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AN ARABIC PAPYRUS IN THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE STORIES OF THE PROPHETS

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ARABIC papyri hitherto published have come, with but rare exceptions, from Egypt and deal almost exclusively with Egyptian affairs. They are either state documents of an administrative and financial character or private contracts and correspondence reflecting the social conditions in the early Arab province of Egypt. The outstanding exceptions are three mid-third-century documents now in the Oriental Institute and a small number of documents recently discovered by the Colt Expedition of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. Both groups deal with the economic administration of the province of Syria and its southern district of Palestine.¹

Arabic papyri dealing with the Qurʾān and traditions, or with history and literature, are conspicuous by their almost complete absence. This paucity is the result of several readily understandable factors. Parchment was the preferred material for Qurʾānic texts. The general use of paper replaced that of papyrus, first in the provinces east of Egypt and then in

Egypt itself, where papyrus held out the longest.² Egypt, however, was not the center of intellectual and literary activities in these early centuries of Islam, which is probably one of the reasons why the kindly Egyptian soil has not brought forth a group of early Arabic literary papyri. The intellectual centers were in the western Asiatic provinces, where the soil is anything but kind to the preservation of manuscripts.³

Hitherto the earliest known dated literary work on papyrus is a manuscript presumably still at Heidelberg. It consists of twenty-seven folios dealing with the biographies of the prophets. It bears the date of Dhū al-Qaʿdah, 229/August–Sep-

¹ The oldest known Arabic book manuscript on paper is dated A.H. 252/A.D. 866; cf. De Goeje, "Beschreibung einer alten Handschrift von Abu ʿObaid's Garīb-al-hadīth," *ZDMG*, XVIII (1864), 781, 786.

² ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd Allah (d. 234/848–49), a diligent student of tradition, collected and wrote out on papyrus the entire *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. He placed the bulky work in a large bookcase for safe-keeping, as he thought, during his subsequent absence on a journey. Returning home, he found "the earth had mixed with the books so that they had turned into mud. I had not the heart," he adds, "to write it (*Musnad*) again!" Cf. Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrikh Baghdad* (14 vols.; Cairo and Baghdad, 1931), IX, 458, 462.

³ Cf. Nabia Abbott, "Arabic Papyri of the Reign of Gaʿfar al-Mutawakkil ʿala-llāh," *ZDMG*, XCII (1938), 88 ff.

tember, 844. It traces its *isnād*, or chain of authorities quoted, back to Wahb ibn Munabbih, of whom more presently. The Heidelberg collection has several other fragments of literary papyri; but neither these nor the first-mentioned manuscript have been published as yet,⁴ except for two folios of the latter which deal with Mohammed and the treaties of ʿAqabah.⁵

Among the fairly representative collection of Arabic papyri in the Oriental Institute is a group of documents from Upper Egypt which were acquired in 1931 by the late Dr. James H. Breasted. In this group was found the present literary fragment consisting of half a folio torn lengthwise and now bearing the Oriental Institute number 14046. Professor Sprengling gave the papyrus its first reading, which, a few years back, he generously turned over to me. The fragmentary nature of the piece, its familiar content, and the pressure of other work led to its being set aside for a time that proved longer than was originally intended. In the process of completing the reading of the text, the attempt was made to identify the piece with known literary works in its particular field. The several themes as such were readily enough identified. But neither the sequence of these themes nor yet their exact content and phraseology has been met with so far in the sources at hand. It is, of course, possible that a duplicate as to text and sequence does exist in some source that has been missed or overlooked, despite the research here undertaken. In that case, it would be gratifying to have such a duplicate brought to our attention so that it can throw its light on the problems of date and authorship of the present fragment. Pending such an identification, the tentative conclusion is that we have

here a literary fragment that dates, most probably, from the third century of Islam. This tentative conclusion is based, first, on the quality and script of the papyrus and, second, on the peculiarities of the text itself.

The papyrus is fine in quality, unlike most of the generally coarse products met with in papyrus documents of the fourth century of the Hijrah. It now measures 20.5 by 10.5 cm., though its original format must have been close to a square, since reconstruction shows about half of the width of the text space is missing. The papyrus is written on both sides with nineteen and twenty lines to what appears to be the recto and the verso, respectively. The script is the fairly careful book hand or *naskhī* of the early centuries employed largely by the copyists. It is a simple and more or less cursive type with the letters generally well formed. Though diacritical points are not fully used throughout the text, there is, nevertheless, a generous sprinkling of these on many words. *Fā* and *qāf* receive a dot below and above, respectively, as was the general practice with some of the earliest papyrus documents. The punctuation device for a full stop—a circle surrounded by a number of dots—is also true to early practice (Pls. III and IV).

It is, however, the text of the document that is even more suggestive of its early origin. There is first the question of the *isnād*, or chain of authority. Like the Heidelberg papyrus mentioned above, the traditions rest on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 110 or 114/728 or 732), who in his turn drew, quite frequently as not, on ʿAbd Allah ibn al-ʿAbbās (d. between 68 and 70/687–90), as he does on the recto of the present papyrus. It is a well-established fact that these two and the earlier Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. 32/652–53) did much to touch up biblical scenes and patriarchs and introduce them into the

⁴ Carl H. Becker, *Papyri Scholt-Reinhardt I* (Heidelberg, 1906), pp. 8–10.

⁵ Gertrud Mélamède, "The Meetings at al-ʿAqabah," *Le Monde oriental*, XXVIII (1934), 48–56 and reproductions.

PLATE III



ORIENTAL INSTITUTE No. 14046. TEXT. RECTO

faith and literature of Islam.⁶ Wahn's materials were in turn transmitted through his daughter's son, Idrīs ibn Sinān, part of whose name appears in our document. This latter's son, 'Abd al-Mun'im ibn Idrīs (d. 228/843 at the ripe old age of about a hundred), was also a traditionist. He is credited, like his grandfather Wahn, with a *Kitāb al-Mubtada'*, or "Book of the Beginning" (of creation).⁷ 'Abd al-Mun'im quite naturally claimed to have received his traditions on the authority of his father Idrīs and his maternal grandfather Wahn. His claim, however, was challenged by a number of part-contemporaries and succeeding traditionists, including no less a figure than Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855-56) and Bukhārī (d. 256/870). The main complaint against him is that he, being a posthumous son, could not have received his materials by the orthodox method of direct unbroken personal transmission back to Wahn himself. He is accused of searching the book market for copies of books, including those of his father, from which he extracted the materials for his works and his transmissions.⁸ But, the accusation notwithstanding, 'Abd al-Mun'im did not lack for students and transmitters, well into the succeeding centuries.⁹ It is therefore quite likely that his work, which does not seem to have survived to our day, was

in circulation in at least the third, fourth, and fifth centuries of the Hijrah. Could it be that we have here either the original or a copy of one of the first few folios of 'Abd al-Mun'im's *Kitāb al-Mubtada'*? The answer lies mainly in the lost part of the *isnād* of the first line of recto.

Turning to the rest of the text, we find that its several units, though never wholly identical with any of the numerous parallels available, are nevertheless quite close to third- and fourth-century sources. Sources later than these do present close parallels to some of the lines of the papyrus. But, inasmuch as such late sources could not have been written in the age of Arabic papyrus, they are irrelevant to the problems of dating and authorship, unless they present an identical text together with a pertinent and complete *isnād*.

The several themes touched on in the papyrus include the beginning of creation, the number of sacred books and the time of their revelation, the number of the prophets, the angels aiding the Moslems at the Battle of Badr, and the visits and description of the angel Gabriel. From the nature of one and all of these themes, great divergences and contradictions exist in the numerous traditions concerning them. Moreover, these themes themselves have been explored, in varying degrees, by scholars who were primarily interested in them and to whose work reference will be made as called for. Those currently interested in these themes and students yet to come will, no doubt, find some significant materials in the numerous early passages—some of which have not yet been utilized—that parallel the papyrus text to some degree. They would, of course, be much interested in the completed text of the papyrus. It is therefore to be hoped that the missing part will be discovered in some library or museum and be united with its other half, which will now speak for itself.

⁶ Cf. M. Lidzbarski, *De Propheticiis* (Lipsiae, 1893), pp. 27-54; A. Fischer, "Neue Auszüge aus ad-Dahabi und Ibn an-Naggar," *ZDMG*, XLIV (1890), 438-42.

⁷ Nadīm, *Fihrist* (Leipzig, 1871-72), p. 94; Ibn Qutaibah, *Kitāb al-Ma'arif* (Göttingen, 1850), p. 261; Lidzbarski, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁸ Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Baḍ' wa al-Ta'rikh* ("Le Livre de la création et de l'histoire"), ed. and trans. C. Huart (6 vols.; Paris, 1903—), II, 155; Khaṭīb, XI, 132-34; cf. *ibid.*, p. 399, for a somewhat similar accusation of Abū Faraj al-Isfahānī, author of the *Aghānī*, who frequented the flourishing book market of Baghdad with its well-stocked shops, whence he carried home great quantities of manuscripts.

⁹ E.g., Khaṭīb, I, 55, and XI, 131-34; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* ("Annales"), ed. De Goeje (15 vols.; Lugduni Batavorum, 1879-1901), Index; Ibn 'Abd Rabbīhī, *'Iqd al-Farīd* (3 vols.; Cairo, 1293/1876), III, 351; Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* (Cairo, 1924), I, 7.

TEXT, RECTO

- ١] سنان عن جدى عن وهب بن منبه اليماني
٢] ا بدو الخلق حين انشا به الله . . . فكيف ان
٣] والارض الى ان انزلت التوره على موسى
٤] قال وهب انه قرا اثنين وسبعين كتابا من كتب
٥] الانبيا والكتب التي انزلت من السما على جميع الانبيا مايه كتاب واربع كتب
٦] منها على شيث بن ادم كتاب في خمسين صحيفه وعلى ادريس كتاب في ثلثين
٧] صحيفه وعلى ابراهيم كتاب في عشرين صحيفه وعلى موسى التوره وعلى داود ا
٨] لزبور وعلى عيسى الانجيل وعلى محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم الفرقان .
٩] (صحف ابراهيم)] به في اول ليله من شهر رمضان
١٠] (التوره) من شهر رمضان بعد صحف ابراهيم بتسع مايه عام
١١] (الزبور) من شهر رمضان بعد التوره بخمس مايه [عام]
١٢] (الانجيل) من شهر رمضان بعد التوره بالفدو [؟ عام]
١٣] وانزل الفرقان على محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم لاربع وعشرين ليله خلقت من شهر
١٤] رمضان] خمس وعشرين عاما وكـ . . .
١٥] [في ليله القدر ما يكـ . . .
١٦] محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم
١٧] [فاذا كل ليله القدر من . . .
١٨] [فانزل عليه القران في عشرين . . .
١٩] محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم

TRANSLATION, RECTO

1. [. . .] Sinān on the authority of my grandfather on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih the Yamanite.
2. [. . .] the beginning of creation when Allah caused it to rise. . . .
3. [. . .] and the earth until the Pentateuch was sent down to Moses
4. [. . . Wahb sai]d that he had read seventy-two books of the books of
5. [the prophets. And the books that were sent down from heaven to] all the prophets were a hundred and four books.
6. [Of these to Seth the son of Adam a book of fifty] leaves and to Idrīs a book of thirty
7. [leaves and to Abraham a book of twenty leaves and] to Moses the Pentateuch and to David the
8. [Psalms and to Jesus the Gospel and to Mohammed—may Allah bless him] and give him peace—the Furqān.
9. [. (the leaves of Abraham). . were sent] down on the first night of the month of Ramaḍān.
10. [. (the Pentateuch). .] of the month of Ramaḍān after the leaves of Abraham by nine hundred years.
11. [. (the Psalms). .] of the month of Ramaḍān after the Pentateuch by five hundred [years.]
12. [. (the Gospel). .] of the month of Ramaḍān after the Pentateuch by a thousand and [? years.]
13. [And the Furqān (was sent down) to Mohammed—may Allah bless him and grant] him peace—on the twenty-fourth of [the month of]
14. [Ramaḍān after the.] and five and twenty years. And.
15. [.] in the Night of Power. What.
16. [. Mohammed—may Allah bless him and grant him peace.
17. [.] so that every Night of Power of.
18. [.] and the Qurʾān was sent down to him during twen[ty (years)]
19. [. . . Mohammed—may Allah bless him and grant him pe]ace.

COMMENTS

The attempt to reconstruct most of the text in full was given up when the parallels available failed to yield complete and exact duplicates of the surviving text of the papyrus. However, where possible, the closest parallels have been introduced tentatively into the reconstruction so as to clarify the separate themes and give continuity to some of the text. Judged by the simplest and most obvious construction called for in lines 5-8 and 13 of recto and lines 2-6 of verso, the papyrus and text preserved is about half the size and content of the original folio.

Line 1.—The second *ʿan* of the *isnād* calls for an explanation. As a rule, when ʿAbd al-Munʿim is cited, his authority is traced back to “his (maternal) grandfather, Wahb.” When he himself is the direct narrator, the phrase is “my grandfather Wahb.” It would seem, therefore, that in either case this second *ʿan* is superfluous and may be a scribal error. However, in the face of the incomplete *isnād*, one cannot be sure of this. The “my grandfather” in question may have been ʿAbd al-Munʿim’s paternal grandfather, that is, Sinān, who could have received traditions from his contemporary Wahb. But again it must be pointed out here that Sinān is not met with elsewhere in this capacity. Another alternative is that the immediate transmitter is not ʿAbd al-Munʿim himself but perhaps a son of his.¹⁰ It is obvious that the question must wait on the completed *isnād*. Note the further reference to Wahb as the authority in verso, lines 1 and 18.

Lines 2-3.—For such brief and incidental reference to the creation cf. *Tījān*, page 3, lines 3-4; it is to be remembered that Ibn Hishām’s ultimate authority for the *Tījān* is Wahb ibn Munabbih himself.

Lines 4-8.—The word for “seventy” is

¹⁰ Cf. Lidzbarski, *op. cit.*, p. 48; Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb al-Tījān* (Hyderabad, 1347/1928-29), pp. 1-2.

clearly written and fully pointed. These lines deal with the books sent down to the prophets from Adam to Mohammed and with the number of these books that Wahb is said to have read. The total number of “books” varies from 163, as given on the first page of the *Tījān*, to 104, as found in most of the other sources.¹¹ These latter again differ among themselves as to the distribution among the different prophets, though Idrīs is always credited with 30, as here in line 6. The *Tījān*, Maqdisī, *Fihrist*, and Thaʿlabī draw a distinction between *kitāb*, or book, and *ṣahīfah*, or leaf. This is also done in lines 6-7, which assign Idrīs a “book of thirty leaves.” According to these five, there were, in addition to the four books of lines 7-8, 100 leaves in all sent down to the prophets (names and number of prophets differ). Judging by the spacing of the papyrus, the most likely distribution is that which allots 50 leaves to Seth, 30 to Idrīs, and 20 to Abraham. This is the distribution found in *Maʿārif*, page 27, and curiously confirmed in *Tījān*, page 2; both sources, it is to be noted, trace back, as here, to Wahb. However, in phraseology the text comes closest to that found in Maqdisī, III, 2, which, together with the passage from *Maʿārif*, forms the basis of the reconstruction of these lines.

The number of books said to have been read by Wahb is variously given as 70, 72, 92, and 93. Some of the difference is due to the probable confusion of the Arabic “seventy” with “ninety,” which are readily confused as written but unpointed words. However, Ibn Saʿd, one of the earliest sources, states that Wahb claimed to have read 92 sacred books, of which 72 were in general circulation and accessible

¹¹ E.g., *Maʿārif*, p. 27; Tabarī, I, 153, 349-50; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab* (“Les Prairies d’Or”), ed. C. Barbier de Meynard (9 vols.; Paris, 1861-77), I, 69, 73, 95, 108; Maqdisī, III, 2; *Fihrist*, p. 22; Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* (Cairo, 1314/1896), p. 57; Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. I. Eisenberg (Ludguni Bata-vorum, 1923), pp. 69-71, 80-81.

in places of worship, while the other twenty were known only to a few.¹²

Lines 9-14.—The passage combines two sets of traditions. The first has reference to the belief that the five major sacred scriptures were all sent down from above in the month of Ramaḍān. Though agreed on the month, the specific day of the month assigned to each of the revelations varies considerably.¹³ The second set of traditions deals with the time intervening between these scriptures or the ages of the prophets to whom they were sent.¹⁴ Though traditions in each of these two groups are numerous, a combination of the two sets—such as the papyrus presents—seems to be comparatively rare. So far, but one such combination has come to my attention, though others most probably exist. In view of the differences as to the day of the month and the number of years involved, it is best not to attempt a reconstruction of the papyrus text. However, since parallel passages combining both sets of traditions seem to be rare, the text of the only one available is herewith reproduced for the clarification of the theme.

روى ان صحف ابراهيم نزلت في اول
ليله من شهر رمضان وانزلت التوراه

¹² Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqāt* (9 vols.; Leiden, 1905-40), V, 395-96. For treatment of these themes cf. Lidzbarski, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48; Fischer, *op. cit.*, pp. 439 and 441; Otto Pautz, *Muhammed's Lehre von der Offenbarung* (Leipzig, 1898), pp. 120-23; Fritz Trummeter, *Ibn Saʿid's Geschichte der Vorislamischen Araber* (Stuttgart, 1928), pp. 56-57.

¹³ E.g., Ibn Saʿd, I, 129, I², 93, and II², 3-4; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Masnad* (6 vols.; Cairo, 1313/1895-96), IV, 107; Birūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. Edward Sachau (London, 1879), p. 331; Maqdisi, IV, 140-41; Thaʿlabī, pp. 113-14; Kisāʿī, pp. 68-69; Māwardī, *Aʿlām al-Nubūwah* (Cairo, 1319/1901), p. 161; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, and Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl* (Cairo, 1343/1924), I, 406-7; Suyūṭī, *Itqān* (Cairo, 1318/1900), I, 42; Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Aʿfāl* (8 vols.; Hyderabad, 1312-15/1894-97), I, 279, No. 3756.

¹⁴ E.g., *Maʿārif*, p. 28; Ibn Saʿd, I, 26; Ṭabari, I, 8 ff., 1068-69, 1072; Masʿūdī, IV, 106-8; Hamza al-Isfahānī, *Annalium*, ed. and trans. L. M. E. Gottwaldt (Lipsiae, 1844), I, 11-12, 84-85; Birūnī, pp. 16 ff., 48 ff.; Māwardī, pp. 33-34.

لست ليال خلت من شهر رمضان
بعد صحف ابراهيم بسبعماية سنه
وانزل الزبور لاثني عشر ليله خلت
من شهر رمضان بعد التوراه بخمس
مايه عام وانزل الانجيل لثمانيه عشر
ليله خلت من شهر رمضان بعد
الزبور بستماية سنه وعشرين عاما
وانزل القران لسبع وعشرين ليله
من شهر رمضان بعد الانجيل بست
مايه وعشرين عاما . 15

Lines 14-19.—Here again two closely related and frequently overlapping sets of traditions are involved. The first deals with the *Lailat al-qadr*, or the Night of Power, which is placed in the month of Ramaḍān, though again assigned to different days of that month, with the preference given to some night in the last third of the month. It is also associated with a special revelation of the Qurʾān.¹⁵ The second set, lines 17-19, deals with subsequent revelations during every night of Ramaḍān over a period of years covering most of Mohammed's prophetic career.¹⁷ It is impossible to tell with certainty if *Furqān* and *Qurʾān* are used interchangeably in the papyrus, though the probability is that they are so used.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Muḥāḍarat al-Abrār* (Cairo, 1906), I, 77.

¹⁶ E.g., Ibn Hishām, *Sirah*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1859), p. 155; Ṭabari, I, 1149-54; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Krehl (4 vols.; Leiden, 1862-1908), I, 501-3, and III, 192; Ibn Ḥanbal, V, 324, 369, and VI, 12; Abū Dāʿūd, *Sunan* (2 vols.; Lucknow, 1305/1888), I, 196-99; Birūnī, pp. 330-31; Māwardī, p. 161; *Itqān*, I, 42; *Kanz al-Ummāl*, I, 148. Cf. also Pautz, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-82.

¹⁷ E.g., Bukhārī, I, 475, and II, 310, 410; Ibn Ḥanbal, I, 230-31, 288, 363, 366-67; Ibn Kathīr and Baghawī, I, 406-7.

¹⁸ E.g., Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥat al-Makkiyyah* (4 vols.; Cairo, 1911), III, 94-95.

VERSO, TEXT

- ١ [ذكر وهب عن بن عباس
- ٢ صلى الله عليه وسلم وكانت الانبيا [مايه الف واربعه وعشرين الف نبي الرسل
- ٣ منهم ثلث مايه وخمسه اعشر منهم [خمسه عبرانيون ادم وشيث وادريس ونوح
- ٤ وابراهيم وخمسه من العرب هود وصالح واسماعيل وشعيب ومحمد صلوات الله عليهم
- ٥ واول النبي من بني اسرائيل موسى واخراهم عيسى وقد قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه
- ٦ وسلم لاصحابه يوم بدر انتم على عدّه [اصحاب طالوت ومؤّ عدّه الرسل فمن الانبيا
- ٧ من يسمع الصوت فيهبه ومنهم من يوحي اليه ومنهم من يكلم
- ٨ ياتني كما ياتي الرجل صاحبه في ثياب [ببيض
- ٩ راسه كالحنك وشعره كالمرجان
- ١٠ عليه وساجان من درمنضو]
- ١١ الخضره وصورته التي صور عليها
- ١٢ وقد قال له النبي عليه السلام اشتهى ان اراك في صورتك التي تكون عليها
- ١٣ فسد ما بين الاقنين و[. . . .
- ١٤ من بني اسرائيل غير خمسه اعشر نبيا منهم
- ١٥ وابراهيم واسماعيل واسحاق ويعقوب
- ١٦ [صلى الله عليه وسلم ك
- ١٧ [الله على انبيا الله وعليهم
- ١٨ [ذكر وهب عن بن عباس ان اول من خلق الله القلم
- ١٩ [قلمه برق كتابه نور ينظر الله تعالى فيه كل يوم ثلاثايه نظره
- ٢٠ [حي و]بيت ويندل ويعز ويرفع اتواما

TRANSLATION, VERSO

1. [Wahb mentioned on the authority of I]bn ʿAbbās. [Mohammed]
2. may Allah bless him and grant him peace. And the prophets were [a hundred and twenty-four thousand. The Apostles]
3. among them were three hundred and fifteen. Of these [five were Hebrews—Adam, Seth, Idrīs, Noah,]
4. and Abraham; and five were Arabs—Hūd, Ṣal[i]h, Ishmael, Shuʿaib, and Mo-hammed—may Allah’s blessings be upon them.]
5. The first prophet of the Children of Israel was Moses and the last of them [Jesus. The Apostle of Allah—may Allah bless him]
6. and grant him peace—said to his Companions on the Day of Badr, “You are of the same number as that [of the company of Ṭālūt and as that of the Apostles. Among the prophets]
7. is he who hears the voice and heeds it, he to whom re[velation is made (in a dream or trance), and he who is (directly) spoken to
8. comes to me as a man comes to his friends in gar[m]ents white
9. His head like a mass of curls and his hair as [coral
10. on it, and two headbands of beautiful pearls [. . . .
11. green. And the form on which he was formed [. . . .
12. And the Prophet—peace be upon him—said to him, “I desire to see you in your own form [. . . .”
13. and he filled the space between the two horizons. And [. . . .
14. of the children of Israel except fifteen prophets. Among these [were
15. [and Ab]raham and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jaco[b
16. [Mohammed] may Allah bless him and grant him peace [. . . .
17. [. . . .] Allah on the prophets of Allah and on the[m. . . .
18. Wahb mentioned on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās that the first thing that Allah created was the [pen
19. his pen is lightning and his book is light. Allah most high looks [into it every day three hundred times [. . . .
20. and causes to die and to live, humbles and exalts, and lifts up people [. . . .

COMMENTS

Lines 1 and 18.—Cf. above, page 174.

Lines 2-5.—The source of the tradition and the sequence of the themes of lines 1-10 is the same as that of Maqdisi, III, 1, though again the text is not identical. The reconstruction of lines 2-5 makes use of this passage along with that of *Ma'ārif*, page 27. The number of the prophets varies, growing larger with time.¹⁹ The distinction between "prophet" and "apostle" began early to engage Moslem religious thought.²⁰ The listing of "Hebrew" and "Arab" prophets is frequently met with, though with Ibn Qutaibah the distinction is that of Syrian and Arab.²¹ The number of Israel's prophets differs, though there seems to be general agreement as to Moses and Jesus being the first and the last of these, respectively.²²

Lines 5-6.—These lines have reference to the well-known belief that Gabriel and a host of angels fought on the side of the Moslems at the fateful Battle of Badr. The subject creeps in here because the number of the Moslem warriors was supposed to be the same as that of the apostles and the companions of Ṭālūt.²³ This latter appears in the Qur'ān, now in the role of Saul, now in that of Gideon and his band.²⁴

Lines 6-7.—The reconstruction of this and the preceding follows mainly, but

¹⁹ Cf. Ibn Sa'd, I, 10, 27; Ibn Ḥanbal, V, 265-66; Ṭabari, I, 174; Māwardī, pp. 36-37; Tha'labī, pp. 15-16, 56; *Kanz al-Ummāl*, VI, 120-21; A. J. Wensinck, "Muhammed und die Propheten," *Acta orientalia*, II (1924), 169-70.

²⁰ See preceding note and cf. Wensinck, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-75; Pautz, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 220-30.

²¹ See n. 19 above; *Ma'ārif*, p. 27.

²² E.g., Ṭabari, I, 720; Maqdisi, III, 124; Māwardī, p. 34.

²³ Ibn Sa'd, II, 9, 12-13; Ṭabari, III, 132; *Kanz al-Ummāl*, V, 264-74, esp. No. 5340.

²⁴ Qur'ān (Cairo, 1347/1928), Sūrah 2:247-49, and Bell's translation (2 vols.; Edinburgh, 1937 and 1939), I, 36-37.

not wholly, the text found in Maqdisi, III, 1-2. These three methods of communication with the world above are generally accepted in Islam.²⁵ Mohammed, it would seem, experienced all three. The theme is well explored by the numerous biographers of Mohammed, Eastern and Western.

Lines 7-11.—Inasmuch as the sequence of themes is still that found in Maqdisi, III, 18, the temptation is to continue to use this source for the reconstruction of the text. But Maqdisi's text so far, close as it is, nevertheless is different from that of the papyrus. Furthermore, Maqdisi himself cuts this passage short as though losing patience with the fantastic description of Gabriel. It is, therefore, best to reproduce the passage here for clarification of theme and for possible comparisons rather than to venture on a doubtful reconstruction.

وفى الحديث ان جبريل ليأتين كما
ياتى الرجل صاحبه فى ثياب بيض
مكفوف باللؤلؤ واليواقيت راسه
كالحباك وشعره كالمرجان ولونه
كالتلج جناحاه اخضران ورجلاه
مغموستان فى الخضره وكيت وكيت

It is in the tradition that (Mohammed said) Gabriel comes to me, as a man comes to his friend, dressed in white garments, bordered with pearls and various (other) gems. His head is as a mass of curls, his hair is as coral and his colour as that of snow. His two wings are green and his feet are dipped in green and so on and so on.

²⁵ E.g., *Kanz al-Ummāl*, VI, 115, No. 1780, and 301, No. 5152. Note that the first tradition derives from Ibn 'Abbās, as does the papyrus text.

For the *hubuk* of the passage the papyrus has *hibāk*. The first is associated with both "head" and "hair" and seems to mean either wavy hair or twisted curls hanging down one's back. It is used seemingly in both these senses in connection with the description of the Dijjāl, or false prophet, Musailimah al-Kadhdhāb.²⁶ The hair is sometimes compared to coral and sometimes to saffron.²⁷

The reading of the second word—entirely unpointed—of line 10 offers some difficulties. An attempt to read it as two words led nowhere. If the first letter is read as *sīn* only, then the most likely reading is the dual *sājān*, to mean "two headbands." Yet it looks as though what precedes the first *alif* can be read as two letters—a *sīn* or *shīn* preceded by one of the single-toothed letters, *bā*, *tā*, *thā*, *nūn*, or *yā*. Playing around with this combination, the only reading that seems to be at all possible is *سساخان*. This may be linked to *taskhan*, or *taskhān*, itself arabicized from the Persian *tashkan*, a special headdress or hood used by Moslem Persian scholars and theologians as it was formerly used by the priests of the fire-worshippers, the *Muwābadhah*. The difficulty with this reading is that the dictionaries do not present us with this form of the word. The plural, *tasākhhān*, is used sometimes for shoes, but this is supposed to be an error made by those who did not know the Persian source of the word.²⁸

²⁶ Ibn Ḥanbal, IV, 20, and V, 372; cf. also Butrus Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* (2 vols.; Beirut, 1286/1870), I, 336.

²⁷ E.g., D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale* (Paris, 1776), p. 341; 'Abd al-Rahīm ibn Aḥmad, *Daqā'iq al-Akhhbār* (Cairo, 1343/1924), p. 5; Hammer-Purgstall, "Geisteslehre der Moslimen," in *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, Phil.-Hist. Classe*, III (1852), 193.

²⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* (4 vols.; Cairo, 1311/1893-94), I, 114-15; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisan al-ʿArab* (20 vols.; Būlāq, 1300-1308/1882-1911), XVII, 69; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs* (10 vols.; Cairo, 1307-8/1888-90), IX, 233; Dozy, *Noms des vêtements* (Amsterdam, 1845), pp. 200, 378-79.

The last word of line 10 contains the letter *ḍād* and not *zā*; hence the reconstruction of the word as *mandūr* over against the more frequently met with *manẓūm*, that is, strung (pearls).

The reference to Gabriel's green feet is met with in the sources, where they are compared to green emerald.²⁹ It is, of course, impossible to tell if the word "green" of line 11 is to be identified with the word "green" in the passage from Maqdisī.

Gabriel is said to have been in the habit of visiting Mohammed in human form, as other angels are said to visit prophets.³⁰ He generally assumed for the purpose the appearance of Dihyah ibn Khalifah the Kalbite.³¹ Presumably, it was on these occasions that he came dressed in white, that color being then,³² as now, much in favor with Moslem men. However, neither the papyrus text nor the passage quoted are concerned with Gabriel's human form. They purport, instead, to describe his angelic form—a theme on which the traditions give numerous vents to the imagination. Colors, jewels, and several garments come in for a share of attention in addition to details of his own angelic form from head to foot, with the varying number of his wings figuring quite prominently. The description grows in detail and splendor with time and is made use of in a mystical allegorical sense.³³

²⁹ E.g., Ibn Sa'd, III¹, 6; *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, VI, 115, No. 1782.

³⁰ Magdasī, I, 170.

³¹ E.g., Ibn Sa'd, II¹, 17, IV, 184, and VIII, 46; Ibn Ḥanbal, I, 27, 51-52 and IV, 164; Bukhārī, II, 313, 412; Maqdisī, I, 173; *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, VI, 115, No. 1783.

³² E.g., Ibn Sa'd, I², 147-51; Ibn Ḥanbal, I, 363.

³³ E.g., Ibn Ḥanbal, I, 395, 398, 407, 412, 460, and VI, 120; Ibn Sa'd, I¹, 113, 129, 143; Maqdisī, I, 173, and IV, 161; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (2 vols.; Cairo, 1319/1901), I, 88-89, 97-98; Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (13 vols.; Cairo, 1931-34), XII, 172; Mirkhond, *Rauzat-us-safa* ("Garden of Purity"), trans. Rehatsek (London, 1891-94), II¹, 212; *Dabistān*, trans. David Shea and

Lines 11-13.—These lines have reference to the only two occasions on which Mohammed is said to have seen Gabriel in his true form—at al-Ḥirā³ and during the *Mirāj*, or the Night of Ascent into heaven.³⁴ As the papyrus text and its literary variants state, Mohammed asked specifically for this privilege.³⁵

Anthony Troyer (Washington and London, 1901), pp. 398-99 (which description is credited to Ibn Sīnā); D'Herbelot, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-41; Asin Palacios, *La Espiritualidad de Algazel y su Sentido Cristiano* (4 vols.; Madrid-Granada, 1934-40), III, 240-41.

³⁴ Ibn Sa'd, I, 113, 143; Ibn Hishām, pp. 152-53; Ṭabarī, I, 1150; Ibn Ḥanbal, I, 407, and VI, 236, 241; Bukhārī, II, 313, and III, 340; Pautz, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43, 229; B. Schrieke, "Die Himmelsreise Muhammeds," *Der Islam*, VI (1915-16), 1-30; Josef Horowitz, "Muhammed's Himmelfahrt," *Der Islam*, IX (1918), 159-83.

³⁵ Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, I, 322, 407; Maqdisī, II, 11, and III, 173; Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Muḥāḍarat*, II, 166; Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XII, 170.

Lines 13-17.—These lines would seem to be dealing with the prophets of Israel and their number.³⁶

Lines 18-20.—The "pen" that was the first thing created was, of course, not conceived as an ordinary instrument of writing but as "light" and the means of spiritual and intellectual illumination.³⁷ Though a text identical with that of the papyrus is yet to be discovered, a number of passages are met with that include close parallels to parts of these lines.³⁸

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³⁶ Cf. Maqdisī, III, 1; Māwardī, pp. 27-32, 91; Ibn Kathīr, I, 341.

³⁷ E.g., Sūrah 96:4-5; M. Horten, "Das Buch der Ringsteine Fārābī's," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, XVIII (1904-5), 287; see also following note.

³⁸ E.g., Ṭabarī, I, 29-38; Maqdisī, I, 161, 164; Ṭhalabī, pp. 10 and 114; Kīsāʿī, p. 6; *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, III, 211-12.