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Introduction

According to legend, after the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's (r. 13–23/634–44) conquest of Jerusalem in the year 16/637, one of his soldiers, a man named Shurayk b. Khabāsha al-Numayrī, went to fetch water from a well on the Temple Mount. As al-Wāsiṭī (d. *ca.* 360/970), a preacher in the al-Aqṣā mosque, relates in his hagiography of Jerusalem, *The Virtues of the Holy City* (*Faḍā'il Bayt al-Muqaddas*),

> suddenly the bucket fell from [Shurayk's] hands, and so he descended [into the well] to search for it. A man appeared to him in the well and told him to follow him, taking him by the hand and ushering him into the Garden. Shurayk took leaves [from a tree in the Garden]. Then the man led him back, and [Shurayk] exited [the well]. He went to his companions and told them about it. His story was brought before ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who said: "Shall a man from this community enter the Garden while he is alive among you? Look at the leaves! If they have withered, they are not from the Garden. If they haven't withered, they are." … And indeed, the leaves had not withered.[1]

Shurayk is said to have kept the leaves he brought from his subterranean visit to paradise, guarding them in his personal copy of the Qur'ān until his death, and to have been buried with them, placed delicately between his chest and the burial shroud covering his corpse, when he was laid to rest in the Syrian village of al-Salamiyya.[2] Some thirteen centuries later, between 1938 and 1942, archaeologists excavated what appeared to be the remains of the well inside the al-Aqṣā mosque.[3] To this day, one can see, to the left of the entrance to the mosque, the stairway leading down into the vast system

[1] Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il*, 93–4 (#154: *Ḥadīth al-waraqāt*). The story also appears in Maqdisī, *Muthīr al-gharām*, 58; Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, I, 339; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 136. For the little biographical information that is available for al-Wāsiṭī, see ʿUlaymī, *Uns*, II, 482.
[2] Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il*, 94 (#155); Maqdisī, *Muthīr al-gharām*, 46.
[3] See Hamilton, *The structural history*, 63–4.

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of tunnels below the Temple Mount, a mysterious subterranean maze in which, according to Muslim tradition, flow the rivers of paradise.[4]

The "Story of the Leaves" (*ḥadīth al-waraqāt*), as it is known, encapsulates a tension that underpins conceptualisations of the otherworld across a wide spectrum of Islamic religious discourses. The idea that the boundary between this world (*al-dunyā*) and the hereafter (*al-ākhira*) cannot be traversed, except after death, is etched deeply into Muslim thought. ʿUmar's reticence is a case in point. Though seemingly aware of the ancient prophecy that "a man shall enter the Garden alive, walking on his two feet,"[5] he remains sceptical. In fact, according to one version of the story, when ʿUmar first hears about Shurayk's miraculous journey,[6] he consults his advisor Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, a Jewish convert to Islam and an authority on the Bible. Kaʿb confirms the correctness of Shurayk's claim. Still, ʿUmar insists on further proof.

After all, does not the Qurʾān state that behind the dead, "there is a barrier (*barzakh*) until the day that they shall be raised up" (23:100), sealing off the otherworld from this world? In fact, according to a notion that circulated widely in Islamic literature, not even the imagination, that most transgressive of human faculties, is capable of crossing this barrier. In the collections of sayings (hadiths) traced to the prophet Muḥammad, from the early centuries of Islam onwards, it is affirmed time and again that God prepares for His servants in paradise "that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived."[7] This is an apophatic statement that is also found in the Gospel, as well as in Talmudic and Christian Syriac literature.[8] Muslims

[4] Cf. the cover image. For the rivers of paradise underneath the Temple Mount, see Wāsiṭī, *Faḍāʾil*, 67 (#108), 68 (#110); Ibn al-Murajjā, *Faḍāʾil*, 268, 6–8 (#407). See further Shalem, "Biʾr al-waraqa," 58; Kaplony, *The Ḥaram*, 359, 512. Cf. Psalm 46:5; Ezekiel 47:1–12.

[5] Yāqūt, *Buldān*, s.v. al-Qalt, IV, 386b, reports from Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. between 32/652 and 35/655) that the prophecy is already found in the scriptures of the Jews. There is no such prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, although Ezekiel 47:1–12 is vaguely reminiscent. Most authors appear to attribute the prophecy directly to the prophet Muḥammad. See, e.g., Shams al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (writing around 875/1470), *Ithāf al-akhissāʾ*, quoted in Le Strange, *Palestine under the Muslims*, 198.

[6] Cf. this and other versions of the story in the translation of Le Strange, "Description of the Noble Sanctuary," 270–2; Shalem, "Biʾr al-waraqa," 50–61.

[7] Hammām, *Ṣaḥīfa*, 25 (#31); Ibn al-Mubārak, *Musnad*, 73 (#121); Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *k. badʾ al-khalq* 8 (*b. mā jāʾa fī ṣifat al-janna*), II, 324; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *k. al-janna* 2, IV, 2174; Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, *k. al-janna* 15 (*b. mā jāʾa fī sūq al-janna*), IV, 685; Hannād b. Sarī, *Zuhd*, I, 47 (#1); Abū Nuʿaym, *Ṣifat al-janna*, 36–7 (#8), 41–2 (#16), 135–48 (##109–24); Ibn al-Kharrāṭ, *ʿĀqiba*, 313; Qurṭubī, *Tadhkira*, II, 165–6; Suyūṭī, *Budūr*, 488; Lamaṭī, *Ibrīz* (tr. O'Kane/Radtke), 901; Ashqar, *Yawm*, III, 117. Cf. *CTM*, s.v. kh-ṭ-r, II, 48a; Graham, *Divine word*, 117–19. G. H. A. Juynboll (*ECḤ*, 57), pinpoints the Kufan *mawlā* and traditionist Abū Muʿāwiya Muḥammad b. Khāzim (d. 194–5/810–11) as an important launch pad for the tradition in Muslim circles, even though the hadith is likely to have circulated earlier, as is suggested by the examples of Hammām (d. 131/749 or 132/750) and Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797).

[8] While in Paul (*1 Corinthians* 2:9), the eschatological content of the adage is only alluded to, the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 99a, XXIV, 671) refers it explicitly to Eden and the

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of the early centuries of Islam sought to anchor the adage in their own scripture and in the exemplary lives of the Prophet and his Companions. Thus, the Companion ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/652–3?) reportedly taught that "in the Torah it is written: 'God has prepared for those who draw their sides away from the couches that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human mind has conceived, that which no angel or messenger knows about.' " The expression "those who draw their sides away from the couches" (*alladhīna tatajāfā junūbuhum ʿan al-maḍājiʿ*) refers to the pious who perform nightly vigils instead of sleeping. An addendum to the adage in its original form, the phrase is taken *verbatim* from the Qurʾān (32:16) and from there projected into Jewish scripture. As ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd continues, after reading this verse, "we would recite: 'No soul knows what joy (*qurrat aʿyun*) is hidden away for them' (Q 32:17)."[9]

It is undeniable, however, that the Qurʾān pictures paradise and hell in intimately concrete and worldly terms.[10] In a canonical hadith, one reads that "the Garden is closer to you than the strap of your sandal, and so is the Fire."[11] This remarkable tradition echoes the Qurʾānic verse that declares God to be closer to man than his jugular vein (50:16), but raises the notion to a cosmological level. While the "jugular vein" verse emphasises the bond that connects God with individual believers, the "sandal" hadith extends this relationship of intimacy more generally speaking to the relationship between the otherworld and this world, between the "world of the hidden" (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) and "the world of witnessing" (*ʿālam al-shahāda*, cf. Q 6:73). The otherworld, in this view, cuts through earthly reality in the way in which the strap of the sandal penetrates the cavity between the toes of the foot. The image is vivid and palpable. It suggests that this world and the otherworld are intertwined, that there is a measure of immanence of the divine in creation.[12]

In al-Wāsiṭī's account of the "Story of the Leaves," the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, though inclining towards the transcendentalist view that this world and the next are two fundamentally different realms of existence, is proven wrong. The leaves Shurayk brings back from his tour of paradise,

world to come, as does the Syrian Church Father Aphrahat (d. *ca.* 345) in one of his homilies. See Aphrahat, *Homilies*, 357–8. For further references in Christian literature, see Wilk, "Jesajanische Prophetie." On the question of "material eschatology" in Talmudic literature, see Costa, *L'au-delà*, 287–94.

[9] Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, IX, 137; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *k. al-janna* 5, IV, 2175.

[10] See Q 13:35, where the Qurʾān speaks of the "picture of paradise" (*mathal al-janna*). Certain exegetes understood *mathal* as "likeness," not as "picture," thus "making the concrete descriptions of Paradise the representation of an inexpressible reality." See *EI2*, "Djanna," II, 447a–452a, at 448a (L. Gardet); Poonawala, "Ismāʿīlī *taʾwīl*," 212.

[11] Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *k. al-riqāq* 29 (*b. al-janna aqrabu ilā aḥadikum*), IV, 194; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, I, 287, 413, 442. See *CTM*, s.v. *sh-r-k*, III, 117a.

[12] Unsurprisingly, Sufi authors were particularly fond of the "sandal" hadith. E.g., Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. 627/1230) quotes it in his *Asrārnāmeh*. See Ritter, *Meer*, 187.

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"looking like the leaves of the Syrian peach tree, as big as the palm of a hand and with a pointed head,"[13] do not wither. They partake of eternal life, thus demonstrating beyond doubt that Shurayk really has crossed the boundary between the here and the hereafter, and that humans, "while they are alive among you," can reach out beyond the imperfections of this world and connect with an otherworld in which humankind's spiritual and material potentialities are realised and lived to the full. As I argue in this book, the story of Shurayk's traversing the divide between *dunyā* and *ākhira* is not as exceptional as it may seem at first sight. Rather, it is indicative of a much broader theme, a nostalgia for immanence and a sense of realised eschatology that has its point of departure in the Qurʾān and from there runs through an impressive range of Islamic religious discourses and practices.

Reconceptualising the *Dunyā/Ākhira* Divide

Islam shares with Christianity the story of Adam's and Eve's eating from the forbidden tree in paradise, the primordial sin resulting in the Fall of humankind and banishment from the garden of Eden. Paradise, accordingly, is lost and will be regained only at the end of time by those whom God chooses or by those who deserve to be saved on account of their beliefs and actions. Those whom God does not elect, or those who fail to accumulate enough merit in the time that elapses between the Fall and Judgement, conversely, go to hell. Historical time begins with the Fall from the primordial garden; it is followed by three major successive eras of world history: the pre-Islamic period, a time of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) that is sporadically illuminated by the appearance of prophets; the Islamic period, in which God's revelation is available, though not to all of humanity; and the apocalypse (the "history of the future," in Franz Rosenthal's phrase[14]), which ushers in the end of the world, and the end of history. At Judgement, history is abolished; eternity begins; *al-ākhira* replaces *al-dunyā*. This sequence is what may be called the diachronic mode of conceptualising the relationship between *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhira* (see Chart 1).

Augustine of Hippo's (d. 430) doctrine of original sin was a dominant idea in the history of Christian thought.[15] In Islam, the notion had far less purchase. No Muslim scholar would have absolved Adam and Eve from blame, but there was a clear tendency among exegetes to make light of Adam's sin.[16] Evil in Islam, as Gustav von Grunebaum suggested, is "accidental"

[13] Wāsiṭī, *Faḍāʾil*, 94 (#155); Maqdisī, *Muthīr al-gharām*, 46.
[14] Rosenthal, *History*, 23.
[15] Segal, *Life after death*, 584–5; Benjamins, "Paradisiacal life." However, writing a century after Augustine, the Eastern Church Father Jacob of Serugh (d. 521) could still maintain that "Adam sinned, but God did not curse him, for He loved him and did not hate him." See Jacob of Serugh, *Quatre homélies*, 12.
[16] Kister, "Adam," 149. Cf. Anawati, "La notion de 'péché originel'," 31.

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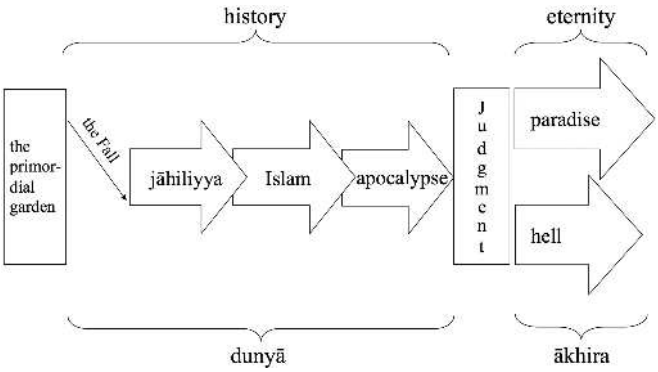

CHART 1. The *dunyā/ākhira* relationship: The diachronic view.

rather than a "structural" given of human nature.[17] Adam's and Eve's departure from paradise was frequently painted by Muslim artists, especially in the later centuries, but depictions of Eve handing the fatal fruit to Adam remain to be found.[18] A Persian painting from around 700/1300 shows the primordial couple first and foremost as victims of the devil's cunning, and thus minimises their guilt.

Arguably, this is a perspective rooted in the Qurʾān. Whatever the degree of their own responsibility, Adam and Eve are said to have received God's forgiveness immediately after their expulsion (20:122–3). They did not pass on any essential, inherited human depravity to their descendants. As the Qurʾān affirms, "every soul only bears its own burden" (6:164). In Islam, therefore, the fall, or rather the descent, from paradise does not signify an ontological shift from a state of grace to one of sin and damnation but rather, a momentary loss of divine favour. Humankind's connection with the otherworld may require repair, but it is not severed completely. The door between this world and the otherworld remains ajar.

Similarly, the world that humankind inhabits is not a place of corruption. In the Qurʾān, "the earthly manifestation of creation is not a cursed place of punishment and suffering; rather, it shows a clear affinity with paradise."[19] What is more, this optimism is not restricted to the Qurʾān. There are numerous traditions of Islamic religious thought that lean in the direction of an accessible paradise. They speak of objects, substances, or beings that move to and fro between this world and the otherworld. One category of such go-betweens is select individuals who travel to the otherworld and back.

[17] Von Grunebaum, "Observations," 119. See also Anawati, "La notion de 'péché originel'," 37.
[18] Milstein, "Paradise as a parable," 147.
[19] Neuwirth, *Koran*, 439, 744–8.

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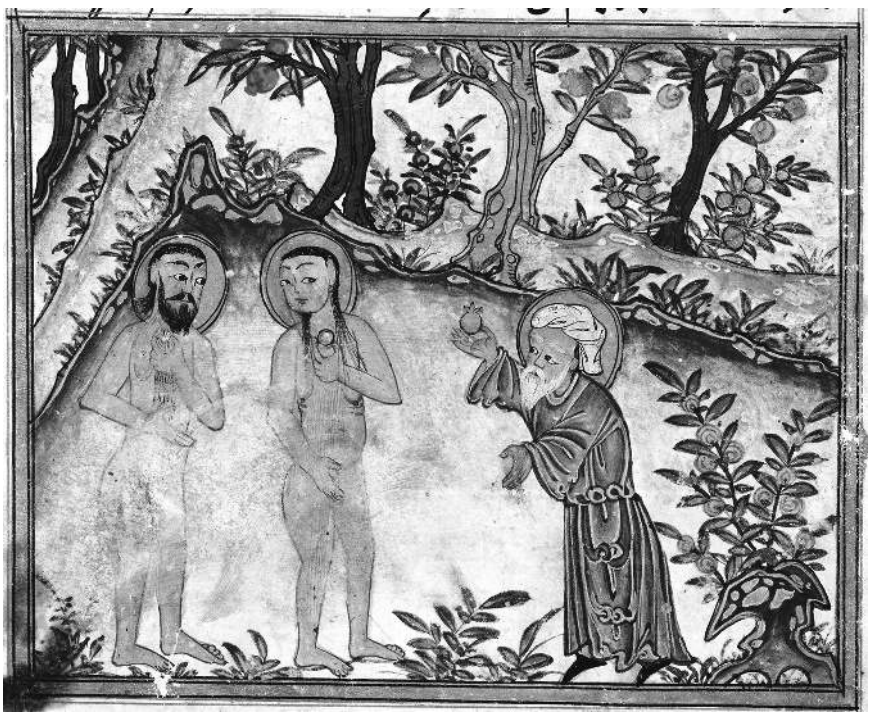

FIGURE 1. The devil tempts Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. From al-Birūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya* (*The Chronology of Ancient Nations*). Tabriz/Persia, 707/1307–8. Edinburgh University Library, Centre for Research Collections, MS Edinburgh Or. 161, fol. 48v.

This concerns, most famously, the prophet Muḥammad during his Ascension (*miʿrāj*), but there are others, too. In the popular genre of *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (*Tales of the Prophets*), the prophet Idrīs, the Islamic Enoch, is said to have toured paradise and hell. The same goes for Bulūqiya, a figure that harkens back to the Babylonian Gilgamesh.[20] A number of visionaries and mystics in the history of Islam claimed to have emulated the Prophet's heavenly journey (and less frequently, his *descensus ad inferos*).[21] There are also examples of ordinary human beings going on otherworldly journeys. Shurayk, the hero of the "Story of the Leaves," is one of them. In the *Arabian Nights* one occasionally comes across narratives about the exploits of heroes who reach paradise or hell, or earthly utopias and dystopias that resemble them closely.[22] In one of the *Nights*' most famous tales, "The

[20] Dalley, "Gilgamesh." On these narratives of otherworldly journeys, see the following text, pp. 112–9.

[21] See the following text, pp. 227–8.

[22] For paradise in the *Arabian Nights*, see Ott, "Paradies"; eadem, "Paradise, Alexander, and the *Arabian nights*." For travels to the underworld, see Fudge, "Underworlds."

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FIGURE 2. The prophet Muḥammad approaching the gate of heaven during his ascension. From Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (*The Comprehensive History*). Tabriz/Persia, *ca.* 705/[1306] or 714/[1314–15]. Edinburgh University Library, Centre for Research Collections, MS Edinburgh Or. 20, fol. 55r.

Second Qalandar's Tale," the hero stumbles upon the entry to a subterranean paradisiacal cave, complete with a heavenly maid, cushioned couches, and wine.[23] Lastly in this category, dream visions allowed for an easy way to travel to the otherworld and back again. The Islamic literature on dreaming is vast, and frequently features visions of, and conversations with, the dead in paradise and hell.[24]

Other types of go-betweens include liquids, winds, sounds, smells, and material objects that move between the otherworld and this world, or flow from one to the other. The Nile, Euphrates, and the two eastern Turkish rivers Sayḥān and Jayḥān, for example, are said to spring from the al-Kawthar well in paradise.[25] Pleasant fragrances are wafted into this world from paradise; in fact, all perfume originates in Eden.[26] The sweet scent of babies (*rīḥ al-walad*) comes from paradise.[27] Salutary plants are likewise thought to

[23] *The Arabian nights*, I, 73–5.

[24] See Kinberg, "Interaction," 295–301; Schimmel, *Die Träume des Kalifen*, 198–200; Katz, "Dreams," 190; Sirriyeh, *Sufi visionary*, 57–67. On al-Ghazālī's view of the "reality" of dreams, see Moosa, *Al-Ghazālī*, 74–5. A modern, ironic take on this theme is Zahāwī, *Thawra*. Cf. the following text, pp. 279–80.

[25] Qurṭubī, *Tadhkira*, II, 167–8; Majlisī, *Biḥār*, VIII, 352; Nābulusī, *Ahl al-janna*, 49–50.

[26] See Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden*, 65, and the references given there. On the scent of paradise entering the world through the tombs of saints, see Diem and Schöller, *The living and the dead*, II, 90–6. The most prominent example is, of course, the tomb of the Prophet in Medina. See, e.g., Būṣīrī, *Burda*, 13 (v. 58).

[27] Nābulusī, *Ahl al-janna*, 51.

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derive from the heavenly realms.[28] Adam is said to have taken seeds from the Garden with him and to have planted them in India, thus bringing nutmeg (*shajar al-ṭīb*) into the world.[29] According to another tradition, the date-palm, the first plant to have grown on the face of the earth, came to this world from heaven.[30] Every pomegranate contains at least one seed that is from paradise.[31] In Shiʿism, one finds the notion that Abū Ṭālib, the father of the first Imam ʿAlī (d. 40/661), used to eat pomegranates, "and from it ʿAlī was born"[32] – who then passed on this heavenly seed to his progeny, the Imams.

As for sounds, it is true that revelation, according to standard doctrine, has come to an end with Muḥammad, the "seal of the prophets" (*khātam al-anbiyāʾ*). However, acoustically, Arabs, and with them all Muslims, continue to be connected to the otherworld. Arabic, after all, is the language Adam and Eve spoke in paradise, and brought with them to earth.[33] According to the Egyptian polygraph, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), the famous exegete of early Islam, Ibn ʿAbbās (d. *ca.* 68/687–8), taught that Adam's language in paradise was Arabic. "However, when Adam disobeyed his Lord, God deprived him of Arabic, and he came to speak Syriac. Then, however, God restored Adam to His grace and gave Arabic back to him."[34] Muslims are made particularly aware of this primordial linguistic bond with God when listening to the Qurʾān, the "recitation" (Arab. *qurʾān*) of the divine text located on the "preserved tablet" (*lawḥ maḥfūẓ*, Q 85:21) in heaven, an act first performed by the prophet Muḥammad and by his Muslim followers ever since. In this perpetual global concert of simultaneous voices, a piece of the otherworld is present all the time among Muslim audiences, the "recitation" functioning rather like a ceaseless radio transmission that people can tune into at their leisure.[35] "God Himself," affirms the Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 458/1065), "recites through the tongue of every Qurʾān reader," so that "when one listens to the Qurʾān recitation of a reader, one hears it from God."[36] In Islam perhaps more than any other tradition, to

[28] In addition to the examples provided in the following text, see ibid., 52 (truffle and honeydew).
[29] Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka*, I, 90 (#23).
[30] Baḥrānī, *Nuzhat*, 294. Cf. Nābulusī, *Ahl al-janna*, 52, according to which pressed dates (*ʿajwa*) are "the fruit of paradise."
[31] Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, X, 263.
[32] Baḥrānī, *Nuzhat*, 98.
[33] Cf. Goldziher, *History of grammar*, 44–5; Loucel, "L'origine du language," 167–8.
[34] Suyūṭī, *Muzhir*, I, 30 (tr. Czapkiewicz, *Views,* 66). Similarly in Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 239/853), *Taʾrīkh,* 27–8; Thaʿlabī, *Kashf*, IX, 177 (*ad* Q 55:4), from an anonymous source.
[35] On the concept of a Qurʾānic *lingua sacra*, which is closely related to the doctrine of the inimitability (*iʿjāz*) of the Qurʾān, see Wansbrough, *Qurʾanic studies*, 85–118. According to the early exegete Muqātil b. Sulayman (d. 150/767), those Muslims who are not native speakers of Arabic are washed in two rivers situated at the entry to the eternal garden. One purifies their bodies, the other purifies their heart, so that they emerge with bodies as beautiful as that of the prophet Joseph, with hearts like that of the prophet Job, and speaking Arabic like Muḥammad. See Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, IV, 532 (*ad* Q 76:21).
[36] Ibn al-Farrāʾ, *Muʿtamad*, 186, quoted in Böwering, *Mystical vision*, 95.

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borrow Michel de Certeau's phrase, "the sacred text is a voice."[37] By this voice, practitioners gain access to paradise. "Every verse of the Qurʾān," writes al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) in his celebrated *opus magnum*, the *Revivification of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*), "is a degree (*daraja*) in paradise and a light in your houses."[38]

The point is not, however, that the world of the here-and-now, in Islam, is in all respects paradisiacal. No such reductionist notion is proffered here. In this book, rather, traditions that resolutely place the primordial and eschatological paradise in the distant past and future are given equally full attention.[39] Further, it would be fallacious to underestimate the important place that hell occupies in the Muslim religious imagination.[40] In fact, hell, as the "sandal" hadith tells us, is as closely intertwined with this world as paradise. To illustrate this point with just one example, according to the Qurʾān, there grows at the bottom of hell the poisonous tree of Zaqqūm, which sprouts fruits "like the heads of devils" (*ka-ruʾūs al-shayāṭīn*, 37:65). Some Muslim exegetes understood this expression figuratively, or simply accepted the existence of such a tree in hell without further inquiring into the matter.[41] Others, however, argued that "head of devils" was the name of a disgustingly bitter tree growing in the Tihāma region in Yemen.[42] There was some debate about this, but according to the fifth/eleventh-century exegete al-Thaʿlabī, the most well-known answer to the question was the latter, that is, that Zaqqūm is a hellish plant simultaneously found in this world and the other.[43] Hell and the world inhabited by human beings, in other words, overlap.

Certain animals, in particular snakes and scorpions, were believed to shuttle back and forth between the earth and the hellish netherworlds.[44] Hellish sounds, such as the crashing noise of a stone hitting hell's floor, were heard by the Prophet and his Companions.[45] Suggesting an analogy to the four rivers of paradise, the Prophet allegedly held the view that hell-water

[37] De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, 137. In Qurʾānic studies, the phenomenon of the divine immanence in and during the recitation of the text is analysed by Neuwirth, *Koran*, 166–72, 178–81. See also Graham, *Beyond the written word*, 81, 87, 103–4; idem, "*Qurʾān* as spoken word"; Kermani, *Gott ist schön*, 212–32.

[38] Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 450.

[39] An intriguing typology of three paradises in medieval Christianity is sketched by Christoph Auffarth, who writes that "[i]n addition to the primordial paradise on the one hand and the eschatological paradise on the other, there is yet another paradise type in the Middle Ages, one which is neither closed off, nor in a distant future of uncertain reality." See Auffarth, "Paradise now," 169.

[40] See Lange, "Introducing hell in Islamic Studies."

[41] Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, III, 135.

[42] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, VII, 62.

[43] Thaʿlabī, *Kashf*, VIII, 146. Cf. Hamadhānī, *Maqāmāt*, 218 (*al-Maqāma al-Dināriyya*).

[44] For an example, see Wellhausen, *Reste*, 153. See also Jīlī, *Insān*, 246.

[45] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *k. al-janna* 31 (*b. fī shiddat ḥarr nār jahannam*), IV, 2184–5; Suyūṭī, *Budūr*, 424. See *CTM*, s.v. w-j-b, VII, 140a.

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leaks into the world, warning against bathing in hot mountain springs, "for they flow from hell."[46] The most extreme heat in summer is no other than the heat of hell, which has escaped to the surface of the earth, while the most extreme cold in winter is breathed into the world from the reservoir of extreme cold in hell.[47] In more abstract terms, a hadith asserts that "fever flows from hell (*al-ḥummā min fayḥ jahannam*)."[48] The list could be continued, but a more thorough discussion of these and other examples is reserved for the chapters to follow. Here, I use these instances to highlight what I see as a key theme of Islamic eschatological literature, a theme that runs like a thread through this book: the disappearing boundary between this world and the otherworld. By this formulation I mean the perceived proximity, spatial, temporal, and conceptual, of *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhira*, as well as the openness of Islamic traditions towards the idea of "realised eschatology" in the full, utopian *and* dystopian sense, not just in that of the optimistic feeling of "paradise now."

At this point, let us pause and note that important objections can be raised against approaching the history of Islamic eschatology along such lines. Arguably, the boundary between *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhira* is far from passable, the opposite of what I claim in many places in this book. In fact, the radical difference between *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhira*, it might be countered, is a fundamental a priori of the Islamic tradition. One scholar, for example, has suggested that the rigorous distinction between *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhira* is as constitutive for Islam as the mind/body dyad is for the intellectual history of the West (the mind/body distinction, supposedly, played a lesser role in Islam).[49] Islam tends to be characterised, not least by Muslim thinkers, as the most antimythological of the Abrahamic faiths, as *that* tradition which has most efficiently wedded the concept of the sacred with that of transcendence, thereby banishing the magical and mythical from this world. Statements to this effect abound. The Arab Muslim conquerors, writes Patricia Crone, "disseminated a religion that drained the world of divinity to concentrate it in a single transcendental God."[50] In the words of Josef van Ess, "Islam does not know the idea of a mediating instance.… All bridges are torn down: there are no sacraments, no images to be worshipped, no church music. God is transcendent."[51]

[46] Majlisī, *Biḥār*, VIII, 486.
[47] Tottoli, "The Qur'an," 144. The Prophet is said to have allowed the delay of the *ẓuhr* prayer in the case of great afternoon heat, "for the severity of the heat flows from hell (*shiddat al-ḥarr fayḥ min jahannam*)." Cf. Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *k. mawāqīt al-ṣalāt* 9 (*b. al-ibrād bi-l-ẓuhr*), I, 173, and passim in Bukhārī and other canonical collections. See *CTM*, s.v. f-y-ḥ, V, 214a.
[48] Daylamī, *Firdaws*, II, 156; Nābulusī, *Ahl al-janna*, 75–7.
[49] Winter, "Islamic attitudes," 37.
[50] Crone, *Nativist prophets*, 276.
[51] Van Ess, *Christentum und Weltreligionen*, 110.

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