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The Representation of the Children of Israel in the Qur'an and the Pentateuch: A Comparative Analysis of Narrative and Conceptual Correspondences

Seyyed Mohammad Musavi Moqaddam¹, Kobra Salmani² 

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Abstract

This study compares the representation of the Children of Israel in the Qur'an and the Pentateuch, focusing on the selection, organization, focalization, and function of narrative and conceptual material in both corpora. To avoid conflating concepts and events at different analytical levels, the units of study are classified into three levels: direct narrative correspondence, direct conceptual correspondence, and limited conceptual overlap. The corpus was purposefully and restrictively formed from Qur'anic verses related to the Children of Israel and clearly associated units, encompassing five axes: "Covenant, blessing and responsibility; disobedience and breach of covenant; calf worship; election and preference; and confrontation with truth and fidelity to the Law." The method is comparative-textual, grounded in qualitative content and narrative analysis. The Qur'anic text and the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch were supplemented by the Septuagint, the Samaritan tradition, Ṭabarī's commentary, and selected historical and exegetical evidence to control for reception history and textual diversity. The findings indicate that the two traditions' shared themes, such as

¹ . Associate Professor, Department of Quran and Hadith Sciences, College of Farabi, University of Tehran, IRAN (**Corresponding Author**). sm.mmoqaddam@ut.ac.ir

² . Master's Graduate in Quran and Hadith Sciences, College of Farabi, University of Tehran, Tehran, IRAN. k.salmani@ut.ac.ir

covenant, responsibility, disobedience, calf worship, and the special status of the Children of Israel, do not signify uniformity in the organization of meaning. In the selected corpus, the Qur'an reorganizes these materials with a relative predominance of address, admonition, and responsibility for the present audience. In contrast, the Pentateuch situates them primarily along the trajectory of covenant history, Law, and collective identity. In the narrative of calf worship, the prominence of Samiri in the Qur'an, as opposed to Aaron's role in Exodus, creates a different pattern of agency and responsibility. Election in both traditions is linked to covenant and responsibility and is not readily reducible to inherent superiority or immunity from judgment. Regarding distortion, the evidence is insufficient for direct correspondence, and limited conceptual overlap remains the most precise level of comparison. Overall, the study shifts from a mere inquiry into "Shared Elements" to an examination of how shared material is reorganized and what function it serves within each text's structure.

Keywords: Children of Israel, Qur'an, Pentateuch, Representation, Narrative Correspondence, Conceptual Correspondence, Limited Conceptual Overlap, Narrative Focalization.

Introduction

The Holy Qur'an mentions the Children of Israel in historical, theological, ethical, and legislative contexts. These references are linked to concepts such as divine blessing, covenant, responsibility, guidance, disobedience, and admonition. Consequently, studying the representation of the Children of Israel cannot be accomplished merely by collecting verses; rather, it requires examining how the Qur'anic text selects, condenses, and reorganizes the elements of a narrative or conceptual tradition within its own address structure. In this framework, the mention of the Children of Israel is both narrative material and part of the Qur'an's mechanism of address, admonition,

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and the engendering of responsibility (Danishkiya, 2014; Rezaei, 2014). Here, "Address" refers to the Qur'an's direct orientation toward its audience. The Pentateuch is also a foundational corpus for the study of narrative, Law, and Israelite identity. In Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, the narrative of the ancestors, the Exodus, the covenant, the wilderness period, and religious and social laws are presented in connection with fidelity or disobedience. However, the "Pentateuch" should not be assumed to be a completely uniform text; historical-critical research emphasizes the processes of formation, redaction, and reworking of diverse traditions (Schniedewind, 2004; Pioske, 2022). Therefore, this article uses the term "Pentateuch" for the existing textual corpus and distinguishes between the final text and the history of its traditions' formation.

Narratives such as the Exodus, the Sinai covenant, and calf worship can simultaneously be subjects of literary-theological study and historical inquiry. Disagreement remains over using Pentateuchal narratives to reconstruct ancient Israelite history, and we must distinguish between "narrative about the past" and "Historical witness about the past." (Pioske, 2022) The aim of this article is not to prove or disprove the historicity of these events, but to examine how they are narrated and imbued with meaning in the two corpora. Comparison between the Qur'an and the Pentateuch is possible in subjects such as covenant, election, disobedience, responsibility, and calf worship, but thematic similarity does not imply identical narration, transmission tradition, or historical origin. In the case of calf worship, Exodus 32 and the Qur'anic accounts differ in prominent characters, order, and narrative focus. Pregill has also demonstrated that this narrative has been reread numerous times in its

reception history (Pregill, 2020). Therefore, comparison must preserve each text's literary independence while also allowing examination of reception history and the reformulation of tradition. Here, "Reception History" refers to later rereading and reinterpretations of the narrative.

In contemporary Qur'anic and Biblical studies, attention has shifted from enumerating similarities to examining the textual and religious context, reception history, and rereading of earlier traditions. Reynolds examines this relationship through Biblical contexts and textual-exegetical study, while Neuwirth studies the Qur'an in the religious milieu of late antiquity (Reynolds, 2018; Neuwirth, 2019). Thus, the problem of the article is not merely the existence of similarity, but the manner of reorganizing a narrative or conceptual material and its new function in each text.

This problem cannot be fully addressed without considering the audience. The narratives of the Children of Israel in the Qur'an were presented in a context where the first audience was in contact with Jewish and Christian traditions, and this was especially important in Medina, where Jewish groups were present (Arafat, 1976; Faizer, 1996). From this perspective, the rereading of the Israelite past could play a role in regulating the Muslim community's relationship with the earlier religious heritage and the religious responsibility of the present community. However, the article does not attribute any unit to a specific occasion of revelation or particular event, and employs "Present Audience" only to the extent that the structure of the verses permits.

The reception history of narratives also does not match the original text. Jewish exegetical traditions, ancient translations, and Islamic commentaries can help us understand the rereading of narratives, but we must distinguish them from the primary textual witness. This emphasizes the importance of

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reception history and the reinterpretation of Israelite tradition (Fishbane, 1985). In this article, these sources do not substitute for the Pentateuchal text and are used only as contextual or exegetical evidence.

Persian and Arabic studies have also examined various dimensions of the subject :

Shomali and Rabi' Nattaj on Israelite ethics, Hadiyan Rasnani on promise, obedience, and covenant, Tabatabaei Amin on election, Hajati Shuraki and Taheri Akerdi on differences in narrative elements, Muhammadi et al. on the link between mentioning the Children of Israel and behavior, and Naderi Qahfarrukhi on calf worship (Shomali and Rabi' Nattaj, 2018; Hadiyan Rasnani, 2020; Tabatabaei Amin, 2018; Hajati Shuraki and Taheri Akerdi, 2022; Muhammadi et al., 2022; Naderi Qahfarrukhi, 2024). However, comparing shared events, conceptual correspondence, focalization, and address function in a controlled corpus still requires a systematic framework. Accordingly, the article first forms the corpus by searching for explicit uses of the term "Children of Israel" and then by examining clearly related units without this term. The selected materials are classified into three levels: "Direct narrative correspondence," "Direct conceptual correspondence," and "Limited conceptual overlap." This distinction sharpens the thesis by preventing conflation of non-equivalent concepts and by controlling the scope of claims.

The main research question is: 'What differences and similarities do the Qur'an and the Pentateuch exhibit in the representation of corresponding narratives and themes related to the Children of Israel in the selected corpus, in terms of selection, organization, and function '?

The sub-questions focus on the level of correspondence, the organization of covenant and disobedience, differences in the elements of the calf narrative, and the relationship between address, ethical evaluation, and the audience's relationship to the event.

The research hypothesis is that, in the selected corpus, both traditions link Israelite themes with covenant, responsibility, disobedience, and the special status of the people, but their functions are not identical. More specifically, the Qur'an links the past more closely to admonition, evaluation, and the engendering of responsibility for the present audience, while the Pentateuch organizes the same material more along the trajectory of covenant, Law, and collective identity. This hypothesis is limited to the present corpus and does not claim generalization to the entire Qur'an or all Biblical tradition .

1. Literature Review

1.1. Persian and Arabic Studies

Persian studies on the Children of Israel in the Qur'an and Torah have primarily taken shape along ethical, historical, theological, and comparative axes. Shomali and Rabi' Nattaj emphasize ethical similarities and differences, Hadiyan Rasnani focuses on the relationship between promise, obedience, and covenant, and Tabatabaei Amin emphasizes the distinction between historical election and inherent superiority (Shomali and Rabi' Nattaj, 2018; Hadiyan Rasnani, 2020; Tabatabaei Amin, 2018).

Hajati Shuraki and Taheri Akerdi have examined differences in the selection and presentation of narrative elements; Muhammadi et al. have addressed the relationship between mentioning the Children of Israel and behavioral

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evaluation; and Naderi Qahfarrukhi has dealt with the narrative of calf worship (Hajati Shuraki and Taheri Akerdi, 2022; Muhammadi et al., 2022; Naderi Qahfarrukhi, 2024). These works provide a basis for comparison; however, they do not systematically distinguish shared events, conceptual correspondence, and limited overlap, nor do they simultaneously analyze focalization and address function.

In Arabic studies, Duwaykat has addressed the wandering of the Children of Israel, and Hamza has examined their attributes in the Qur'an (Duwaykat, 2008; Hamza, 2023). These works demonstrate the breadth of the subject, but they do not simultaneously compare the selection, organization, focalization, and function of corresponding materials in a limited corpus.

1.2. International Studies and Exegetical Sources

In international studies, scholars have examined the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible primarily through the frameworks of inter-textually, reception history, and the religious context of late antiquity. Reynolds emphasizes narrative and Biblical contexts and Neuwirth focuses on the religious and literary milieu of late antiquity (Reynolds, 2018; Neuwirth, 2019). Rubin has also examined the link between the representation of the Children of Israel and the Islamic self-image (Rubin, 1999).

Pregill traces the reception history of the calf narrative from Biblical tradition through Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, showing that this narrative has been reworked across periods (Pregill, 2020). This perspective helps distinguish the Pentateuchal text from its reception history.

Fishbane shows the importance of reinterpreting textual traditions (Fishbane, 1985). On the other hand, for key cases such as covenant and calf worship,

the Hebrew text, Greek translation, and Samaritan tradition must be examined as distinct witnesses; conflating them with contemporary Persian translations may obscure textual and historical differences (Elliger, Rudolph and Schenker, 1997; Rahlfs and Hanhart, 2006; Florentin and Tal, 2025).

McAuliffe and DeLong-Bas outline important trajectories in the study of the Qur'an and the Bible (McAuliffe, 2006; DeLong-Bas, 2025). For analyzing the reception history of Qur'anic narratives, Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān* is also important, as it preserves some of the earliest readings of verses about the Children of Israel and the calf (Ṭabarī, 2001).

1.3. Research Gap

The research gap is not the absence of studies on the Children of Israel, but rather the design of comparison: in some studies, events, themes, and exegetical traditions have been placed on the same level; sometimes the Hebrew text, ancient translations, and commentaries have not been distinguished; and few studies have examined multiple axes simultaneously in a controlled corpus.

The present study addresses this gap through three levels of correspondence and by distinguishing between the primary text, ancient textual witnesses, exegetical sources, and historical evidence. The innovation lies not in discovering new similarities, but in controlling the level of comparison and analyzing selection, focalization, narrative organization, and address function simultaneously.

This framework allows for the examination of differences, such as the prominence of Samiri in the Qur'an and Aaron in Exodus, or the difference between Qur'anic "Distortion" and Deuteronomy's warnings about adding,

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subtracting, and forgetting the commandment, without imposing an artificial equivalence.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Representation

"Representation" in this study refers to the manner of selecting, omitting, condensing, foregrounding, ordering, and analyzing the elements of an event or theme to construct a particular meaning. Two texts may refer to the same event, but by selecting different characters or altering the narrative's order and focus, they may produce different functions (Genette, 1980). This concept is used in the article to analyze intra-textual organization, not to prove historical priority, adaptation, or direct dependence.

Claims about the historical transmission route require independent historical, linguistic, and inter-textual evidence and exceed the scope of the present analysis; therefore, "Representation" explains intra-textual differences.

2.2. Direct Narrative Correspondence

"Direct Narrative Correspondence" exists when an event or chain of actions recognizable in the Qur'an and one of the Pentateuchal books allows for direct comparison through main elements such as character, central action, situation, and consequence. The narrative of calf worship is the primary example of this level.

The mere existence of a shared word or theme is not sufficient; the linkage of the event's elements must be clear enough that comparison is possible without conjecture or extra-textual interpretation.

2.3. Direct Conceptual Correspondence

In "Direct Conceptual Correspondence," a single event is not necessarily present; rather, a concept or semantic relationship is clearly identifiable in both corpora through textual markers. Covenant, responsibility, election, and the relationship between fidelity and consequence are among these.

The criterion is a verifiable conceptual network, not the homogenization of narrative elements. Differences in how the concept is organized are themselves part of the research findings.

2.4. Limited Conceptual Overlap

"Limited Conceptual Overlap" is allocated to cases where two texts share a general domain, but the evidence is insufficient for direct correspondence. In this study, the relationship between certain Qur'anic uses of "Distortion" and Deuteronomy's warnings about adding, subtracting, and forgetting the commandment falls into this level, as the domain of fidelity to the commandment is shared. Still, the scope and conceptual structure are not identical.

This category is not a weak degree of proving sameness; rather, it is an independent level that preserves limited similarity while preventing hasty equating.

2.5. Narrative Selection and Organization

Narrative selection refers to the choice, omission, condensation, and foregrounding of an event's elements. The analysis focuses on observable elements such as main characters, central action, dialogue, order, reaction, and consequence (Genette, 1980).

Comparing these elements shows the degree of detail and the angle from which each text presents an event. The presence or absence of a single element

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does not in itself have definitive interpretive value and must be analyzed in relation to the narrative focus, address structure, and semantic consequence.

2.6. Focalization and the Position of the Audience

Focalization pertains to the question of which character, action, or consequence the text directs the audience's attention toward; therefore, it is of particular importance in comparing Aaron in Exodus and Samiri in Ta-Ha.

In the Qur'an, a past event can be situated within a surah addressed to the present audience. In this article, "present audience" is an analytical concept and is employed without attributing any verse to a specific occasion of revelation.

2.7. Address and Guidance Function

The address and guidance function is examined through four indicators:

- 1 (The existence of direct address to a group or audience;
- 2 (The existence of a command, prohibition, or rhetorical question;
- 3 (Linking the past to the situation of the audience;
- 4 (The expression of responsibility, consequence, or ethical evaluation.

These indicators measure the prominence of the address function in the selected corpus, not a value judgment between the two texts. Ricoeur also shows that narrative can shape understanding of time and identity; therefore, placing the past within a new address structure can redefine the relationship between past and present (Ricoeur, 1984).

Accordingly, the article avoids the simple dichotomy of "Ethical Qur'an/historical Torah." Both corpora contain historical, ethical, legislative, and identity elements; the issue is their relative predominance and how the selected corpus links these functions.

2.8. Level of Historical and Exegetical Analysis

The study distinguishes between three types of data: primary text, exegetical tradition, and historical evidence. The Qur'anic text and the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch are the primary data; ancient translations and commentaries are used for reception history and the context of a reading; and historical evidence is used to examine the possibility of historicity or the social context of events.

The existence of a narrative alone does not prove its historicity, and the absence of definitive historical evidence does not negate its literary or theological value. Therefore, the article distinguishes between an event's historicity and its narrative function.

2.9. Principle of Level-Appropriate Comparison

Based on this framework, the narrative of calf worship is examined at the level of direct narrative correspondence, covenant and election at the level of direct conceptual correspondence, and the relationship between "Distortion" and Deuteronomy's warnings at the level of limited conceptual overlap.

This principle prevents Midrash, Talmud, or later commentaries from substituting for the primary text. Such sources can illuminate reception history, but their entry as direct witnesses changes the level of the corpus.

Therefore, the conceptual framework rests on four complementary axes: "Type of correspondence, narrative organization, focalization, and address function. This combination allows analysis of similarities without ignoring structural and theological differences".

3. Research Method

This study is comparative-textual and uses qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis to examine the selection, organization, focalization, and

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application of materials related to the Children of Israel in the Qur'an and the Pentateuch. To address the problem of non-equivalent data, the research evidence has been separated into three levels: "Primary texts, exegetical evidence, and historical-reception evidence." The Qur'anic text and the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch form the primary basis for comparison; the Septuagint and the Samaritan text serve as textual witnesses and help control the diversity of textual traditions, not as substitutes for the base text. Early Islamic commentaries, especially Ṭabarī's commentary, are also used where necessary to examine reception history and early understanding of the Qur'anic narrative. Still, they are not automatically treated as direct correspondences for Qur'anic verses. This distinction prevents a later exegetical or textual datum from being placed on the same level as the Qur'anic or Pentateuchal text without regard to its nature.

3.1. Formation of the Preliminary Corpus

In the first stage, the explicit use of the term "Children of Israel" in the Qur'an was taken as the starting point for identifying data. This set is only a preliminary lexical corpus and does not capture all narratives and themes associated with the Children of Israel. In the second stage, units that, without explicit mention of this term, were related to the Children of Israel based on characters, narrative continuity, event subject, and contextual indicators were also examined. Thus, lexical search and narrative identification were distinguished from one another.

3.2. Criteria for Selecting Final Units

Each Qur'anic unit was included in the final corpus when it met three conditions: "First, its connection to the Children of Israel was clear based on

textual or contextual evidence; second, a recognizable narrative or conceptual counterpart existed for it in the Pentateuch; and third, its comparison was possible without imposing a counterpart from sources outside the primary text".

Alongside these criteria, the principle of minimal comprehensiveness was observed; meaning that the final selection was not limited solely to verses containing the term "Children of Israel," but related narratives without this term were also examined in the second stage. To prevent uncontrolled expansion of the corpus, any unit whose connection to the Children of Israel, or its counterpart in the Pentateuch, could be established only by relying on later exegetical tradition was not accepted as direct correspondence.

3.3. Hierarchy of Sources

In comparing the Pentateuch, the Hebrew text was considered the primary witness, and the Persian translation was used only to facilitate understanding. When textual tradition diversity affects the analysis, the Septuagint and Samaritan tradition were used as independent witnesses (Elliger, Rudolph and Schenker, 1997; Rahlfs and Hanhart, 2006; Florentin and Tal, 2025). On the Qur'anic side, the Qur'anic text is the basis, and early commentaries, especially Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, provide reception history and early interpretation; these sources are not equated with the primary text (Ṭabarī, 2001).

3.4. Determination of Correspondence Level

After identifying the final units, each case was placed in one of three levels based on pre-defined criteria:

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1 (Direct narrative correspondence: The existence of an event or chain of actions recognizable in both texts, along with several shared main elements such as character, central action, situation, and consequence.

2 (Direct conceptual correspondence: The existence of a concept or semantic relationship clearly present in both texts, without necessarily a single unified narrative.

3 (Limited conceptual overlap: Sharing a specific semantic domain, while differences in the scope of the concept, argument structure, narrative focus, or textual function do not allow for direct equating.

"Limited conceptual overlap" therefore does not merely indicate thematic similarity, but is a specific methodological category employed when both texts have direct evidence for a semantic domain. Still, the evidence is insufficient to claim complete correspondence. Hence, the Qur'anic concept of "distortion" was not treated as a direct correspondence with Deuteronomy's warnings about adding, subtracting, or forgetting the commandment.

3.5. Organization of the Corpus and Unit of Analysis

The final units were organized into five axes: "Covenant, blessing and responsibility," "Disobedience and breach of covenant," "Calf worship and deviation from monotheism," "Election and preference," and "Confrontation with truth and fidelity to the Law".

In conceptual axes, the unit of analysis is a set of verses that constitute a relatively unified theme or semantic relationship. In the calf worship axis, in addition to the set of verses, the analysis also examined narrative elements including main characters, central action, and dialogue, order of events, characters' reactions, consequence, and degree of narrative expansion.

3.6. Analysis Process

The analysis followed four stages: Identifying the Qur'anic unit and its counterpart; determining the level of correspondence; extracting shared and differing elements; and interpreting differences based on narrative, address, ethical, and audience-related indicators.

In narrative analysis, "Omission," "Addition," and "Reformulation" are descriptive terms and do not, in themselves, imply distortion, adaptation, or historical dependence. In cases where textual, manuscript, or exegetical evidence indicates disagreement, the disagreement is reported separately at all three levels to preserve the distinction between "What the text says" and "What the exegetical tradition says about the text".

3.7. Historical and Textual Control

The present study does not judge the definitive historicity or non-historicity of events such as the Exodus, the Sinai covenant, and calf worship. However, the issue of historicity has not been completely set aside; rather, it is considered an independent level from "Textual representation." Therefore, the existence of a narrative in the Qur'an or the Pentateuch is not, in itself, proof of the event's historical occurrence, and disagreement between texts is not attributed to a definitive transmission route without independent historical evidence.

Furthermore, this study does not assume the Pentateuch is a completely unified historical-literary unit. The Hebrew text serves as the criterion, along with evidence from the Greek and Samaritan traditions, allowing attention to the diversity of textual transmission history; however, these textual witnesses enter detailed analysis only when they are important for explaining the difference under comparison.

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3.8. Scope Control

The research corpus is purposeful and limited and does not claim statistical representativeness of all mentions of the Children of Israel in the Qur'an or all Biblical traditions. Nor is the aim of the study to determine the historical priority of the Qur'an or the Pentateuch or to prove a definitive route of adaptation. The claims of the article must therefore remain limited to the selected corpus, the specific levels of correspondence, and the evidence presented for each case .

4. Comparative Analysis of Five Axes

4.1. Covenant, Blessing, and Responsibility

In the Qur'an, the mention of blessing and covenant of the Children of Israel in the selected verses of Surah al-Baqarah, particularly verses 40, 47, 83, and 122, is situated in an address-oriented structure. "Remembering the blessing" in these units is not merely a report of a past privilege; rather, it is accompanied by fidelity to the covenant and a set of theological, devotional, and ethical obligations. Therefore, Israel's past becomes a tool for assessing the audience's religious responsibility.

In Exodus 19:5-6, Israel's special status is framed in terms of hearing the commandment and keeping the covenant, and Deuteronomy 28:1-14 links obedience with covenant blessings. A comparison of the Hebrew text shows that the election of the people here is not a separate privilege, but a relationship conditioned on hearing and keeping the commandment (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 28:1-14). Thus, the fundamental similarity of the two texts lies in the link between blessing, election, and responsibility.

The main difference in the selected corpus lies in where this relationship appears in the text's structure. In these units, the Qur'an uses address and imperative verbs to activate responsibility in the time of address. At the same time, the Pentateuch organizes the same relationship within a broader network of covenant history, Law, and ethnic identity. Therefore, the difference should not be reduced to the simple dichotomy of "Ethical covenant in the Qur'an" and "Historical covenant in the Torah"; both texts possess ethical, historical, and identity dimensions, but the relative weight of these dimensions differs in the selected corpus.

4.2. Disobedience and Breach of Covenant

In the Qur'an, verses 83-85 and 93 of Surah al-Baqarah place disobedience along the trajectory of the covenant and divine commandment. The contrast between "We hear, and we disobey" and the rhetorical question about accepting part of the Book while abandoning another part elevates disobedience beyond an isolated violation, turning it into a gap between knowing the commandment and practicing fidelity.

In the Pentateuch, disobedience also finds meaning within the covenant structure. Deuteronomy 9:7 recalls the people's past rebellions, and Deuteronomy 31:16 places the abandonment of the covenant in the people's future. Thus, in both traditions, disobedience is linked to the covenant relationship and responsibility before the divine commandment.

The important difference lies in the function of this remembrance. In the selected Qur'anic units, the past of the Children of Israel is placed in a structure of argumentation and address and provides the possibility of assessing the religious situation of the present audience; in the Pentateuch, disobedience is situated more along the trajectory of collective memory, the

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continuity of the covenant, and warning about the consequences of infidelity. Consequently, the main difference is not in the "Subject of Disobedience," but in the manner of its activation for the audience and its position in the structure of each text.

4.3. Calf Worship and Deviation from Monotheism

Calf worship is the clearest case of direct narrative correspondence in the corpus. Exodus 32 in the Hebrew text presents a relatively continuous narrative of the people's request, the making of the calf, the ceremony, Moses' return, his reaction, the confrontation with Aaron, and the consequences of the crisis (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Exod. 32). The Greek Septuagint also preserves this narrative core. In this respect, the original narrative structure in the Hebrew and Greek traditions is comparable (Rahlf's and Hanhart, 2006). Therefore, the difference between the Qur'an and Exodus 32 cannot be attributed merely to translation differences or manuscript transmission.

The Qur'an reproduces this event in several Suras and in accordance with their contexts. In Surah al-Baqarah, verses 51-54, calf worship is presented in connection with the people's wrongdoing, repentance, and consequence; in Surat al-A'rāf, verses 148-152, the making of the calf and the reaction of the Children of Israel and Aaron are foregrounded; and in Surah Ṭāhā, verses 85-97, Samiri becomes the central element in explaining the formation of the deviation.

The difference between Aaron and Samiri is analytically significant. In Exodus 32, Aaron is situated in the network of action among the people, Moses, and the Sinai covenant crisis. Still, in Ṭāhā, Samiri becomes the

central agent in explaining how the calf was formed. Consequently, the shift in narrative focus is not merely a relocation of a character; it changes the type of explanation of the origin of deviation and the distribution of responsibility among the individual agent, the leader, and the community.

This difference can also be traced to reception history. Ṭabarī in *Jāmi' al-Bayān* transmits a set of exegetical reports about Samiri, his role, Aaron's reaction, and Moses' return; therefore, the prominence of Samiri in early Islamic exegetical tradition is also a subject worthy of examination, but these reports cannot be equated with the Qur'anic text (Ṭabarī, 2001). Consequently, the present analysis distinguishes between "Samiri in the Qur'anic text" and "Samiri in the narrative expansion of exegetical tradition".

Furthermore, differences among the textual traditions of the Pentateuch show that the title "Torah" should not be treated as a completely uniform historical text. Therefore, for this article, the Hebrew text is the primary criterion, and Greek and Samaritan evidence is used only to control textual differences. This caution prevents any difference between the Qur'an and a later translation or version from being directly attributed to a difference between "The Qur'an" and "The Torah".

In conclusion, the main difference between the Qur'an and Exodus 32 in the present corpus is not the existence of calf worship, but the refocusing of the narrative, the manner of explaining the origin of deviation, and the distribution of responsibility among characters and the community. This finding shows that changing a character's position can, without changing the core of the event, place a different ethical and theological issue at the center of the narrative.

4.4. Election and Preference of the Children of Israel

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The findings do not support a simple opposition between acceptance and rejection of election. Both traditions regard the Children of Israel as having a special status in relation to God and associate this status with covenant, commitment, and responsibility. In the Qur'an, preference in the selected units appears alongside remembrance of blessing and address; therefore, the people's special status can serve as a basis for reminding them of responsibility and assessing fidelity. In the Pentateuch, the election of the people is situated in the network of covenant, Law, and collective identity and finds meaning through maintaining the covenant bond and obeying the commandment.

From a soteriological perspective, this structure matters because the election of the people cannot be directly equated with guaranteed salvation. In both corpora, the special status of the people is situated within a relationship in which blessing and privilege are accompanied by commitment and fidelity; therefore, breach of covenant or infidelity can raise the issue of consequence and judgment. In this sense, election is more a covenantal and responsibility-generating condition than "Immunity from Judgment," and its religious effects depend on how the relationship with God is maintained.

This point has another implication: in the present corpus, the difference between the two traditions should be sought not merely in the principle of accepting election, but in how election is linked to the people's religious destiny. The Qur'an, at least in the selected units, places the mention of election within the structure of address and admonition and thereby links the people's past to the assessment of the present audience's religious situation. The Pentateuch, by contrast, organizes election more along the trajectory of

collective covenant, Law, and the continuity of the people's identity. Thus, in both traditions, election has an identity and theological dimension, but this election alone is not the final answer to the question of salvation; the main issue is the relationship between election, fidelity, and its consequences within the covenant framework.

Accordingly, the concept of election in the studied corpus has a limited but significant soteriological implication: divine election is not a privilege separate from responsibility, and the people's special status does not automatically guarantee salvation. However, a complete examination of the individual, collective, and eschatological forms of this concept requires a corpus broader than the present verses and exegetical texts. It exceeds the scope of the present study. What the current corpus shows with greater certainty is the structural link between election, covenant, fidelity, judgment, and responsibility.

4.5. Confrontation with Truth and Fidelity to the Law

Verses 75 of al-Baqarah, 78 of Āli 'Imrān, and 13 of al-Mā'idah speak of certain types of distortion, concealment, or alteration of speech. In contrast, Deuteronomy 4:2, 6:12, and 8:11 warn against adding to and subtracting from the commandment, forgetting God, and forgetting the ordinances. Both sets are related to responsibility before the divine commandment and maintaining the relationship with revelation, but their conceptual scope is not identical.

Therefore, these two sets do not fall at the level of direct conceptual correspondence. "Distortion" in Qur'anic usage has a broader scope than the selected warnings of Deuteronomy and it cannot be directly equated with "Adding or Subtracting" or "Forgetting the Commandment." The more valid

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conclusion is limited conceptual overlap in the domain of fidelity to the commandment and avoidance of severance from the Law.

This limitation is methodologically important because it shows that in comparative study, the absence of a complete counterpart can also be a finding. On this axis, the study, instead of constructing an obligatory equivalent in the Pentateuch for the Qur'anic concept of distortion, preserves the difference in conceptual levels. Thus, the comparison between the two texts approaches a comparison of more equivalent concepts.

4.6. Summary of the Five Axes

In the five axes examined, the similarity of the Qur'an and the Pentateuch in covenant, responsibility, disobedience, calf worship, and the special status of the Children of Israel does not signify uniformity in the organization of meaning. The more explicable difference between the two traditions in the present corpus lies in the manner in which shared materials are situated in the structure of the text: the Qur'an in the selected units shows greater capacity for transforming the past into address, admonition, and the engendering of responsibility; the Pentateuch organizes the same materials more along the trajectory of covenant history, Law, and the collective identity of the people. This statement pertains to the relative predominance of functions, not an absolute dichotomy.

In the narrative of calf worship, differences in narrative focus and the distribution of responsibility show that changing narrative organization can, without changing the core of the event, create a different explanation of the agent of deviation. On the issue of election, both traditions link the special status of the Children of Israel to divine relationship and responsibility, and

the present evidence is insufficient to reduce it to inherent superiority. In the axis of distortion, too, the difference in conceptual level prevents direct correspondence, and limited overlap remains the most precise level of comparison.

Finally, the third audience is also important in this model: in the selected Qur'anic units, the past of the Children of Israel is not merely the subject of narrative, but can become a tool for admonition and evaluation for a community forming its religious identity and responsibility. This does not mean attributing any verse to a specific historical event or occasion of revelation; rather, it is inferred from the structure of the address itself and the link that the text establishes between the past and the present audience .

5. Discussion and Comparative Conclusion

5.1. From Thematic Similarity to Difference in Organization

The findings of the five axes show that the similarity of the Qur'an and the Pentateuch in covenant, election, responsibility, disobedience, and calf worship is insufficient to explain the relationship between the two texts. Both traditions place these themes within the network of the relationship between God, the people, and the divine commandment, but they differ in their position within the text's structure and in their relationship to the audience.

In the Qur'an, materials related to the Children of Israel often appear in Suras whose subject is not exclusively the history of this people; therefore, the past event can be placed within a structure of address, argumentation, admonition, and evaluation. In the Pentateuch, the same materials are primarily organized along the trajectory of the ancestors' narrative, the Exodus, the covenant, the Law, and the people's destiny. Therefore, the difference should not be reduced to "Ethical Qur'an/Historical Torah".

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This conclusion aligns with the study's narrative approach: the meaning of narrative material derives not only from its content, but also from its position in the narrative structure, focalization, order, and type of address (Ricoeur, 1984; Genette, 1980).

5.2. The Past as Covenantal Memory and Address to the Third Audience

One important finding of the study is that, in the selected Qur'anic units, the past of the Children of Israel sometimes transcends narrative subjecthood and becomes a tool for assessing the present audience. When placed within the structure of address and argumentation, the remembrance of blessing, covenant, disobedience, and religious deviation creates a connection between past experience and present responsibility.

This feature can be explained by the concept of the "third audience": a community that is not the main subject of past events, but for whom the narrative is reread so its relationship to earlier religious heritage, religious responsibility, and collective identity can be regulated. In this framework, the Children of Israel are not merely the subject of speech; their history can become a mirror for assessing the audience community. This point aligns with studies linking the representation of the Children of Israel to the formation of the Islamic self-image (Rubin, 1999; Neuwirth, 2019).

In the historical context, this function can also be understood in the communicative milieu of the Qur'an with Jewish and Christian communities and the identity conflicts of the early Muslim community. Still, no verse should be reduced to a specific event or definitive occasion of revelation. Therefore, "Third Audience" in this article is an analytical concept of the text, not a claim to determine the definitive date of revelation of any unit.

In the Pentateuch, the past of the Children of Israel is also collective memory and a tool of ethical warning; the difference is that this past is situated within the people's continuous narrative of covenant and Law. Therefore, historical and address functions are not mutually exclusive; a narrative can simultaneously be historical-identity memory and a tool for engendering responsibility. The difference between the two traditions in the present corpus lies more in how they activate these capacities.

5.3. Calf Worship and the Reason for the Change in Narrative Focus

The narrative of calf worship is the clearest example of why the organization differs. Exodus 32 organizes the event along the trajectory of the Sinai covenant crisis and the relationship among the people, Moses, and Aaron; the Qur'an reconstructs it across several Suras, according to each Sura's context. In Exodus, Aaron is situated in the network of action between the people and Moses, and responsibility is framed in relation to leadership and the community; in Ṭāhā, Samiri is the central agent in explaining the formation of the calf. Therefore, the shift in focus is not merely a relocation of a character, but a change in the model of explaining deviation and the distribution of agency.

This difference can be explained by the narrative structure of the texts: the Qur'an refocuses the elements of the story in accordance with each Sura, without necessarily requiring a definitive historical cause or specific transmission route for this difference.

The historicity of the event must be kept separate from its representation. No definitive, uniform evidence exists for the historicity of the Exodus, the Israelite stay at Sinai, and calf worship; therefore, this study examines Exodus 32 as narrative-religious data, not as a proven historical report (Pioske, 2022).

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5.4. Election, Collective Identity, and Theological Responsibility

The findings do not support a simple opposition between "Acceptance" and "Rejection" of election. Both traditions consider the Children of Israel to have a special status in relation to God and associate this status with covenant and commitment.

In the Qur'an, preference in the selected units appears alongside remembrance of blessing and address; therefore, the people's special status can serve as a basis for reminding them of their responsibility. In the Pentateuch, the election of the people is situated in the network of covenant, Law, and collective identity. Theologically, the key point is that election is accompanied by responsibility, and in the present corpus, neither tradition presents election as meaning immunity from judgment or freedom from the need for fidelity to God.

This conclusion shifts election from ethnic privilege to the relationship between election, commitment, and collective identity. From a soteriological and eschatological perspective, a distinction must also be made between the "Historical election of the people" and "Salvation"; therefore, in the present corpus, election is neither equivalent to salvation nor a source of immunity from judgment, but primarily a covenantal and responsibility-generating category. A comprehensive theory of salvation requires broader evidence.

5.5. The Boundaries of Comparison in the Issue of Distortion

On the axis of distortion, the evidence is insufficient to establish a direct correspondence between Qur'anic uses of "Distortion" and the selected passages of the Pentateuch. The Qur'an speaks of domains such as altering, concealing, or transforming speech, while Deuteronomy in the selected

passages emphasizes adding to and subtracting from the commandment and forgetting the ordinances.

Therefore, the relationship between the two sets remains limited to conceptual overlap. This limitation is not merely a weakness of data; it is a methodological result, because constructing direct correspondence between non-equivalent concepts reduces the precision of comparison.

Consequently, the absence of a complete counterpart can also be a comparative finding and prevents dichotomization between complete similarity and complete unrelatedness.

5.6. The Pentateuch as a Multi-Layered Textual Tradition

One implication of this method is that the "Torah" should not be assumed to be a completely unified text devoid of transmission history. The Hebrew text as a criterion, the Greek translation, and the Samaritan tradition occupy different positions, and comparison must specify which textual witness it addresses (Elliger, Rudolph and Schenker, 1997; Rahlfs and Hanhart, 2006; Florentin and Tal, 2025).

Therefore, the Hebrew text is the primary basis for comparison, and Greek and Samaritan evidence enters only when it affects the analysis. This distinction differentiates the comparison of the Qur'an with the Pentateuch from the imprecise comparison of the Qur'an with a contemporary Persian translation.

5.7. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Comparative study of the Qur'an and the Bible gains greater explanatory power when it goes beyond listing similarities and differences and simultaneously poses three questions: 'At what level is a material correspondent?' 'How has it been reorganized in the structure of each text?'

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‘And what narrative, theological, or audience-related consequence does this reorganization have’?

This framework applies to comparative religious studies, comparative theology, and interfaith dialogue, as it prevents both the homogenization of every similarity and the treatment of every difference as complete unrelatedness.

This model can be extended to broader corpora and other subjects and, by combining textual analysis, manuscript evidence, and reception history, can examine the reasons for narrative differences more precisely.

5.8. Conclusion

In sum, the findings of the five axes do not support a dualistic and oppositional model between the Qur'an and the Pentateuch. Both traditions employ themes such as covenant, election, responsibility, disobedience, and calf worship, but they organize these materials differently.

The main contribution of the study, therefore, is not merely proving similarity or difference, but demonstrating the semantic consequence of reorganizing a shared material. In the Qur'an, the selected materials about the Children of Israel find greater capacity for being placed in the structure of address, admonition, and assessment of the present audience; in the Pentateuch, the same materials are situated more along the trajectory of the narrative of covenant, Law, and the collective identity of the people. This difference is relative, and both texts possess historical, ethical, and identity capacities.

In the narrative of calf worship, the change in focus from the network of Aaron, Moses, and the community in Exodus to the prominence of Samiri in Ṭāhā creates a different pattern of agency and responsibility. In election, both

traditions link the people's special status to divine relationship and commitment. In the issue of distortion, too, the evidence is insufficient for direct correspondence, and limited overlap remains the most precise level of comparison.

From this perspective, the difference between the Qur'an and the Pentateuch should be analyzed in the link between text, narrative structure, audience, and the system of responsibility, not merely in the presence or absence of similar narrative elements .

Conclusion

This study conducted a comparative analysis of the representation of the Children of Israel in the Qur'an and the Pentateuch, focusing on the selection, organization, focalization, and function of narrative and conceptual material; to avoid homogenizing non-equivalent concepts, the analysis distinguished between direct narrative correspondences, direct conceptual correspondence, and limited conceptual overlap, treating the Qur'anic text and the Hebrew Pentateuch as the primary witnesses. The Septuagint, the Samaritan tradition, and early Islamic commentaries were also used independently, primarily to trace reception history, textual diversity, and the formation of certain readings. The findings showed that the similarity of the two traditions in subjects such as covenant, blessing, responsibility, disobedience, calf worship, and the special status of the Children of Israel does not signify uniformity in the organization of meaning. The fundamental difference in the examined corpus is manifested not so much in the mere presence of these themes, but in their position in the structure of each text, the type of address, and the manner of linking the past with religious responsibility. Therefore, the difference

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between the Qur'an and the Pentateuch should not be formulated in the simple dichotomy of "Address-oriented and ethical Qur'an" versus "Historical Torah"; rather, one should speak of the relative predominance of certain functions in each corpus. The Qur'an in the selected units shows a greater capacity to transform materials related to the past of the Children of Israel into address, admonition, and assessment of the present audience. At the same time, the Pentateuch organizes the same materials more along the trajectory of covenant history, Law, and the people's collective identity.

In the narrative of calf worship, differences in focalization and the distribution of responsibility show that a narrative's reformulation can, without changing the core event, transform the explanation of deviation. In Exodus 32, Aaron is situated in the network of action among Moses, the community, and the Sinai covenant crisis, while in Surah Tāhā, Samiri gains greater prominence in explaining the calf's formation and the origin of deviation. Therefore, the difference between the two texts is not merely the omission or addition of a character, but lies in a shift in the model of agency, leadership, and responsibility. However, this difference alone is insufficient to prove historical priority, direct adaptation, or a definitive transmission route of the narrative. It must be analyzed through textual representation and reception history.

On the axis of election, too, the evidence does not support reducing election to inherent superiority or a privilege independent of responsibility. In both traditions, the special status of the Children of Israel is situated within a relationship with God and covenant and is accompanied by commitment and fidelity. In the Qur'an, preference in the selected units is placed alongside the

remembrance of blessing and address and can lead to reminding responsibility and assessing the religious situation of the present audience; in the Pentateuch, the election of the people also finds meaning in the network of covenant, Law, and the continuity of collective identity.

From a soteriological perspective, the key finding is that divine election is not, in itself, equivalent to a guarantee of salvation or immunity from judgment. In the examined corpus, election is more a covenantal, responsibility-generating condition in which blessing and special status are accompanied by fidelity and commitment, and infidelity can raise the issue of consequences and judgment. Therefore, in the analysis of election, a distinction must be made between the historical election of the people, collective identity, and the question of salvation. This distinction allows the special status of the Children of Israel to be understood not as a guarantee of salvation, but as a divine-covenantal relationship with religious obligations and ethical consequences. At the same time, the present corpus is insufficient to present a comprehensive theory of individual salvation, collective salvation, or eschatology in the Qur'an and Jewish tradition; however, it provides the necessary evidence to demonstrate the structural link between election, covenant, fidelity, judgment, and responsibility.

Along the axis of confrontation with truth and fidelity to the Law, the study also refrained from establishing direct correspondence between Qur'anic uses of distortion and the selected passages of the Pentateuch. The difference in the conceptual scope of distortion from the warnings about adding, subtracting, or forgetting the commandment kept the relationship to a limited conceptual overlap. This result shows that in comparative studies, the absence of a complete counterpart for a concept can also be a valid finding, as it

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prevents hasty equating and the placement of non-equivalent evidence in a single framework.

From an audience-oriented perspective, the past of the Children of Israel in the selected Qur'anic units can help assess the present audience. In this framework, the concept of the third audience refers to a community not present at the original events but, through rereading, confronted with questions of identity, religious responsibility, and its relationship to earlier heritage. This concept clarifies why events related to the Children of Israel in the Qur'an function beyond historical reporting, serving as admonition and assessment of the present community's religious situation. This interpretation does not attribute any verse to a specific event or definitive occasion of revelation; rather, it is based on the structure of the address and the text's connection between past and audience. From a textual perspective, the results also show that the Pentateuch should not be considered textually uniform without qualification, nor should its narratives be treated as direct historical reports without independent evidence; distinguishing the Hebrew text as the criterion, along with Greek and Samaritan evidence, and separating the primary text from exegetical tradition, allows for more precise and controlled comparison. Accordingly, the article does not make a final judgment about the definitive historicity of the Exodus, the Sinai covenant, or calf worship, nor does it treat narrative differences as evidence of historical priority or lateness.

Finally, the most important contribution of the study is that it transfers the comparison of the Qur'an and the Pentateuch from the level of the simple question "What is shared?" to the level of the question of how the shared

material is reorganized, its position in the structure of the text, and the function it acquires in the new context. Accordingly, comparative study of religious texts gains greater explanatory power when it considers correspondence, narrative structure, focalization, audience position, and each text's theological implications. This framework, while preserving the independence of each tradition, enables a more precise dialogue among Qur'anic studies, Biblical studies, inter-textual studies, and comparative theology. However, these results depend on the limited corpus of five axes, and generalizing them to all mentions of the Children of Israel in the Qur'an or all layers of Biblical tradition requires broader research .

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