, orientalists such as Goldziher, have pointed to the influence of Jewish books on Islamic laws and regulations.

### 3-5. The Word of God Being Jesus Christ and the Superiority of the People of the Book
Yusuf Dar al-Hadad (n.d.), in confirming doubts regarding the Prophet's borrowing from Judaism and affirming the superiority of the People of the Book and their prophets, especially Jesus (peace be upon him), over Muslims and the Prophet Muhammad, claims that the Prophet Muhammad acknowledged belief in God and belief in His word. This is evidenced by Baydawi's (1998) commentary on verse 157 of Surah Al-A'raf.

According to Dar al-Hadad, Moses' book is the Imam and leader of the Quran, and the Quran is its Arabic translation and confirmation, and the Children of Israel are its witnesses. He cites Baydawi's commentary on verse 12 of Surah Al-Ahqaf and verse 17 of Surah Hud as evidence for his claim. Furthermore, regarding the Quranic verse, "And a witness from the Children of Israel testified," a witness from the Children of Israel recited the scriptures to the Prophet, and that the Quran is derived from the scriptures. Referring to a Christian named Waraqah ibn Nawfal, Dar al-Hadad states that Waraqah was a translator of the Torah and the Gospel into Arabic. He was the one who invited the Prophet to the monotheism of the scriptures, confirmed the revelation to him, and accompanied him in his Quranic call. This same Waraqah dispelled the Prophet's doubts and anxieties whenever he was uncertain, bringing peace of mind to the Prophet. Dar al-Hadad, citing al-Baydawi's (1998) commentary, states that, "The book to which Muhammad believed and to which he called is the collection of all revealed books, which is the sacred scripture of the People of the Book (p. 183). Again citing al-Baydawi's commentary, he notes that the meaning of following their guidance (the People of the Book) is that they agreed upon concerning monotheism and the principles of religion. In his explanations regarding the sources of the Quran, Dar al-Hadad refers to al-Baydawi's (1998) commentary, which interprets the phrase "من لقائه" in the verse "And indeed, We gave Moses the Scripture, so do not be in doubt about meeting Him," as signifying the act of visiting Moses or relating to "Al-Katab" (the Book). He cites the verses regarding the Prophets (24-25): "This is a reminder for those who are with me and a reminder for those before me." In this context, "Those who are with me" refers to the Ummah of the Prophet, while "Those before me" pertains to earlier communities. The author emphasizes that these "earlier communities" serve as a reference whose guidance must be followed, and this guidance is embodied in the Holy Book. Therefore, Muhammad is undoubtedly connected to the Book of Moses through the Imams (leaders) of the Jews.

According to Dar al-Hadad, "al-Kitab" is the same as "al-Kitab al-Imam," also in clear Arabic. The Quran itself repeatedly refers to the existence of sources for itself, connecting itself to these sources in various ways, and in times of difficulty, presenting these sources as evidence of its truthfulness. Furthermore, from beginning to end, the Quran sees itself as connected to al-Kitab, to the point of identifying itself as the Arabic text of al-Kitab. Dar al-Hadad, in explaining the linguistic connections of the words in the verses and by refering to the Tafsir al-Baydawi, identifies the Quran as the Arabic al-Kitab.

## 3-6. The Existence of the Terms associated with the People of the Book in the Quran

Yusuf Dar al-Hadad, in explaining verses 104-105 of Al-An'am concerning the teaching of the Book to the Prophet of Islam, refers to the Tafsir al-Baydawi (1998), which states that the word "darasat," in both its spelling and meaning, derives from the verb "darash" in Hebrew. He explains that this word appears in Midrash, the Book of Ezra, and the Book of Nehemiah, in the teaching of the law. These "Kitabi" terms, like much information about Judaism, such as stories, laws, etc., were prevalent in Arab society among the People of the Book. The Prophet was also in constant contact with those communities. Dar al-Hadad, in a footnote, mentions ten different readings from al-Baydawi in support of his statements about the verb "darasat," stating that "darasta" or "darasta" means the teaching of the books of the ancients and the mention of the teachings of the People of the Book and the Jews, among others (Dar al-Hadad, n.d.). Dar al-Hadad takes the meanings of the word "darasat" from the expressions of Tafsir al-Baydawi under verse 105 of Al-An'am (al-Baydawi, 1998, Vol. 2).

Dar al-Hadad also refers to Surah Al-Qamar, discussing that there is no book other than that of the Jews and Christians. This book has been a source for Muhammad and his followers, from which they read the myths of the past; therefore, the Quran is the same as the hadiths of the People of the Book (Dara Haddad, n.d.). The repeated references to the People of the Book in the Quran are due to the Quran's desire to frequently return to its primary source! Coincidentally, the reason for the Prophet's strength of heart and the steadfastness of his faith in questionable matters is the reference to the People of the Book who had previously read the Book (Quran 10:94; 6:114), and this is strong evidence that the People of the Book were teaching and assisting Muhammad (Dara Haddad, n.d.). Therefore, according to Dara Haddad, Muhammad is undoubtedly connected to the Book of Moses through the Jewish leaders who called for guidance!

Jeffrey (2004) has included the word "to return" (80:31) among foreign vocabulary and states that commentators such as Tabari, Zamakhshari, and Baydawi have also expressed doubt regarding its meaning. Bagawi has also narrated a story in his interpretation that further indicates uncertainty about the meaning of this word in the Quran. Suyuti has also considered it foreign in his work "Itqan." Therefore, Jeffrey's source for classifying the word "أبَّ" as foreign includes the interpretations of Tabari, Zamakhshari, Bagawi, and Baydawi, as well as Suyuti's research studies (Jeffrey, 2004).

The word "He gives life" in the Quran, according to some Orientalists, has entered the Quran due to a misinterpretation of verse 61 from the Gospel of Luke. Baydawi (1998) has also acknowledged in his interpretation of verse 39 of Surah Al-Imran and verse 7 of Surah Maryam that this word is foreign and part of the borrowed vocabulary in the Quran. Jeffrey (2004), referring to the statements of Islamic commentators regarding the foreign classification of this word, states that this word is derived from a Christian source, and the name "Yuhanna/Yuhani" has entered the Arabic language as "He gives life."

**The word "Ya'qub" (Jacob):** Suyuti in "Al-Mazhar", Zamakhshari in the tafsir of verse 57 of Surah Maryam, and Baydawi in the tafsir of verse 29 of Surah Baqarah, considered this word foreign and borrowed. Jeffery (2004) suggests that it may be a loanword from Hebrew, possibly through a Christian intermediary, and likely via Syriac.

**The word "Masih" (Messiah):** Commentators such as Zamakhshari and Baydawi (1998) rejected the views of other commentators regarding its Arabic origin, classifying it as a foreign word. Muslim lexicographers who also considered it foreign, trace it back to a Hebrew word. Jeffery (2004), citing these interpretations and books, considers this word non-Arabic and a loanword in the Quran. Hirschfeld (1902) derives it from Aramaic; however, Jeffery and Frankel consider it derived from Syriac.

**The word "Isa" (Jesus):** Jeffery (2004), regarding the foreign nature of this word, states that commentators such as Zamakhshari and Baydawi, unlike numerous Islamic scholars, acknowledged its foreign origin in their tafsir of verse 40 of Surah Al-Imran. Baydawi, in his tafsir of verse 81 of Baqarah, considers it derived from Hebrew.

**The word "Talut" (Saul):** According to Baydawi (1998), in his commentary on verses 247 and 249 of Baqarah, this word is derived from Hebrew. Jeffery (2004) also considers it a Hebrew word!

**The word "Salawat":** According to Baydawi and Zamakhshari, it means the synagogue of the Jews, and according Jeffery (2004), it is derived from Hebrew. He bases his classification of "Salawat" as a foreign word on its interpretation in the tafsirs of Baydawi and Zamakhshari.

**The word "Sabt" (Sabbath):** Baydawi (1998), in his tafsir of verse 65 of Surah Baqarah, explains that as God ceased His work on the seventh day and rested, this day was called "Sabt." According to Jeffery, Geiger, Hirschfeld, and Horowitz, this word is Aramaic in origin and possibly from a Jewish word. It is questionable whether it was used in Arabic sources before the Quran. Geiger (1898) also, in his book, considers it a loanword from the Israelites.

**The word "Dawud" (David)**: According to Baydawi (1998) in his commentary, is a Hebrew word. Jeffery (2004) argued that it reached the Arabs from common narratives in Jewish-Christian communities.

**The word "Hittah":** According to Baydawi's interpretation, was not an easy word for Quranic commentators to translate. Suyuti also included it among Hebrew words in his book. Geiger (1898) and Hirschfeld (1902) also agree on its Hebrew origin.

**The word "Jahannam" (Hell):** According to Baydawi in his commentary on verse 206 of Surah Al-Baqarah, is a foreign word. Geiger (1898) argues that it is a Hebrew word derived from the Talmud. The Islamic commentators' labeling of this word as foreign confirms the Orientalists' claim of its being borrowed.

**The word "Biyya'":** It was used in inscriptions before Islam, and according to the interpretations of Zamakhshari and Baydawi on their interpretations of Surah Al-Hajj (22:40), is a foreign word and refers to "the temple of the Christians" or "the synagogue of the Jews."

Zamakhshari and Baydawi, in their interpretations of verse 31 of Surah Al-Baqarah, claimed that "Adam" is a foreign word. Citing their view, Jeffery (2004) considers it a Hebrew word. He states that, undoubtedly, the word "Adam" as well as the story of his creation were familiar to the Prophet!

**The word "Israel"** is also, according to Zamakhshari and Baydawi under their interpretations of verse 40 of Surah Al-Baqarah, a foreign and Hebrew word entering the Quran from Christianity.

**The word "Injil" (Gospel)**, which, according to Jeffery (2004), was considered foreign by commentators such as Zamakhshari and Baydawi, is one of the influences of Syriac-speaking Christians on the Quran, with whom the Prophet had contact.

**The word "Maryam" (Mary),** the name of the mother of Jesus (peace be upon him), which Baydawi (1998), in his commentary on verse 36 of Surah Al-Imran, considered foreign and Hebrew. Jeffery (2004) also underscores the Hebrew origin of this name; however, it is clear from its pronunciation that it entered the Arabic language through a Christian source.

In the article on baptism in the first volume of the Encyclopedia of the Quran, Leiden explains that the use of water for religious washing, which is only mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:138), is equivalent to the Quranic word "*ṣibgha*." Quranic translations by orientalists such as Sale, Rodwell, Arberry, and Yusuf Ali have also translated the word "*ṣibgha*" as baptism. However, according to Bell (1953), the exact meaning of this word is not clear. Tabari's commentary also translates it as a religious "nation" that follows the religion of God.

However, Yusuf Ali, whose writings are based on the interpretations of Baydawi and Suyuti, explains it in a footnote to his translation of the Quran as follows: Arab Christians used to pour a kind of dye into the baptismal water to indicate that the person who had been baptized had taken on a new color in their life! This implicitly refers to the borrowing of words, terms, and religious practices from Christianity (Leiden, Vol. 1). According to Jeffery (2004), this is a foreign word in the Quran and is used in the Medinan surahs, and in the Quran, it acquired the meaning of baptism under the influence of Christianity. According to Jeffery, Zamakhshari also considered this word to mean "baptism" under the influence of Christianity.

Rippin states that Zamakhshari in Kashshaf and Baydawi in Anwar al-Tanzil have interpreted the word "ṣalawāt" to mean a place for worship and judgment in the Jewish religion. This word is an Arabicized form of a word derived from the Hebrew "*ṣelota*." (Leiden, Vol. 2).

According to Blachère (1995), Islamic traditions report another phrase instead of the common "*basmala*" in the Quran: "*Bismika Allahumma*," meaning "In your name, O Lord!" which recalls the phrase "YHWH b'shem" in the Bible. In other words, *basmala* in the Quran is influenced by the Bible. Baydawi's (1998) commentary serves as the source for Blachère's argument (Blachère, 1995).

According to Bell (1953), the Islamic prayer (salat), which originated in Mecca, was likely influenced by Christian worship practices, considering the Syriac origin of the word "salat." The Meccan surahs mention two daily prayers, morning and evening, in addition to a night prayer, but the middle prayer was added in Medina. The word "salat," meaning prayer, is derived from an Aramaic source. While Noldeke suggests it might have a Jewish Aramaic root, it is more likely to have originated from a Syriac source. The common phrase "*aqama al-salat*" (establish prayer) is also, according to Wensinck, a clear Syriac phrase. The commentaries of Zamakhshari and Baydawi on verse 40 of Surah 22 of the Quran acknowledge the Hebrew and foreign origin of this word (Jeffery, 2004).

### 3-7. The Monotheism of Pre-Islamic Arabs

Yusuf Durra Haddad (n.d.), citing Quranic verses, introduces the Prophet as a propagator of the teachings of the People of the Book to the Arab people. In his view, the people of the Arabian Peninsula accepted monotheism even before the Prophet. He supports this claim with verse 23 of An'am, verse 87 of Zukhruf, verse 38 of Zumar, verse 53 of Qasas, and verse 61 of Ankabut, as well as the explicit statement in verse 106 of Yusuf and its interpretation in the commentaries of Baydawi and Jalalayn. He argues that the non-monotheism of the Arabs of Mecca and Hijaz was such that they knew God but associated others (idols) with Him in worship. It was the People of the Book who spread monotheism in Mecca, and pure monotheism existed among the Arabs of Mecca before the Prophetic mission, with verse 53 of Qasas serving as evidence. Furthermore, the Arabs themselves admitted that they were not polytheists and were horrified by the Prophet's accusation of polytheism! (Durra Haddad, Yusuf, n.d.).

According to Durra Haddad, Christian monotheism was also disseminated in Hijaz by a number of disciples, and Muhammad (PBUH) was sent at a time when the monotheism of the "Book" had spread

from the north to the south of Hijaz. It was this monotheism of the "Book" that eradicated idolatry in Hijaz and the worship of idols, and ultimately led to the spread of the monotheism of the Book around the Kaaba. Furthermore, some of the nobles of Quraysh, such as Uthman ibn Huwayrith and Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who were close to Khadija (SA), were also active in spreading the teachings of the Gospel and the monotheism of the Book. This is despite the fact that some Muslim scholars and certain Orientalists, such as Blachère (1995), have denied the presence of the People of the Book in Mecca and their religious dominance.

### 3-8. The Prophet's Intervention and Actions in the Quranic Text

Bell (1953) recounts a narration from Baydawi's (1998) commentary regarding the scribes of revelation. It states that Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Sarh was writing down the revelation being sent to the Prophet. In this narration, Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh was writing verses 12 to 14 of Surah Al-Mu'minun. When he reached the end of the verse, he paused for a moment, became ecstatic, and said, "So blessed is Allah, the best of creators." Muhammad (PBUH), who needed the rhythm and cadence of Abdullah's phrase in his book, told Abdullah to write that phrase in the Quran as well. This instruction from the Prophet caused doubt in Abdullah ibn Sa'd. Later, he abandoned Islam and returned to Mecca. By presenting such narrations in his commentary, Baydawi (1998) paved the way for expressing doubts about the Prophet's authorship of the Quran and the Quran being derivative (Bell, 1953, p18).

### 3-9. The Companions' and Muslims' Visits to Jewish Schools

Geiger (1898), citing Baydawi's commentary on verse 91 of Surah Al-Baqarah, recounts a narration in which Umar enters a Jewish school and asks them questions about the angel Gabriel. The Jews describe Gabriel as an angel of punishment and torment and their enemy as he reveals the Jews' secrets to the Prophet. They also state that Gabriel is on the right side of God and Michael is on the left. Clearly, by referring to this narration, he implicitly suggests that the Prophet and his companions frequented Jewish schools, thereby making it possible for them to acquire Jewish knowledge orally. In his reference to this narration in Baydawi's (1998) commentary about Umar ibn al-Khattab's entry into Jewish schools, Geiger (1898) states: "However, our view is not that the Arab Jews knew nothing of the biblical texts. The existence of schools among them has already been reported to us" (pp. 17-18).

## 4. Conclusion

An examination of the Orientalists' use of al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis in the context of the borrowing hypothesis regarding the Quran and the Biblical texts reveals that a significant portion of their analyses rests on a superficial interpretation of apparent similarities between Islamic and Judeo-Christian teachings. Such similarities do not necessarily imply direct influence; rather, in several cases, they stem from a shared source of revelation, the regional cultural-linguistic milieu, and common religious traditions. Reliance on concepts such as "Furqān," fasting ordinances, the designation of Jesus as the "Word of God," or specific terminologies of the People of the Book, without a nuanced understanding of Quranic sciences and the exegetical methodologies employed by Muslim commentators—especially al-Bayḍāwī—cannot serve as a sound basis for the borrowing theory. This research, through a comparative content analysis of al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis and Orientalist citations, demonstrated that many of their claims suffer from methodological weaknesses, overlooking the Quran's intrinsic semantic framework, and insufficient awareness of the cultural-historical context during its revelation. Moreover, certain interpretations are clearly driven by ideological preconceptions and a reductionist view of the divine revelation. In contrast, al-Bayḍāwī's interpretative approach, supported by a diverse range of Islamic sources, not only affirms the autonomy and originality of the Quranic discourse but also provides an internal theological response to these challenges. Ultimately, the present study underscores that any scholarly analysis of the interaction between Islam and pre-Islamic religions must distinguish between shared features, actual influence, and genuine interaction, with full consideration of the classical Islamic exegetical traditions.

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