# Unveiling the Obstacles:
# Why (Qur'ānic) Storytelling Struggled in Early Islamic Society

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| **Article type:**<br>Research Article<br><br>**Article History:**<br>Received 20 January 2024<br>Revised 01 November 2024<br>Accepted 13 November 2024<br>Published Online 06 January 2025<br><br>**Keywords:**<br>Qur'ānic storytelling,<br>Obstacles,<br>Early Islam,<br>Israelites,<br>Quranic rhetoric. | This article, employing a qualitative-explanatory approach and utilizing library research and document analysis, explores why Qur'ānic storytelling has not been recognized as a distinct branch of Islamic literary studies. The primary question of the study is: why, despite the growth of Islamic rhetoric, did the art of storytelling fail to gain prominence among Muslim scholars? Through an examination of available sources, the article identifies six key factors contributing to this oversight: the misinterpretation of the term "qasas"; confusion between stories, myths, history, folktales, and legends; the historical context of storytelling in pre-Islamic times; the overlap of sources for certain stories with those of other prophetic narratives; negative attitudes towards storytelling among the Imams and companions; and the influence of Israelite traditions in exegetical literature. These factors, the article argues, have hindered the development of storytelling as a prominent technique within the Qur'ān. |

## 1. Introduction

Despite the Qur'ān being a repository of divine guidance, communicated predominantly through structured narratives of prophets and historical events, the literary aspects of these narratives have received limited attention compared to other Islamic sciences, such as grammar and rhetoric. This oversight raises an essential question: Why has the art of Qur'ānic storytelling not been studied with the same scholarly rigor as Islamic rhetoric? Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi (870-950), Ibn Sina/Avicenna (980-1037), and Ibn Rushd/Averroes (1126-1198) translated foundational Greek works into Arabic, notably Aristotle's Rhetoric, catalyzing the growth of Islamic rhetorical sciences. Yet, systematic exploration of narrative techniques within Qur'ānic stories has lagged behind, a trend this study aims to understand.

This paper identifies and investigates a specific gap: the absence of a literary study on Qur'ānic storytelling in early Islamic scholarship and its effects on Islamic culture and intellectual development. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology, this study will examine the cultural and intellectual consequences of this oversight, particularly how it may have impacted early Islamic society's engagement with narratives as a divine instructional tool. Ultimately, this research hypothesizes that this neglect limited the Qur'ān's role in shaping a more nuanced Islamic literary tradition and cultural identity, suggesting a need for renewed scholarly interest in Qur'ānic storytelling as a unique and integral part of Islamic intellectual history.

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

Storytelling has been a longstanding tradition in the Arabian Peninsula, where it gained new dimensions with the advent of Islam. The Qur'ān's use of narrative has enhanced the art of storytelling, imbuing it with spiritual and didactic significance. Despite this integration, however, storytelling did not develop into an independent field of study within Islamic literary sciences in the same way as rhetoric or eloquence. Although scholars have examined various aspects of storytelling, there remains a gap in exploring why storytelling, particularly Qur'ānic storytelling (qissas), was not accorded the same scholarly attention as rhetoric in early Islamic society.

Ibn Juzi (2007) offers another perspective, examining the role of storytelling within Islam, especially its religious and social functions, and noting how it served both didactic and moral purposes. However, Ibn Juzi's work centers primarily on the themes and moral implications of stories rather than on the development of storytelling as a structured literary science. There are numerous sources and references about storytelling; for example, Ja'farīyān (2021) provides a complete picture of storytellers in the history of Islam and Iran. Parwīnī and Nazemian (2019) have provided a detailed and sometimes quantitative description of ancient Persian narrative literature. Similarly, Pellat (2011) explores the semantic range of *qissas* (stories) in Arabic, examining how the term evolved and was applied to different forms of narrative. Pellat's semantic analysis highlights the diversity of storytelling forms, but stops short of analyzing why storytelling was not theorized as rigorously as rhetoric.

Ja'farīyān (2021) believes that despite the support of some individuals for storytellers who had been approved by the second caliphate, many scholars in the second and third centuries denied these storytellers (Ja'farīyān, 2021). This paper tries to build upon the above-mentioned studies, specially through a refrence to some drawbacks regarding the qissas in the early Islamic culture.

Despite these contributions, little research has examined the underlying reasons for the lower status of storytelling as a formal science compared to oratory or rhetoric in early Islamic scholarship. This study seeks to build upon the aforementioned works, particularly by examining the cultural and ideological factors that may have contributed to the scholarly neglect of storytelling, or *qissas*, within early Islamic culture. It aims to identify specific drawbacks and challenges faced by storytellers in establishing storytelling as an influential scholarly field.

## 3. Theoretical Framework: Unveiling the Drawbacks of Qissas in Early Islamic Thought

Storytelling has always been a core element of human expression, deeply woven into the cultural and spiritual life of societies worldwide. Both folk traditions and sacred texts often rely on narratives to convey values, history, and teachings. The Qur'ān, a central religious scripture, uses storytelling not only to engage readers but also to impart lessons, with nearly one-fourth of its verses dedicated to the

stories of prophets, past nations, and pivotal events (Parvini, 2000; Ashrafī, 2003). This emphasis highlights the educational importance of storytelling in the Qur'ān.

Despite this prominent role, storytelling (*qissas*) did not emerge as an independent discipline in early Islamic culture, as rhetoric did. Various factors contributed to this divergence, each impacting the development and perception of *qissas*. These factors include:

### 1- Misconception of the Term *Qissas*:

A significant obstacle is the widespread misunderstanding of the term *qissas*, leading to ambiguity in how storytelling is conceptualized. The term's etymological and contextual interpretations vary, which obscures its educational potential and diminishes its acceptance as a specialized field.

### 2- Conflation of *Qissas* with Legends, Histories, Folk Tales, and Myths:

Another obstacle is the tendency to equate *Qissas* with genres such as legends, folktales, and myths. This conflation overlooks the Qur'ānic stories' unique intent and structure, which center around moral instruction and divine guidance rather than mere entertainment or folklore.

### 3- Historical Roots of *Qissas* in the Pre-Islamic Era (*Jāhilīyya*):

The association of *Qissas* with pre-Islamic storytelling traditions contributes to hesitations in fully integrating it into Islamic scholarship. Early Muslims may have viewed these stories as remnants of *Jāhilīyya* (the Age of Ignorance), and thus avoided giving storytelling the same scholarly weight as other sciences.

### 4- Ambivalent Attitude of Imams and Companions toward Storytelling:

The cautious stance of certain Shia Imams and Companions toward storytelling likely stems from the influence of *Isrā'īlīyyāt* (stories of Israelite origin). This influence created a perception of storytelling as potentially unreliable or even harmful to Islamic teachings, given its association with non- Qur'ānic sources.

### 5- Overlap with Other Revelatory Books:

The fact that certain stories in the Qur'ān overlap with narratives in other revelation-based texts (e.g., the Bible and Torah) sparked debates over authenticity and uniqueness. This shared origin may have led some scholars to question the distinctiveness of Qur'ānic stories, complicating their acceptance as an independent narrative science.

### 6- Impact of *Isra'iliyyat* in the Interpretive Tradition:

The presence of *Isra'iliyyat* within Islamic interpretive traditions introduced foreign elements that complicated the understanding of Qur'ānic narratives. These external influences may have cast doubt on the purity of Qur'ānic storytelling, reducing its status compared to other Islamic disciplines.

Each of these factors plays a critical role in understanding the challenges faced by *Qissas* in early Islamic culture. Examining these influences sheds light on the complex dynamics that shaped the reception and development of Qur'ānic storytelling, revealing both its literary and educational significance in a broader historical and religious context (for further details, see Ja'farīyān, 2021).

## 4. Discussion and Results
### 4-1. Misconception of the Term *Qissas*

The first detriment arises from the pervasive misinterpretations and misleading associations attached to key terms, stories, and the art of storytelling itself. When we refer to Qur'ānic stories, we deviate from the conventional understanding of a story as a narrative crafted from imaginative musings. Regrettably, various individuals, including adversaries and skeptics of the Qur'ān, have erroneously construed these narratives as fictional tales and myths. The essence lies in recognizing that the Arabic language provides multiple terms synonymous with "story" and "tale." Notable among these are qissas, sireh, ḥadīth, anecdote, samar, superstition, myth, narration, nadera, akhbār, legend, and others. Of these, the terms "mathal," "ḥadīth," and "akhār" hold a pronounced presence in the Qur'ān.

These linguistic variations, while sharing semantic affinity with the term qissas, serve to distinguish Qur'ānic stories as a distinct literary genre from other classifications in human literature, such as tales, myths, and historical accounts. The crux lies in appreciating the nuanced differences and appreciating Qur'ānic stories not as products of imaginative invention but as divinely revealed

narratives that transcend conventional storytelling conventions. This linguistic precision is indispensable for dispelling misconceptions that might equate Qur'ānic stories with mere works of human fiction or mythology.

The term "qissas" is rooted in the trilateral infinitive qissa, derived from the Q.S.S root, encompassing verbal forms, such as Yaqisso, Qissan, and Qissasan (Ashrafī, 2003). Its fundamental connotation revolves around the notions of "cutting" and "dismemberment," with Persian interpretations extending to "telling a story" or "following someone" for Qissas, and "speaking" or "following" for Yaqisso (Ashrafī, 2003). Husaynī (1998) characterizes Qissa as "following" or "following the previous work" (Husaynī, 1998). Additionally, Qissas is identified as the plural noun of Qisse, a term with diverse meanings including "akhbār," "ḥadīth," "a segment of utterance," "written content," "dignity," "story," "present," "work," "speech," and "novel." Intriguingly, Qisse also encompasses the concept of "hair weaving," with forehead hair referred to as Qisse, symbolizing the most beautiful part akin to the adornment of the forehead. In the Holy Qur'ān, "Ahsan al-Qisas" (Qur'ān 3:12) signifies the best stories or the pinnacle of storytelling (Tamīm Dārī, 2000)

The term Qissas is employed both as a noun and an infinitive. Found seven times in the Holy Qur'ān, six instances present it in the form of nouns denoting "story," "anecdote," "news," "biography," and similar concepts, while once it appears as an infinitive signifying "seeking and following a work." Ṭāliqānī (1983) posits that al-qisas, whether used as an infinitive or a noun, involves investigating and following events to discern facts and acquire knowledge. He contends that these verses encapsulate the pursuit of truth (Ṭāliqānī, 1983). Al-Mizan's translation (Mūsawī Hamidānī, 1995) further elucidates that in Surah A'raf (7: 176), "Faqses al-Qisas" translates to the infinitive form, urging "the telling of the story or emphasizing the need for storytelling." The term can also function as a gerund, as in "Aqsis al-Qisse," implying "contemplation, critical thinking for truth, and departure from falsehood." (Mūsawī Hamidānī, 1995)

Parwīnī (2000) posits that "qisas, used in the context of storytelling, assumes the guise of a name, symbolizing the narrative's protagonist" (Parwīnī, 2000). Ashrafī (2003) asserts that qasas, when employed as infinitives, "serves as the wellspring of innovative style, optimal methodology, and unconventional arrangement" (Parwīnī, 2000). In sum, Parwīnī identifies five axes for "qisa" across verb, noun, and infinitive forms: "search and pursuit," "reading, recitation, and repetition," "expression and description," storytelling, tale," and "narrative selection and destiny" (Parwīnī, 2000).

The term "Ḥadīth" emanates from the root word "Hadasa," signifying recreation. In *the Lexicon of the Qur'ān*, Hoduth is defined as "a creation accompanied by novelty. Ḥadīth encompasses anything new, be it an action or speech" (Qurashī, 1992). Ḥadīth is described as conveying news of the day, akin to a new anecdote, as it involves narrating or speech to create something unprecedented (Qurashī, 1992).

Similarly, "Naba" is a pivotal term used interchangeably with news, story, and tale in the Qur'ān, with 81 instances of its root appearing in the text (Ashrafī, 2003). Despite events often referencing the distant past, the term and its derivatives consistently convey the essence of informing and, by extension, storytelling and biography (Husaynī, 1998).

Another significant term is "Hakayat," synonymous with the Arabic word, "Al-Raviah." Abbott (2008) traces its roots to the ancient Sanskrit word "gna," meaning to know (Abott, 2008). It entered English through Latin, holding dual meanings of "knowing and saying." This etymology unveils two facets of narration—a universal quest for knowledge and the expression of acquired knowledge (Abott, 2008). In the context of Qur'ānic stories, the study of their structure and functions serves as both knowledge acquisition and knowledge expression.

Interestingly, the term "story" itself denotes both a narrative and a follow-up. The act of storytelling can be approached from two perspectives: narrative as a literary genre and narrative as a linguistic construct. In essence, anything that defines a story in form and content is encompassed by the term "narrative." Linguistically, narrative constitutes a discourse governed by specific forms and language rules. The theory or grammar of narrative systematically studies the structural components of these narratives.

The damage incurred lies in the overlooking of semantic nuances, particularly equating qur'ānic qissas with the plural noun qisse. This oversight constitutes a significant obstacle, rendering qur'ānic stories and, consequently, Islamic storytelling incompatible with the purportedly "Islamic" culture. It

is essential to underscore that, in surah yusuf, god designates these stories as the best narratives, emphasizing their divine inspiration and the importance of reflection (qur'ān 12: 3).

**4-2. Conflation of *Qissas* with Legends, Histories, Folktales, and Myths**
The second detriment, intertwined with the first, involves the erroneous equating of Qur'ānic stories with myths, folk tales, and historical accounts by certain scholars, including Dundes (2003). Dundes (2003) endeavors to align some Qur'ānic stories with the World Text Type, based on Arne-Thompson's list (1968), identifying the Qur'ānic motifs and themes shared with folk tales. While it is acknowledged that a significant portion of the Qur'ān conveys its teachings through narratives, approximately one-third of its content, it is imperative to recognize that the Qur'ān is not merely a compilation of stories. Instead, it strategically employs stories to fulfill its moral and religious objectives. Although some commonalities in content and themes may exist between Qur'ānic stories and world stories, the Qur'ān addresses humanity at large, emphasizing universal themes shared among human narratives (Ḥurrī, 2023).

Equating Qur'ānic stories with historical accounts is another misconception that warrants clarification. The term "history" encompasses various meanings, referring either to events and occurrences or to the recording and reporting of historical events (historiography). Derived from the Greek root "historia," meaning "to ask for," "to search," and "to seek information," the Persian word for history is derived from the infinitive "Tafʿeil," with its root being "Arakha and Varkha," eventually evolving into the term "historian." (Tamīm Dārī, 2000).

In its essence, history involves the writing of specific events tied to a particular time, place, story, or people, serving as a record of occurrences. It is the study of events or the examination of incident reports. While true historiography aligns with the Qur'ānic historiography in the form of stories, delving into individual narratives, ethnicities, and true religions, it deviates from approach and purpose. Qur'ānic stories, while sharing thematic elements with historical accounts, serve a more profound moral and religious purpose, transcending mere documentation of past events. Recognizing and appreciating these distinctions is crucial to dispelling misconceptions and acknowledging the unique narrative approach employed by the Qur'ān for its overarching objectives.

Maʿārif (2006) has pointed to some of these axes: Qur'ānic historiography revolves around the lives of prophets and righteous individuals. It is comprehensive and selective historiography and is based on drawing lessons and moral teachings (Maʿārif, 2006). However, in some respects, Qur'ānic historiography in the form of stories differs from historical reports. Firstly, the possibility of error and mistake in historical reports is not entirely negative; secondly, historical reports provide the raw material for Qur'ānic stories. Let's not forget that both English words "story" and "history" are derived from the Greek and Latin root "historia." Although the word "history," in terms of conformity with real facts and events, is somewhat more limited and restricted than the word "story." Thirdly, historical reports are the result of observations and notetaking by others, as mentioned in previous sources. The possibility of tampering and fabrication of events is not entirely ruled out. We should also note that in these reports, highlighting national and racial issues for one nation while downplaying others is not impossible. In this respects, Qur'ānic stories differ from historical reports. Nevertheless, historical reports and the biographies of prophets, nations, tribes, and previous peoples align with Qur'ānic stories in the sense that they occurred.

The term "اساطير الاولين" (myths of the ancients) mentioned in the Qur'ān is equivalent to the English word "myth," derived from the Greek word "mythos," meaning "narrative," "news," or "story" (Ismaʿīlpūr, 2003). Aristotle considers it the foundation of poetry (Zarrīnkūb, 1974). In the Qur'ān, the term "اسطوره" is used in the sense of legend or the stories of the past. In reality, this term is employed by the opponents of the Qur'ān to suggest that the facts in the Qur'ān are replaced with myths. It seems that these myths have their roots in Jewish and Christian storytellers. The term "اسطوره" is mentioned in 9 verses of the Qur'ān: Surah An'am (Qur'ān 6:25), Surah Anfal (Qur'ān 8:31), Surah Nahl (Qur'ān 16:24), Surah Naml (Qur'ān 27:68), Surah Mu'minun (Qur'ān 23:83), Surah Furqan (Qur'ān 25:83), Surah Ahqaf (Qur'ān 46:17), Surah Qalam (Qur'ān 68:15), and Surah Mutaffifin (Qur'ān 83:13).

In the Qur'ān, the term "اسطوره" refers to fabricated or false stories of the ancients, which opponents of the Qur'ān use to challenge its authenticity. In this context, "اسطوره" in Islamic culture does not carry a positive connotation. Hylen (2007) notes:

> The clear-cut distinction between *mythos* (false stories) and *logos* (true, reasoned words or stories) goes back to Plato and has ever since prevailed in Western society. This categorization has become an instrument to distinguish truth from falsehood, in general, in the West and is applied with great success to distinguish between science (logic) and other concepts, such as superstition or religion (myth). As history belongs to the category of science, it is set in opposition to myth—a distinction that has consequences for the classification of Islamic historiography (Hylen, 2007)

According to Helen, one reason why Islamic original narratives do not fit into the category of myth is that myths are considered to be fictional stories. In any case, myths are stories that were once believed by people; however, over time and possibly with the scientific discoveries of the modern world, these stories have turned into legends. Zarrīnkūb (1983) writes: "Myths are a series of narratives preserved and transmitted as traditions, and their narrators believe them to be true as if their events truly happened" (Zarrīnkūb, 1983, p. 32). Myths express the innate human discovery and perception through stories and legends (Zarrīnkūb, 1983). Legend, on the other hand, is any story, narrative, true or false, about historical and real figures. Over time, legends have been less mythic and closer to contemporary times. It seems that myths – at least from the perspective of today's 'science' – are completely false. Legends, however, include both true and false stories, as well as historical reports that have accepted the principles of storytelling and evolved into the realm of narrative. With these characteristics, historical stories, whether past or future, differ entirely from myths and legends. Hylen concludes:

> The problem is that many stories with a historical background within various religious traditions have a function in the lives of the believers that qualifies them as myths, rather than as legends or pure historical narratives without further significance than giving facts about the past (Hylen, 2007, p. 24).

## 4-3. Historical Roots of *Qissas* in the Pre-Islamic Era (*Jāhiliyya*)

The third detriment, intricately linked to misconceptions surrounding the term Qissas, myths, and legends, is the historical background of stories in the pre-Islamic era. Notably, after the death of Antara, storytellers crafted legends embellishing his bravery and military exploits, resulting in the creation of a voluminous storybook, often likened to the Arab *Iliad* by European scholars (Al-Fakhouri, 1982). This historical backdrop hindered the emergence of a nuanced understanding of storytelling among early Muslims, impeding the recognition of its potential even within the Islamic and Qur'ānic contexts. This historical context contributed to a skewed perception of Qur'ānic stories by early detractors, who erroneously labeled them as myths of the ancients. The infidels predominantly focused on narrative components and thematic elements, disregarding the Qur'ān's emphasis on moral and religious guidance within its storytelling. Mir (2008) acknowledges that the Qur'ān, in its approach to storytelling, places greater emphasis on the moral and religious dimensions, using narratives as a means of people's guidance. The Qur'ān is not a mere anthology of stories; rather, it strategically employs stories for theological purposes. The religious objectives are intricately interwoven with captivating narrative methods, forming an inseparable amalgamation.

Even when the Qur'ān draws upon stories from the *Old Testament* and shares content and themes, it imparts a distinctive theological character through its unique narrative style. These stories undergo a process of "Qur'ānicization," whereby specific aspects are refined, modernized, and imbued with new meanings and interpretations within the framework of the Qur'ān's moral teachings. Islam and the Qur'ān, far from mechanically reproducing teachings- including previous stories- transform and elevate them to align with their unique system of moral guidance. This transformative process underscores the dynamic and purposeful nature of Qur'ānic storytelling, transcending a simple retelling of historical events to convey profound theological insights. As Izutsu (1999) puts it:

> In Jahiliyah, there were some recognized moral values; however, they were just there as *membra disjecta*, without any definite underlying irrational sort of moral emotion, or

rather, a blind and violent passion for the mode of life that had been handed down from generation to generation as a priceless tribal asset. Islam made it possible for the first time for the Arabs to judge and evaluate all human conduct with reference to a theoretically justifiable moral principle (Izutsu, 1999, p. 106).

## 4-4. Ambivalent Attitude of Imams and Companions toward Storytelling

The prevalent assumption is that Islam does not have a particularly positive approach towards the arts, including storytelling. However, the reality is different, and historical documents and evidence indicate that this assumption cannot be scientifically substantiated. This is because when the Qur'ān, which is the book of guidance for humanity, expresses some of its main religious teachings through storytelling, it seems unlikely that it would not have a positive approach towards storytelling. However, for some reasons, including the possibility of spreading falsehoods through superstitious storytelling, Shi´a scholars have not shown much enthusiasm for storytelling. "In essence, since Shi'a Imams were opposed to Jewish news and Israelites, they also confronted storytellers" (Jaʿfarīyān, 2021, p. 80). Jaʿfarīyān (2021) has referred to some narrations about the opposition of Shi´a Imams to storytellers. Overall, it seems that the main reason for the opposition of Shi´a Imams is the prevalence of Israelites, which will be mentioned later.

## 4-5. Overlap with Other Revelatory Books

The fourth detriment is closely tied to the repetition of Qur'ānic stories, particularly those of certain prophets, in the holy books of pre-Islamic religions, notably the *Old Testament*. While there is an observable repetition of revelation themes in these stories —assuming they remain untainted by distortion— the issue becomes complex due to the historical manipulation and alterations undergone by these religious texts, for reasons beyond the scope of this discussion. Distinguishing between authentic and manipulated content poses a challenge, given the myriad factors that have affected the integrity of these holy books.

 The distortion of these texts, coupled with the inherent nature of storytelling, introduces an element of uncertainty. Stories, by their very nature, may not always represent a complete and accurate account of events, leaving room for potential distortions. The existence of various versions of the same story in the holy books of the Old and New Testaments serves as evidence for this assertion. Consequently, adversaries who encountered these stories in diverse forms, handed down through generations, might have perceived the Qur'ān and its narratives as mere legends, replete with fabricated tales of the ancients. This perception, influenced by the inconsistencies and alterations present in the pre-Islamic holy books, further contributed to misconceptions about the authenticity and credibility of Qur'ānic stories among those who were exposed to these diverse accounts. (Ashrafī, 2003; MuḥammadQāsimī, 2005)

### 4-5-1. Impact of *Isra'iliyyat* in the Interpretive Tradition

In addressing the third detriment, the distortion of stories by the People of the Book and their amalgamation with pure Islamic ideas is a noteworthy concern. These stories, collectively known as "Israelite narratives," predominantly stem from Jewish and Christian sources, providing fodder for Islamic works within the realms of Tafsir and Ḥadīth. MuḥammadQāsimī (2005) posits that Israelite stories have dual origins: the distorted books of Jews and Christians, particularly those from the *Old Testament*, and the illusions and mythologies of newly converted People of the Book of Islam.

 Within the Jewish tradition, alongside books, such as *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, the *Talmud* plays a significant role. The *Talmud* encompasses principles and branches of commandments, traditions, history, and literature of the Jewish people. A portion of the *Talmud* is dedicated to anecdotes and, more notably, fabricated legends of the Jewish people. As emphasized byMuhammad Ghasemi (MuḥammadQāsimī, 2005), Talmudic myths and superstitious legends are considered a primary source for Israelite narratives found in exegetical books. Notably, these Talmudic legends underwent alterations with changing narrators, reflecting variations in the stories over time.

 The Israelite narratives have three main categories of narrators: Sahaba (companions), Taabi'in (followers of the companions), and Taabi'in Taabi'in (followers of the followers). Prominent figures among the Companions include "Abu Hurairah," "Abdullah Ibn Abbas," "Abdullah Ibn Amro Ibn Al-

Aas," and "A'bdullah Ibn Salam." Among the followers, "Ka'b al-Ahbar" and "Wahb Ibn Manba" are noteworthy. Apart from recounting Talmudic legends in diverse narrative styles, these narrators introduced their own mental illusions and biased imaginations, potentially influenced by new legends in the mosques, especially during the Umayyad caliphate period. This blending of Jewish and Christian narratives with Islamic ideas poses a challenge in preserving the purity of Islamic teachings. It underscores the need for critical examination and scrutiny of the sources and narrators involved in transmitting these stories to ensure the fidelity of Islamic narratives and guard against the inadvertent inclusion of distorted elements from external traditions.

Of course, the work of these false narrators was not limited to their mental creations. They used the Qur'ānic stories that were scientifically and deliberately mentioned in the Qur'ān as the basis of their legends and they expanded on the Qur'ānic stories as much as they could. Of course, in addition to these issues, the weakness, intellectual and cultural stagnation, and political, economic, and social issues of the society of that time should be considered as well. Tamīm Dārī (2000) points out that after the death of the Prophet (PBUH) and during the period of the three caliphs, some Jewish and Christian narrators who appeared to be Muslim, tried to publish Israelite. This group of false ḥadīths narrators and liars were allowed by the caliphs to recite ḥadīth an hour before the Friday prayer. Of course, in this ḥadīth narration, they tried to convey a part of their agenda to others in the form of stories and anecdotes.  Little by little, it reached a point where these storytellers everywhere, even in mosques, instead of Islamic knowledge and ideas, were presenting themselves based on mental constructs and Israeli narratives. Therefore, again, the opponents stole the lead, and except for the infallible imams, each of whom in their short period of time, on different occasions, countered the false storytellers, no wise thinker was found who, by referring to the Qur'ānic text could illuminate the beauty that shines in the Qur'ānic stories like the sun. As a result, the study of the mysteries and techniques of Qur'ānic stories remained in darkness.

### 4-5-2. Israelite Influence in the Exegetical Tradition

An influential factor hindering the manifestation of the unique merits of Qur'ānic stories and obstructing the development of Islamic storytelling lies in the tradition of interpretation and commentary writing. This tradition, initiated from the early revelation of the Qur'ān, aimed to guide comprehending its content within the Islamic world. While the necessity of explaining and interpreting the Qur'ān is evident, the challenge arises when personal thoughts and external influences interject into the interpretative process, leading to potential deviations.

The tradition of interpretation itself has a rich history spanning thousands of years, with numerous interpretations and exegeses written to elucidate the meanings of the Qur'ān. The Arabic literary tradition suggests that the elaboration of words and verses is intertwined with interpretation, and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can be considered the first interpreter of the Qur'ān. The term "interpretation" itself, rooted in various cultures, denotes expansion, discovery, and revelation of the primary meanings.

However, the predicament arises when interpreters fail to exercise discretion, introducing personal biases and external influences into their interpretations. Many interpretations have exhibited such deviations, notably influenced by the Israelite tradition. This influence can be traced to the use of oral traditions, legends, and superstitions from Jewish and Christian sources, particularly the *Talmud*, under the umbrella term "Israelite." Commentators, in their attempts to fill gaps in the text, sometimes neglected the need to reference authentic sources, incorporating elements from these dubious sources into their explanations.

The brevity and conciseness of the Qur'ān, reflecting its unique linguistic style and cognitive approach, meant that it did not deem it necessary to provide exhaustive historical details of prophets and nations. The Qur'ān's primary purpose is not to narrate stories in the manner of early legends or covenant books. Instead, it selectively highlights aspects of the stories deemed essential for guiding humanity toward its ultimate destination, abstaining from exhaustive details.

The interpretative tradition, especially in the early years of Islam, arose from the need to comprehend the verses and signs of the Qur'ān comprehensively. Some commentators, in their efforts to bridge gaps in the text, drew upon fabricated sources, including those influenced by the Israelite tradition. This practice, as explored byMuḥammadQāsimī (2005) in his work on Israelite influence on

the stories of the prophets in Qur'ānic interpretations, demonstrates the complex interplay between interpretations, external influences, and the preservation of the integrity of Qur'ānic narratives.

## 5. Findings and Results

The exploration of misconceptions surrounding Qur'ānic stories has revealed several critical insights. Firstly, the linguistic confusion regarding the term "Qissas" and its conflation with other narrative forms, such as myths and folk tales, has led to a significant misinterpretation of the Qur'ānic stories. A clear distinction between terms like "Qissas," "ḥadīth," "news," and others is crucial in understanding Qur'ānic narratives not as fictional constructs but as divinely revealed stories with theological and moral purposes.

Secondly, the misclassification of Qur'ānic stories as myths or historical accounts, especially by scholars like Dundes (2003), neglects the Qur'ān's overarching message and purpose. While there are shared motifs between Qur'ānic stories and global folklore or historical traditions, the Qur'ān utilizes these stories for sprirual and ethical guidance, not simply as entertainment or historical accounts. The Qur'ānic stories should be viewed as integral to the moral framework of the faith rather than as historical or mythical accounts.

Moreover, the historical backdrop of storytelling in the pre-Islamic Arab world, influenced by figures like *Antar'a* and the notion of heroic tales, has contributed to the negative perception of Qur'ānic storytelling. These pre-Islamic narratives often blurred the lines between factual history and embellished myth, setting a precedent that would later influence critiques of Qur'ānic stories. However, the Qur'ān does not merely engage in storytelling for storytelling's sake. It uses stories to deliver moral lessons and divine wisdom, which distinguish its narratives from the legends and historical accounts of earlier cultures.

The fourth critical finding revolves around the misconception that Qur'ānic stories are derived from the distorted accounts found in earlier religious texts, such as the Old Testament. While shared motifs and themes exist, these stories in the Qur'ān are presented in their purest, undistorted form, offering guidance rather than serving as mere retellings of pre-existing tales. The influence of Israelite narratives, however, presents a challenge in interpreting the Qur'ānic stories, especially when early exegeses incorporated elements from Jewish and Christian traditions.

## 6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that misconceptions about Qur'ānic stories are rooted in linguistic misunderstandings, historical context, and external influences from other religious traditions. To rectify these misconceptions, it is essential to approach the Qur'ānic stories as divinely inspired narratives distinct from myths, folklore, and historical accounts. The Qur'ān employs storytelling not as a mere artistic form but as a vehicle for conveying moral and religious guidance.

The misinterpretation of the term "Qissas" and the distortion of Qur'ānic stories due to the conflation of Israelite legends must be addressed. Scholars and readers must strive for a deeper understanding of the Qur'ānic narratives, focusing on their divine origin, purpose, and moral significance, rather than erroneously equating them with fictional or mythical tales.

In addition, the Qur'ān's use of stories should be recognized as a distinctive literary genre that transcends conventional storytelling conventions, emphasizing its theological and ethical objectives. The critical analysis of how early Islamic commentators and scholars influenced the interpretation of these stories is essential for fostering a more accurate understanding of the Qur'ānic narrative tradition.

The last but not the least, in this paper, an attempt was made to survey some detriments regarding Qur'ānic storytelling in early Islamic society. Having drawn on some available documents, the six challenges were reviewed, and the prevalence of israilyyat in the interpretive tradition was among them. Now, this question is raised: Is there any way out of these challenges? To overcome the hindrances that have impeded the growth and flourishing of Qur'ānic storytelling and literary techniques, adopting a narratological approach is proposed. Narratology, as a theoretical and practical framework, offers a model for analyzing various types of narratives, including factual and historical narratives such as the Qur'ānic stories. The same author has applied this framework to analyze Quranic stories in his other papers and books.

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