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Qur'an Journal #4

In S.2:243-245, Allah commanded his followers to fight on his behalf. In S.2:245, Allah likened dying for his cause to a “beautiful loan,” which he will repay in Heaven. In S.2:246-251, Allah relayed the story of Saul to demonstrate that he will support one in just battle. In the story of Saul, he is anointed as king, but his followers are unfaithful. His army was told not to drink of the river, yet they did anyway; only a few of his followers followed Saul into battle. To demonstrate his power to the non-believers and unfaithful, Allah guided them to victory, and David defeated Goliath. Through this story, Allah revealed that his followers would have his backing in battle, so be it they were not fighting for selfish or unholy reasons. In S.2:53, Allah confirmed Moses and Jesus as prophets. S.2:53 also says that if Allah wished, the Christians and Jews would not have fought each other, but that it was all part of God's plan. This statement left me with many questions; why would Allah will for his followers to fall off the right path and then potentially damn them to hell, do people have free will or is everything the will of Allah?

A large portion of Surah 2 has to do with kindness and charity, which seems a little ironic as it comes almost directly after a section of Surah 2 advocating for war in the name of Allah. Throughout S.2:161-273, Allah revealed to his followers that he is kind and charitable and used a bounty of grain as a parable to demonstrate his generosity. Allah revealed that to reach heaven, one must be charitable and give up a portion of his income to the needy. Allah also tells his followers in S.2:271 that giving to charity in secret is the best way to give charity, but that talking about it is not forbidden. I was left confused by what was meant by S.2:268, though. When Allah says “Evil One,” is Allah referring to the devil or too rich people who will throw

one off the right path? I suppose it could mean both. Through the remainder of the Surah, Allah banned usury and established that Muslims should establish contracts when doing business.

In Surah 19, Allah revealed stories of past prophets and faithful ones and how their faith was rewarded. The first story is the story of Sakariya, who was rewarded for his dedication and prayer with a son, even though he and his wife were beyond the years of having children. In S.19:16-40, Allah revealed the “correct” story of the Holy Virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus Christ. The story of the birth of Christ is slightly different than the one in the Bible, but Allah once again confirmed Christ as a true prophet and confirmed the virgin birth of Christ. In S.19:35, Allah said that Christ was not his son, which is a significant divergence point from the Christian story of the birth of Christ. The next story Allah revealed was the story of Abraham. I am unsure of any differences between the Qur’an’s version of Abraham’s story and the Bibles, but I assume that once again, this is a corrected version of the previous versions of the story. Allah also spoke of Moses, Aaron, Ismail, and Idris and how their faithfulness was rewarded. One important line in Surah 19 is S.19:87, where Allah stated that intercessory prayers were useless.

In Surah 20, Allah began by recounting the story of Moses. Again, it seems incredibly similar to Moses’s story in the Bible, but I am unsure of any direct divergences. S.20:12 stated that shoes are not to be worn in the presence of Allah, which is an important line as I believe it sets a precedent for why Muslims do not wear shoes while in the mosque. In S.20:113, Allah specifies that he has created an Arabic Qur’an to help guide people down the right path, but of course, I am reading the Qur’an in English; can one be saved and believe in Islam with just an English translation? Following the story of Moses, Allah expanded upon the story of Adam and Eve beginning at S.20:117. There is one interesting discrepancy in the story of Adam which may

hint at Islam's progressive nature. In the Bible, Eve ate of the apple first who then tempted Adam to eat of the apple; some oft use this to justify sexist actions as one can interpret Eve eating the apple first as demonstrating women's intellectual inferiority as Eve succumbed to the devil first, but also as can display women as a corrupting force responsible for humanity's exile. This is absent in the Qur'an, which only states that they both ate of the apple. This is an interesting divergence between the Bible and Qur'an, and I wonder if others share my thoughts.