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Research Article

The Reflection of King David's Character in Early Islamic Tradition

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Abstract. This article deals with the figure of the prophet David in the ancient Islamic tradition, according to the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith literature, and the profits tales. In the Holy Qur'an, he is described with a wide variety of issues as a fighter with unique features to whom God awarded gifts. Whereas in the Hadith literature, he is perceived as a model for imitation regarding the prayers and the fast. However, in the profits tales, he is mostly seen as David with Batsheva. According to Islam, such deeds have some folkloric varieties for example, Arie's crisis and his marriage are inappropriate for profits and consequently Islam doesn't accept the Biblical story and it accuses Jews and Christians of the disruption of Ketuvim.

Keywords: Prophet David, The Ancient, Islamic Tradition

INTRODUCTION

The character of David is reflected in the verses of the Qur'an and in its commentaries, in oral traditions (ḥadīth), and in the *Stories of the Prophets* (*Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*) literature from the early Islamic period. The Hebrew reader will encounter a figure who is in many ways similar to the biblical King David known from the Bible and other Jewish sources, but who also differs in various aspects. In the Qur'an—like many other biblical figures mentioned therein—he is first and foremost a prophet, although he is also recognized as a king, as explicitly stated in two verses (2:251; 38:26): "وَأَتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ" ("God gave him kingship and wisdom"); "إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ" ("Indeed, We have made you a vicegerent on Earth").

The period preceding David the Prophet is described in the Qur'an as a time of religious, spiritual, and even political hardship for the Children of Israel, up until the struggle between Ṭālūt—namely King Saul—and Jālūt, the Philistine king, that is, Goliath. It is told that David aided Ṭālūt and, by God's will, slew Jālūt. After the victory over the Philistines, God gave him "kingship and wisdom, and taught him what He willed" (2:251). Similar traditions (*akhbār*, reports) appear in Qur'anic exegesis. The most famous of these is transmitted by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923),¹ one of the greatest classical commentators, quoting Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 732), who was known for traditions concerning the history of the People of Israel in ancient times (*Isrā'iliyyāt*). The Hebrew reader will undoubtedly recognize a strong resemblance between this tradition and what is told in the Book of Samuel.

It is said that Jālūt demanded of King Ṭālūt that the two of them engage in a duel without involving their armies, and the victor would become king. Ṭālūt sent word to his soldiers that he would give his daughter in marriage to whoever would fight and defeat Jālūt. David came to his brothers in the camp and recounted the story to them. The brothers refused to fight Goliath, saying: "Who could defeat Jālūt, who is among the giant tyrants native to Jericho (*al-Jabbārūn*)². When David saw they did not respond to the king's call, he said: "I will fight him." He went to the king and informed him of his intention to battle Jālūt. The king was astonished that such a young and inexperienced man had volunteered. David took up a sling and a stone and went out to the duel. He placed the stone in the sling and shot it at the head of Jālūt, who fell from his horse. David seized his sword and cut off his head. He later married the king's daughter. The Children of Israel praised David's deed, but this aroused Ṭālūt's fear of losing his kingdom. He asked his son to kill David, but the son refused and even informed his sister, David's wife, of their father's plot. David fled to the mountains and remained there until Ṭālūt was killed. Only then did David return and receive the kingship.³

¹ Ṭabarī, 1968, vol. B, pp. 625–632

² In the classical Islamic sources, Jericho was considered the city of giants.

³ According to the Muslim historian al-Mas'ūdī (d. 936), Ṭālūt died on his royal bed, in contradiction to what is written in the Bible, which states that he was killed in battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa; al-Mas'ūdī 1965, vol. 1, pp. 67–69; al-Tha'labī (d. 1035), pp. 305–307; al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144), vol. 1, p. 296; al-Qurtubī (d. 1272) 1967, vol. 3, pp. 256–258; Ibn Kathīr (d. 1372), vol. 1, p. 303; Najjār 1965, p. 306; de Vaux 1936; Zin 2001, pp. 521–528.

Many modern scholars, both Muslim and Western, have taken an interest in the study of the *Stories of the Prophets* (*Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*) and the Messengers of God (*al-Rusul*) in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, as reflected in the sacred scriptures of these religions. Indeed, in the Muslim tradition (Qur'an and ḥadīth), the stories about the prophet David are not numerous. One of the first scholars to study the prophet stories including David in the Qur'an was A. Geiger, followed by many others who expressed differing views on the matter.⁴ Until the early twentieth century, Muslim scholars regarded this literary genre as a popular and unofficial creation, in contrast to the elevated canonical literature. However, some reject the distinction between canonical and non-canonical literature. Orientalists in the West tend to attribute the prophet stories in Qur'anic interpretation to the influence of stories from the Hebrew Bible. It does appear that the Islamic prophet stories derive from various sources: the Qur'an, the ḥadīth literature, oral traditions, and of course, from Jewish and Christian sources.

The gifts of God and His grace to the Prophet David according to the Qur'an
David (Dāwūd) is mentioned sixteen times in the Qur'an⁵ (al-Qur'ān) in a variety of contexts, for example, the gifts God (Allāh) bestowed upon him, his wondrous deeds and elevated traits, and various events that actually function as "stories of the prophets" (*qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) within the Qur'an itself. The first matter mentioned in the Qur'an is David's wrestling with Goliath (Jālūt), the killing of Goliath in battle, and the receipt of kingship and wisdom from God. (2:249-251):⁶

"فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا اللَّهِ كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ. وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ. فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ"

(When Tālūt led the troops he said: "God will test you by a river, and whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is of me except one who scoops a handful with his hand." They drank, except for a few. When he and those who believed with him passed it, they said, "We have no strength today against Goliath and his troops." But those who thought that they would meet God said: "How many small groups have overcome larger ones by God's leave! God is with the

⁴ See Geiger 1902, pp. 180-181; Weil 1845; Tottoli 2002; Speyer 1961; Sadan 1986; Schwarzbaum 1952; Rubin 1999; Norris 1983; Milstein et al. 1999; Khoury 1972; 1978; Kister 1972; Katz 1954..

⁵ Such as Surah 2:251, 4:163, and 5:78 appear in the context

⁶ "The Hebrew translation is based on Rubin (2005, p. 37), and we have used this translation throughout the article. See also Ibn Kathir (2001, pp. 363-364). The story in the Qur'an differs from al-Tabari's version."

steadfast." When they advanced to face Goliath and his forces, they prayed: "Our Lord, pour patience upon us, make firm our steps, and grant us victory over the disbelieving people." They defeated them by God's leave, David slew Goliath, and God gave him the kingdom and wisdom, and taught him what He willed.)

In another verse it is related that God gave to Muhammad revelation in prophecy just as He had given to the "People of the Book" (the Jews) and as He gave to David the Book of Psalms *Zabūr* (4:163)

"إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا"

("We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him; We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes (descendants), Jesus, Ja'qūb, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon and We gave to David the Psalms.")

In another context it is said that God favored some prophets over others and gave the Psalms to David:

"وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا"

("And We have certainly preferred some prophets over others, and We gave to David the Psalms.") (55:17)⁷

According to Muslim tradition, the Book of Psalms (comprising one hundred and fifty *suras*) is a written book called the "*Zabūr*" because it is stable, reliable, and includes words of wisdom, exhortation, and praise of God.⁸ The name is understood based on an ancient Semitic root related to the Hebrew root *z-m-r*, akin to the word *mizmor*.⁹ In Arabic, especially among Christians, the book is called *Mazāmīr* (Psalms). In relatively late periods there appear "external" psalms akin to the *Zabūr*, i.e. psalms attributed to David, in forms of psalmic chapters that have undergone adaptation, and in some of them a distinctly Muslim character is prominent. Sometimes texts of this type, purporting to be "Torah" or texts purporting to be "Psalms," resemble one another.¹⁰

As mentioned above, God also bestowed upon the Prophet David kingship, prophecy, and knowledge, as indicated in two Qur'anic verses also mentioning Solomon:

"وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا" ("And to each We gave judgment and knowledge.") (78:21–79).

"وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا" ("And We granted David and Solomon knowledge.") (15:27–16)

⁷ "The Psalms are also mentioned in the Qur'an (105/21; translation, p. 268): وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ (Indeed, We have written in the Psalms after the reminder that My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.) According to al-Tabarī ([1986] VI, p. 28), the Arabs called the Psalms "*Zābūr*" so that other peoples would distinguish between David's book and other heavenly books. According to some Qur'anic commentators, the verse refers to the Prophet Muhammad; see Bichawi (N. 1388) 1988, I, p. 574; Qurṭubī 1952/3, VI, p. 17; al-Ṭabarī 1986/7, VI, p. 27."

⁸ "Mas'udī 1965, I, p. 69."

⁹ Rubin 2005, pp. 87, 230.

¹⁰ See Shikhu 1910; Sadan 1986, pp. 396–397.

According to the Qur'an, one may enumerate at least five things that may be included in the concept of "knowledge":

a. The craft of making the armor that the warriors wear:

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِنْ بَأْسِكُمْ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ
("And We taught him the art of making armor for you so that it may protect you from your fighting will you then be grateful?") (80:21)

b. To judge justly under God's commandments:

يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ
("O David, indeed We have made you a vicegerent on earth, so judge among the people with truth.") (26:38)

c. Knowledge in the sense of wisdom, as stated above.

d. The talent to distinguish between truth and falsehood:

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصَّلَ الْخِطَابِ
("We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and decisive speech.") (17:38).¹¹

Some interpret that David judged by means of a "chain" (silsila) from heaven, mentioned in Arabic *praise-literature of the Holy Land* in the Mamlūk and Ottoman periods. Thus an author 'Allum (13th century) wrote that when David wished to adjudicate between two Israelites, he would ask God to confirm his rule and show him which party spoke truth and which falsehood. God would send down a chain of light from heaven, suspended between heaven and earth. At the time of judgment, David would bring the two litigants. The truthful one would reach it, the liar could not, for it rose to heaven.¹²

e. Knowledge of the language of birds (also Solomon):

"وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
. وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُودَ وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلِّمْنَا مَنطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأُوتِينَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ هَذَا
لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ"

("We granted David and Solomon knowledge, and they said, 'Praise be to God who has preferred us over many of His believing servants.' Solomon inherited David and said, 'O people, we have been taught the speech of birds, and we have been given of all things. Indeed this is the clear favor.'") (15:27–16)

¹¹ See Ibn Ḥazm 1996, I, p. 180; Qurṭubī 1952/3, XV, p. 162; Ṭabarī, XXIII, p. 139. Cf. Ḥasson 2001; Magen 2008.

¹² Fadā'il Bayt al-Maqdis, pp. 61a–b; compare al-Maqdisī (d. 1363) 1994, p. 180, under the name Ka'b al-Aḥbār, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Mālik ibn Dīnār, and others who were familiar with the Isrā'īliyyāt traditions of Jewish origin which aimed to supplement and explain the Qur'ānic hints on biblical topics. Regarding the chain, see Ibn al-Murajja' (11th century) 1995, section 62, who wrote that a person from the Children of Israel who sinned would go to this place and pray to God until forgiveness was granted. Compare al-Wāsiṭī (11th century) 1979, pp. 74–75; al-Wāsiṭī 2001, p. 72; Yāqūt (d. 1229), vol. 5, p. 128. Rozen-Ayalon (1979) cites a testimony from a manuscript in the Oxford Library and from the above-mentioned work of al-Wāsiṭī, that the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (d. 705) was the one who built the Dome of the Chain at the end of the seventh century.

It should be noted that in Jewish and Islamic tradition knowledge of the language of animals is primarily attributed to Solomon.¹³

It is further said in the Qur'an that God granted David Faḍl (a virtue) or *faḍā'il* (virtues) in excess relative to other prophets for example, his pleasant voice by which he praised and glorified God. God also commanded the mountains and birds to extol His deeds with David:

وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

(“And We subjected to David the mountains, so that they might glorify, and the birds and We were doers.”) (79:21).¹⁴

Another gift given to David was the ability to soften iron:

وَاللَّنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ

(“And We made the iron soft for him.”)

And in the next verse God explains the purpose:

أَنْ أَعْمَلَ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرَ فِي السَّرْدِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ
 (“That you make full coats [of armor] and measure the links, and work righteousness.

Indeed, I am Acquainted with what you do.”) (10:34–11)

Regarding the strength of his faith:

وَادْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

(“And mention Our servant David, the possessor of strength; indeed he was one repeatedly turning [to God].”) (17:38).

David in Hadith Literature

Many traditions (ḥadīths) in Islamic oral literature recount the story of David (Dāwūd) in relation to the Psalms (Zabūr), his melodious voice, his devotion to God, and his exemplary status among the prophets.

For example,¹⁵ When the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him passed by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Qays, known as Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī (a Companion of the Prophet, d. 665), while he was reciting the Qur'an during the night, and he had a

¹³ See Ṭabarī, 19, pp. 140–141; Qurṭubī 1952/3, 13, p. 164 (David and Solomon knew the thoughts of birds based on hearing their voices); Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 1071) 1967/8, 18, p. 174; Ibn Ḥazm, 1, p. 223.

¹⁴ compare: “We bestowed blessing upon David. ‘O mountains, sing with him the praises of God, and you too, birds’” (وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ) (34:10); and in Surah 38, verses 18–19, it is stated: “We subjected the mountains to his will; they sang the praises of God in the evening and at dawn, and also the birds, assembled all turned to Him.” (إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ . وَالطَّيْرُ مَحْشُورَةٌ كُلٌّ) (38:18–19; See al-Qurṭubī (1952/3, XV, p. 265; Ibn Qutaybah (d. 889) 1972, I, p. 138; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, XXII, p. 331; Ibn Kathīr, III, p. 188; al-Ṭabarī, XV, p. 8.

¹⁵ Bukhārī (d. 870) 1957, vol. 3, p. 1257; Bukhārī 1957–a, p. 280; Muslim (d. 875), vol. 1, p. 546; Dārimī (d. 869) 1486/7, vol. 1, p. 416; Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), vol. 2, p. 450; Shaybānī (d. 900), 1991, vol. 3, p. 469 (mentions another person with a beautiful voice in Qur'an recitation – Usayd b. al-Ḥudayr, one of the Prophet's companions, d. 641); Nasā'ī (d. 915) 1986, vol. 2, p. 180; cf. Ibn Kathīr, vol. 3, p. 188; Qurṭubī 1952/3, vol. 14, p. 265.

beautiful voice, the Prophet stood and listened to his recitation. He then said that he had been given one of the Psalms of the family of David.

Another tradition, which appears in various versions, refers to David's extended prayers and his fasting:¹⁶ "The most beloved fast to God is the fast of David, and the most beloved prayer to God is the prayer of David. He would sleep for half the night, pray for one third, and sleep for one sixth; and he would fast every other day."

Another tradition attributed to Abū al-Dardā' (d. 652), one of the Prophet's companions, states: "Whenever the name of David ('alayhi as-salām) was mentioned, the Messenger of God used to say: 'There was no one among the worshipers of God like him.'"¹⁷

According to a report transmitted from Ibn 'Abbās (d. 687), the Prophet's cousin, the Prophet was commanded to learn from David and Solomon. The transmitter Mujāhid (a noted traditions, d. 722) said:

"I asked Ibn 'Abbās: Do you prostrate during Sūrat Ṣād?" "فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ" "He sought the forgiveness of his Lord, and fell down prostrate and repented" – Qur'ān 38:24). Then Ibn 'Abbās read from the Qur'ān: "وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ" "And among his descendants were David and Solomon" and continued reading until he reached: "فَمَتَّاهُمْ أَقْتَابَهُ" "So follow their guidance" (Qur'ān 6:90). Then Ibn 'Abbās said: "Your Prophet was commanded to take them as examples."¹⁸

David also holds a special status among Sufi circles (Islamic mystical orders). In *Kashf al-Mahjūb* ("The Unveiling of the Veiled") by al-Hujwīrī (d. 1072), one of the earliest Sufi texts, it is said that animals would leave their resting places and water would stop flowing in streams in order to listen to David's voice.¹⁹

Another interesting story, reminiscent of the famous "Judgment of Solomon" (1 Kings 3), also appears in Islamic tradition, describing a legal decision made by Solomon in assistance to his father David:²⁰

There were two women, each of whom had a child. A wolf came and took one of the children. The women argued about which one had lost her child, each claiming the other's child had been taken. They appeared before David, who ruled in favor of the elder woman. Then they went to Solomon, who said: 'Bring me a knife, and I will cut the boy in half.' The younger woman cried out: 'Do not do that, may God have mercy on you! The boy belongs to the older woman.' At that, Solomon ruled in favor of the younger woman. We do not know why David ruled in favor of the elder one."

¹⁶ Muslim, vol. 2, p. 816; Bukhārī 1957, vol. 1, p. 380; Haythamī (d. 1405) 1982, vol. 3, p. 193

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 8, p. 206.

¹⁸ See Qur'ān 6/84–90; translation, pp. 113–114; Bukhārī 1957, vol. 3, p. 1257; Ḥanafī, vol. 1, p. 84.

¹⁹ Ghaznawī 1975, pp. 402–403.

²⁰ Bukhārī 1957, vol. 3, p. 2485; Asfarā'īnī (d. 928) 1998, vol. 4, p. 172.

David in the "Stories of the Prophets" *Qışaş al-'anbiyā'*

In this literature, there is a variety of stories about David. One of them, with a folkloric character, revolves around the judgment of the prophet David between two men a landowner (صاحب الحرث) and a shepherd (صاحب الغنم):²¹

The flock entered at night without a shepherd into a planted field or vineyard and damaged what was in it. The owner of the field went to King David and told him his story. The king ruled in his favor. There was no difference between the price of the sheep and the crop that was destroyed. The disputants then went to Solomon, who was young. They asked him about David's judgment and told him their story. Solomon said: There is a fitting solution for both of you. David called Solomon and asked him: What is this solution? Solomon said: The sheep will belong to the landowner so that he may benefit from the offspring and wool, and the shepherd will repair the field, after which each will receive his property back. David agreed to Solomon's ruling.

Another story of the "Isra'iliyyat" type is a Muslim version of the biblical story (2 Samuel 11) about Uriah, whose death David orchestrated in battle so that he could marry his wife Bathsheba. Some interpreters object to the story for two reasons: (a) the act is not befitting a prophet; (b) according to Islam, prophets are infallible²²(معصومون عن الخطأ). The story is as follows:²³

When the prophet David was in the prayer niche²⁴(محراب), Satan came and imagined himself as a golden dove. David wanted to catch it, but it flew away, so he sent someone to hunt it. Then he saw a woman bathing on the roof. The woman pleased David, but when she saw David, she covered her body with her hair. He asked about her and was told she was the wife of Uriah (أوريا) son of Hanan. Then David ordered Uriah to fight against a stronger man. Uriah was killed, and David took his widow as his wife.

²¹ Tha'labi, 326-327, The story is an expansion of what is said in the Quran (78:21-79; translation, p. 266) "وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفِثَتْ فِيهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شَاهِدِينَ فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعَلَمٌ" And [mention] David and Solomon, when they judged concerning the field, when the sheep of the people had strayed therein, and We were witnesses to their judgment. And We gave understanding to Solomon, and to each [of them] We gave judgment and knowledge." (Regarding David and Solomon, they judged the case of the field. The people's sheep had strayed into it, and We were witnesses to their judgment. We gave Solomon understanding, and to both of them We gave wisdom, judgment, and knowledge.). Compare: Tabari, 17, p. 50; Bukhari 1957, VI, p. 2619; Ibn Kathir, III, p. 157; Bayhaqi (d. 1065) 1994, VIII, p. 842; Tabari 1986/7 I, p. 287; zaheri (d. 1063), VIII, p. 146. Shafi'e 1979/80, Part B, p. 122.

²² Masa'ūdī, vol. 1, pp. 69-70; Ibn Hāzīm 1983, pp. 18-19; Rāzī (d. 1209), pp. 48-55 (his second reasoning is different: causing the death of Uriah is an even graver act than marrying the wife of the slain man). Ḥanbalī (1995, vol. 1, p. 111) cites traditions according to which David asked God for forgiveness, and that God only granted it after thirty years. However, these are *Isra'iliyyāt* traditions, whose reliability is doubtful in Islam.

²³ Tha'labī, pp. 318-319; cf. Ibn Kathīr, vol. 4, p. 31; Qurṭubī 1967, vol. 15, p. 166; Ḥanbalī (d. 1521) 1995, vol. 1, pp. 107-113.

²⁴ a small temple or oratory, as some interpret it, but rather not the Tower of David — as suggested by some, such as Mas'ūdī 1965, vol. 1, pp. 106-112. Certain traditions attribute it to the righteous (*awliyā'*) in general, even though David is known as a warrior in both Islam and Judaism. According to Islam, David prayed in several locations; see El'ad 1995, pp. 131-137.

This story is not found in the Quran but in its exegesis (21:26–38)²⁵

Two men ²⁶ entered David's prayer niche (محراب) to be judged between them: "He was frightened by them. They said, 'Fear not, we are two litigants; one of us wronged the other. Judge between us with justice and do not distort the judgment, and guide us to the right path. Here is this brother of mine; he has ninety-nine sheep, and I have but one sheep. He said to me, 'Entrust it to me,' and he has overpowered me in speech.' David said, 'Indeed, he has wronged you in asking to add your sheep to his flock.' Partners often wrong each other, but not the believers and those who do good. Yet they are few.' At last, David understood that they only sought to test him. He asked his Lord for forgiveness, fell on his face, and repented.²⁷ We forgave him. Indeed, his nearness to Us is assured, and he will return to Us in goodness."

Some authors of the "Stories of the Prophets" and Quranic commentators mention that the two brothers, or two angels, claimed that David sinned and that their intention was actually regarding the wife of Uriah, whom David married. As proof, they note that Arabs call a woman a sheep (يقال للمرأة نعجة وأيضا شاة). Hence, the verse implies that after David married ninety-nine women, he added the wife of Uriah. Another David is mentioned in connection with Shabbat observance:²⁸

In the city of Ayla (أيلة, probably Eilat) on the shore of the Red Sea, a tribe from the Israelite lineage lived during David's time. On the Sabbath day, fish would approach the shore, but no one dared to fish for them out of reverence for the Sabbath. However, greed caused some people, who did not keep the Sabbath commandment, to fish the fish. They dug shallow canals so the fish would enter them, so that on Sunday they could take them.²⁹ Eventually, the city was divided between the believers and those who desecrated the Sabbath, whom God cursed at David's request. It is said about the Jews of the place: had they observed the Sabbath, the fish would have come; if not, they would not.

قصة أصحاب السبت This tradition is linked to the story mentioned in the Quran
(The Story of the Shabbat-Breakers) (78:5):
لُعِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى لِسَانِ دَاوُدَ وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا
يَعْتَدُونَ

"Cursed were those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary, because they disobeyed and were habitually transgressing."

²⁵ Ṭabarī, vol. 23, p. 147; Qurṭubī 1967, vol. 19, p. 170; Bayhaqī 1994, vol. 1, p. 71; 'Āmidī (d. 1216) 1983/4, vol. 2, p. 243; Ṭabarī 1986/7, vol. 1, p. 284; Tha'labī, p. 318; Qaḍā'ī (d. 1035) 1998, no. 37.

²⁶ In Qur'anic exegesis, there is a scholarly dispute regarding whether the figures in question were two brothers or two angels who appeared in the guise of human beings.

²⁷ Cf. Ṭabarī (1986/7), vol. 23, p. 148; Suyūṭī (d. 1505) and Maḥallī (d. 1459), p. 600.

²⁸ Tha'labī, pp. 317–319; Baydawi, vol. 2, p. 310.

²⁹ According to the version of Tha'labī (pp. 324–325), they would prepare the nets on Friday (yawm al-jum'a) and pull them out of the water on Sunday (yawm al-aḥad).

According to another verse (7:166), when their evil deeds persisted, they were transformed into despised apes: "So when they ³⁰ فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَنْ مَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ" *deviated from what they were forbidden, We said to them, 'Be apes, despised.'*"

In another story, David fears that someone praises and glorifies God better than he does:³¹

Khalid ibn Makhdugh Abu Ruh reported: I heard Anas ibn M ālik³² say that David, the prophet of God, had the impression in his heart that there was one whom his Creator taught to praise better than David. When he sat in his sanctuary near the spring, an angel descended and said to him: "O David, understand what the frog says when it utters its sounds." So he listened, and suddenly the frog praised God with a praise that David had never praised God with before. The angel said to him: "What do you think? Did you understand what it said?" David asked: "What did it say?" The angel replied: "It said: 'Praise be to God and thanks to You, the ultimate knowledge is Yours, O God.'" David said: "I swear by the One who made me a prophet that I do not praise Him as was said."

The Death of David

The following story recalls the legend of David in Jewish tradition (Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 19), according to which David's seventy years of life were granted to him by Adam, who was supposed to live a thousand years:³³

When God created Adam, He showed him his descendants. Upon seeing one man who pleased him, Adam asked God, "Who is this?" God replied, "This is one of your descendants named David." Adam then inquired how many years of life were allotted to him. God answered that David would live sixty years. Adam then requested from God to add forty years to David's life at the expense of his own lifespan. When Adam's time came, the Angel of Death appeared to him. Adam asked, "Are there not forty years left of my life?" The angel replied, "Did you not give them to your son David?" Adam denied this, but ultimately accepted the total of one thousand years and granted David one hundred years.

CONCLUSION

David in Islamic tradition is portrayed as a prophet and king, a warrior endowed with special qualities. Biblical stories were incorporated into the Qur'an and its exegesis, likely as a result of interaction between Muslims and Jews or Christians who converted to Islam. Islamic scholars regard the Qur'an as a reliable text; however,

³⁰ Cf. (2:65): وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدُوا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ: ("Well you knew those among you who transgressed on the Sabbath, so We said to them: 'Be apes, despised.'")

See also: Ṭabarī (1986/7), vol. 1, pp. 329–335; Ibn Kathīr, vol. 1, p. 107; Qurṭubī (1967), vol. 1, p. 443.

This story is not mentioned in Jewish sources (Ginzberg 1968, pp. 23–25).

³¹ Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 894), 1982, pp. 25–26.

³² From among the companions (aṣḥāb) of the Prophet Muḥammad and his servant (khādim).

³³ Aḥādīth 1982, p. 100; Ibn Kathīr, p. 373; Kasā'ī (his identity and date are unknown, 11th century or earlier) 1985, p. 74. According to Islamic tradition, David lived seventy years, of which he ruled for forty years and was buried either in the Church of Zion in southern Jerusalem or in the Kidron Valley east of the city (Ḥanbalī 1995, vol. 1, p. 116).

some distinguish the biblical traditions included in Qur'anic exegesis into three categories: authentic, false, and of doubtful authenticity.³⁴ For example, the story of Uriah the Hittite and David's marriage to Bathsheba, as well as the tale of the lamb and David's ninety-nine wives, are rejected because, according to Islam, such acts are incompatible with the status of a prophet. It is well known that Islam does not accept the biblical text as authoritative and possesses its own texts and traditions, even accusing Jews and Christians of corrupting the scriptures. Although some Islamic scholars, such as Ṭabarī and Qurṭubī, reference biblical materials, they also present versions that differ significantly.³⁵

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³⁴ Bahjat 1998, pp. 310–319; Kister 1972.

³⁵ In recent years, dozens of books by Muslim authors on the stories of the prophets have been published, often relying on one another. Most of these do not address the issue of exceptional or non-accepted stories in Islam concerning the Prophet David (Dāwūd) and, in fact, contain no new material. Therefore, in our research, we have relied solely on the classical sources.

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