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WHO WERE THE KORANIC PROPHETS 'AD, THAMUD, HUD, AND SALIH?

Robert Eisenman

The stories in the Koran about 'Ad and Thamud, Hud, and Salih have always been thought to show Muhammad's acquaintance with unknown cities and prophets in the Arabian culture sphere. The normal understanding is that these stories have to do with little-remembered Arab holy men, functioning in some identifiable or quasi-identifiable locale in the Arabian Peninsula at some time in the primordial past of the pre-Islamic period.

The usual explanations are full of forced connections and nonsensical rationalizations. All is hazy or unknown and little if anything of note emerges. A typical presentation runs something like this: "'Ad was the name of a tribe who lived in the remote past in Arabia. At one time they ruled over most of the fertile parts of greater Arabia, particularly Yemen, Syria, and Mesopotamia" (i.e., just about everywhere). "They were the first people to exercise dominion over practically the whole of Arabia." (This is from an Ahmadiyya commentary, but almost all present the same or similar insights.)

Another: "The Thamud people were the successors to the culture and civilization of the 'Ad people" (Yusuf Ali), and almost all connect these persons or peoples, in some manner, with Abraham, because in almost all references they are followed by or are connected with an evocation of Abraham. This last is probably true, but in a different manner

than most people would surmise, and they probably have nothing whatever to do with any genealogical connection either with Abraham or Noah.

Here are two others: "The Thamud tribe lived in the western parts of Arabia, having spread from Aden northward to Syria. They lived shortly before the time of Ishmael. Their territory was adjacent to that of 'Ad, but they lived mostly in the hills...The Prophet Salih lived after Hud and was probably a contemporary of Abraham." Here is another: "The Thamud people were the successors to the culture and civilization of the 'Ad people...They were cousins to the 'Ad, apparently a younger branch of the same race. Their story also belongs to Arabian tradition, according to which their eponymous ancestor Thamud was a son of 'Abir (brother of Aram) the son of Sam (Shem), the son of Noah."

Most of this is drawn from real or imagined references in the Koran and on the whole represents a total garbling of dimly recalled and little-understood oral tradition. What we shall show in this paper is that they come from traditions Muhammad or his voices (angelic or real) derived from either Northern Syria or Southern Iraq, probably the latter. If this is so, then the connections of Muhammad with visits to Southern Iraq or even perhaps Northern Syria and the caravan trade that could have easily carried him or those he came in contact with to such locales are greatly

PROPHETS SALIH?

people would surmise, and probably have nothing whatever to do with any genealogical connection to Abraham or Noah.

There are two others: "The Thamud of the western parts of Arabia, and Ad from Aden northward to Yemen, lived shortly before the time of Jesus. Their territory was adjacent to that of Ad, but they lived mostly in the mountains. The Prophet Salih lived after Ad, but he was probably a contemporary of it." Here is another: "The Thamud people were the successors of the culture and civilization of the Aramaeans... They were cousins to the Nabataeans, a younger branch of the Semites. Their story also belongs to the Near East, according to which their famous ancestor Thamud was the brother (brother of Aram) the son of Noah, the son of Noah."

If this is drawn from real or traditional references in the Koran and the Bible, it represents a total garbling of the tradition. What we shall show in this section is that they come from traditions of Ishmael or his voices (angelic voices) derived from either Northern Mesopotamia or Southern Iraq, probably the same as is so, then the connections between Ad with visits to Southern Arabia and perhaps Northern Syria and the caravan trade that could have reached him or those he came in contact with to such locales are greatly

reinforced.

I will try to show that, in fact, they do have to do with cities, peoples, or "prophets," "warners," or "messengers" within the "Arabian" culture sphere, but what is not generally appreciated is that this word must have a much wider connotation than is normally considered to apply and, as a result, these stories have a much wider transmission framework and reflect Northern Syrian conversion stories, very important to both the history of Judaism and Christianity in that region—and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The key connections are 'Ad with Addai/Edessa/Adiabene, Thamud with Thomas, Hud with Judas Thomas (Thomas' other or real name—also equivalent to Thaddaeus, Judas Barsabbas, Judas the Zealot, and, possibly in this sense, "Judas Iscariot"), and Salih ("the Just" in Arabic), of course, with James the Just or James the Righteous One, the brother of either Jesus or "Hud." Even Muslim sources and commentators have garnered the conclusion, no doubt based on his name, that Salih was "a Just and Righteous Man."

The stories are important, too, because they unify the several conversion stories in early Christian and Jewish sources relating to this region. In our view, these stories have to do with the conversion of the King of Edessa, known as Abgarus or Agbarus, and the kings and queen of the Royal House of Adiabene—according to Syriac and Armenian sources, the consort of this "Agbarus," called in Christian sources, "the Great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates." They also have a direct link to the development of the tradition that James the Righteous One sent down Judas Barsabbas in Acts 15: 22-32 to regulate matters relating to

this evangelization. These Northern Syrian conversion stories are also important, because they throw light on the puzzling terminology in the Koran, "Sabaean"—which, in Islamic as well as Christian sources, is often confused with "Saba" or "Sheba," Southern Arabia or "Ethiopia."

Let us take these matters one at a time. In the first place, it is rarely, if ever, realized that the word "Arab" or "Arabia" was being used in Roman times to encompass a much wider expanse of territory and personalities. Roman historians, such as Tacitus, routinely use the word "Arab" to refer to Northern Syrian persons and kings. For Tacitus, King Acbar or Abgar (we shall comment on this confusion below) is "King of the Arabs." Other sources refer to him as "Black." We shall deal with this designation in due course as well.

I have treated this oversight in the map section of my book *James the Brother of Jesus* (Viking Penguin, 1997), showing "Arabia" as extending up into Mesopotamia as far as Edessa and Adiabene in Northern Syria. Petra, across Jordan or on the other side of the Aravah, is clearly a locale, the kings of which are being referred to as "Arab." This would make Herod, whose mother is from an aristocratic house from Petra, probably related to the king of Petra, what loosely goes by the name of an "Arab."

Modern scholars, following one or two leads in Josephus, are fond of referring to this culture as "Nabataean," after "Nabaoth," one of Abraham's sons by his third wife; but it is doubtful if these peoples really ever referred to themselves in this manner or anything other than "Arabs," a term with wide currency in the Roman first-second centuries. It is

this that Muhammad seems unwittingly to be echoing in his references to these legendary peoples of 'Ad and Thamud.

Such a broader definition also imparts an entirely new dimension to the notice in Paul's Galatians about how, after receiving his version of the good news as he taught it among the Gentiles, he did not return to Jerusalem or discuss it with any living being, but "went straightway into Arabia" and only thereafter back to Damascus (1:17). The question is, precisely what did he mean by this reference to "Arabia"?

Normally, it is only thought of as having to do with Petra or some such locale—even a Qumran or Essene-style novitiate in the Judean or Transjordanian desert. But this broader definition allows us to consider whether it meant as far north as Edessa or the "Land of the Edessenes" or "Osrhoenes" (Assyrians—this is how it will be referred to in Eusebius)—or even "Adiabene" neighboring on Edessa, some hundred miles further east; or as far south as Southern Iraq, Messene or Antiochia Charax (present-day Basrah), the area in which Josephus first traces Izates' contact with the merchant he is calling "Ananias," who, together with another teacher, unnamed in his account, teaches a sort of conversion that does not require circumcision.

This would mean that what Paul means by "into Arabia" could be much further afield than is generally appreciated, even as far north and east as Antioch Orrhoe and/or Adiabene in Northern Mesopotamia. This is before his return to "Damascus," from where he later (or earlier) seems to have escaped from representatives of the "Arab" King Aretas of Petra (Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:32 with Acts 9:25). Acts' tendentious

account of the same events is secondary. These, it should be noticed, also involve the contact with a mysterious and unidentified man named "Ananias" (it should be appreciated that this same "Ananias" will materialize in the Syriac accounts of King Agbar's or Agbar's conversion).

There is another matter that should be treated in the context of these notices and that is the location of the fabled Mount Ararat, where Noah's ark came to rest, which the perspicacious reader of the Koran will realize is associated, in most sections, with these allusions to "Hud" and "'Ad," "Salih" and "Thamud." Modern hagiography has, of course, placed the ark in Northern Anatolia on the Russian border. This is partly due to the wandering of "Armenia" northwards ("Armenia" presumably being the area where Aramaic was originally spoken), so that the only real Armenia left is in Southern Russia. The point is that this ark was always associated in some manner with "Armenia" and, as we shall see, this is basically the implication of these notices in the Koran as well.

But for early historians, such as Josephus or the well-known Christian early Church heresiologist, Hippolytus (third-century Rome—thought by some to be a misnomer for a different, anonymous historian, but nonetheless early; the manuscript attributed to him on sects was found in the 19th century at Mount Athos in Greece), the ark came to rest in the Land of the Adiabeni—that is, the Adiabene of interest to us in this discussion. This turns out to be modern Kurdistan or the area of Northern Iraq, moving up into the mountains of Southern Turkey (not Northern Turkey). In fact, one of the best witnesses to this fact is the twelfth-century Jewish

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traveler Benjamin of Tudela.

He actually visited the mosque on an island in the Tigris dedicated to the place where the ark came to rest and, unless he is dreaming (which I fear he is not), this is just north of the present-day city of Mosul—in fact, he locates it between Nisibis and Mosul. As he puts it, leaving Haran (the Carrhae or Carron of Josephus and other historians) and passing through Nisibis, he comes to "an island in the Tigris at the foot of Mount Ararat, four miles distant from the spot where the ark of Noah rested; Omar ibn al Katab removed the ark from the summit of the two mountains and made a mosque of it."

However mythological, this perfectly accords with what Hippolytus in the third century and Josephus in the first are saying, almost a millennium earlier. It also accords with Talmudic data connecting the ark to the land from which Queen Helen came—that is, Adiabene or Kurdistan. Whether he is accurate in this tradition or not (who can be accurate in any tradition concerning "Noah's ark"?) is unimportant. The point is that this is where he thinks the ark came to rest, as did a number of his predecessors—some already cited. Because of the notices I am treating in this paper, which connect 'Ad and Thamud with "the Folk of Noah"—not to mention "the People of Abraham"—and the place where the ark came to rest; I would submit the Koran seems to as well. Mosul, of course, is connected to ancient Ninevah, and both are but a little distant from Arbela, considered by most to have been the capital of the Adiabene on the Northern reaches of the Tigris.

'Ad on its surface is, in fact, linguistically related not only to Edessa,

but also to the name Adiabene. One can go further than this. In all these stories about conversions in Northern Syria to some form of Christianity, retrospectively it is depicted as orthodox Christianity, but quite probably it was heterodox or one of the manifold varieties of what is sometimes referred to as "Jewish Christianity"—and this is also the case with Helen's or her son Izates' conversions to so-called "Judaism" further East, connected to these. "Jewish Christianity" is poor nomenclature, but for lack of better ones—perhaps Judeo-Christianity; even the Arabic "Sabaeen" would be more appropriate to our sources—one can agree to employ it. The terms Ebionitism, Elchasaites, Masbuthaeans (i.e., Daily Bathers, from the Syriac root, 'S-B-', to immerse, or the Arabic variation, "Sabaeans" or "Subba"), "Mandaeans," and in Palestine even "Essenes," all have a common focus on bathing or ritual immersion. These are more technical terms—many arising out of the works of early Christian heresiologists (for the Talmud "*Minim*" or "*Saddukim*") of the second to fifth centuries, or Josephus—unfortunately not widely understood in the population at large. For instance, Epiphanius at the end of the fourth, beginning of the fifth century, refers to an unknown bathing group in Trans-Jordan and beyond, descended from Essenes and Ebionites and interchangeable with Elchasaites, whom he calls, "Sampsaeans." Writing in Greek, Epiphanius has no idea of the derivation of the term.

This last is almost certainly what goes by the name of "Sabaeen" in Islamic culture. It should be appreciated that even in Benjamin of Tudela's seeming very late twelfth-century account, one of the two synagogues he visits

in Mosul, he calls that of "Nahum the Elchasaite," i. e., Nahum the Daily Bather or in Islamic terms, *al-Mughtasilah* or *al-Hasih*, as the Fihrist calls the leader of the Mughtasilah (not to be confused with the later group, *al-Mu'tazilah*). In fact, this may be a variation of the word "Karaites," which would make the links between these two groups of Jewish sectarians interesting indeed. However this may be, this means that even in Benjamin of Tudela's time—unless his manuscript is completely corrupt—there were Jewish sectarian Daily Bathers living in Mosul or Arbela/Adiabene even in the twelfth century.

Many of these groups move on in the third and fourth centuries, again in Southern Iraq, into what comes to be known as "Manichaeans"—the only real difference being that while the Elchasaite/Ebionite/Mughtasilite and Sabaeen groups stressed Daily Bathing, the Manichaeans abjured it—and from there on into Islam. In fact, Mani, it has become clear from more recently uncovered texts, was actually from an Elchasaite family in this same Messene area of Southern Iraq.

The point that all these groups actually have in common, including the latter-day Muslims (who like the Manichaeans also discarded the bathing ideology of the early and still extant "Subba of the Marshes"—the Fihrist calls them the "Mughtasilah of the marshes") is the "True Prophet" ideology. It would appear, the present-day Saddam Hussein has finally eliminated them from history for all time by draining these same marshes—if recent reports are true of the devastation inflicted and the flight of some of these groups, including "Shi'ites" into Iran.

This ideology is very definitely

strong at Qumran, where the passage underlying it (Deuteronomy 18:18-19) is quoted in the Messianic proof texts, called *Testimonia*. It is also strong among the Ebionites, important to Elchasaites who allegedly follow a prophet mysteriously called "Elchasai," and strong among followers of Mani. From there, it proceeds into Islam.

This is not the only Dead Sea Scroll/Jamesian/Ebionite idea that proceeds into Islam: two others are the formulation "believe and do good works," which fairly permeates the capsule descriptions of Islam in the Koran; no different than the Jamesian formulation "faith working with works," and similar such formulations at Qumran, as, for instance, in the Habakkuk Peshet exegesis of Habakkuk 2:4: "The Righteous shall live by his faith"—all with an emphasis on "doing." The second are Islamic dietary regulations, quoted some five times in the Koran, consisting of, among other things, the Jamesian "things sacrificed to idols" ("that immolated to an idol" in the Koran) and "carrion." These are, of course, based on James' directives to overseas communities, repeated three times in the Book of Acts (Chapters 15 and 21) and labored over so disingenuously by Paul in 1 Corinthians 8-11 to produce his formulation that "all things are lawful" and "communion with the blood of Christ").

The formulation we have here is probably based on the Pseudoclementine *Homilies*, also the source of much speculation about the "True Prophet" ideology and bathing—originally probably a Syriac work. Its translator, Rufinus, took it into Greek at the end of the fourth century and its companion volume, the *Recognitions*, into Latin at approximately the same time. The

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formulation, "carrion," reproduced in
these formulations in the Koran, is clearly
signaled there, in place of the rather
garbled "strangled things" in the Greek
New Testament, but this meaning is just
as easily derived, even from this last (see
my *James the Brother of Jesus*).

We are now ready to approach
these notices about a conversion that
took place in Northern Syria in a place
our sources are calling "Edessa"—a late
Greco-Syriac or Aramaic name for the
town -- presumably in the First Century,
having to do with a king there known
as Agbar or Acbar (the Latin pronuncia-
tion) or Abgar. The document Eusebius
claims to be translating, as we saw above,
calls him Abgar Uchama or Agbar the
Black, and he is most probably to be
identified with Abgar V, c. 4 BC to 50
CE. The fifth-century Armenian historian,
Moses of Chorene, whom some consider
a pseudonym for a later ninth-century
Armenian historian, is already testifying
to the difficulty Westerners are having
with names based on Semitic roots and
such a reversal of letters is a common
phenomenon for those familiar with the
vagaries of translating Middle Eastern
nomenclature.

I prefer to use the Latin derivative
"Agbar" because of its clear connection
with the garbled name "Agabus" in Acts,
a "prophet" who was supposed to have
come down from Judea to "Antioch"
and predicted the famine (11:28). This
idea of a famine will also bear some
connection with these Koranic notices
about the problems in either "'Ad" or
"Thamud." The names, Edessa and even
Adiabene, too, have a clear relationship
with the terminology "'Ad" and the
prophet called "Addai" in some sources,
particularly Syriac.

It is not clear to me when the name

"Edessa" gained currency, but before it
was called "Edessa" it was apparently
called "Antiochia Orrhoe" or "Antioch
by Callirhoe"—there being not one, but
at least four "Antiochs" in the Seleucid
Empire previously, the one at the bottom
of the Tigris Delta—Antiochia Charax (in
Greek times, Charax Spasini), Antioch
on the Orontes, Antioch in Pisidia men-
tioned in Acts, and this one. Antioch
Orrhoe or by-Callirhoe was on the upper
reaches of the Euphrates, not far from
Carrhae or the Ancient city of Haran,
that is, Abraham's place of origin. This
fact will have tremendous bearing, not
only on our early Christian and Jewish
sources, but also quite clearly on the
Koran itself.

In other articles, "MMT as a Jamesian
Letter to the Great King of the Peoples
beyond the Euphrates" and "The
Sociology of MMT and the Conversions
of King Agbarus and Queen Helen of
Adiabene," I have already contended
that the "Antioch" intended in these
several notices in Acts about individuals,
such as "Agabus," "some insisting on
circumcision," "some from James," and
"Judas Barsabbas," was not Antioch on
the Orontes near the Mediterranean
coast, but rather the one in Northern
Syria, connected to the name "'Ad,"
where these great legendary conversions
took place, and incidentally, where the
Holy Shroud was ultimately alleged to
have come from.

These notices, reflecting Paul's Letter
to the Galatians and the confrontations
at "Antioch" with the "some from James"
of "the party of the circumcision," are
about individuals, such as "Agabus,"
Judas Barsabbas," some insisting that
unless you are circumcised you can-
not be saved" who trigger the famous
"Jerusalem Council." They also contain

the note that it was at "Antioch" where "Christians" were first called Christians (11:26).

We tend to think there was nothing really happening at this time in the "Antioch by the Orontes" and the only reason we think so, as do the authors of Acts as well, is because of our and their respective ignorance. What was happening was happening here in Northern Syria with these legendary conversions, in the Land of the Edessenes or Osrhoens/Assyrians, the lands of "the great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates." In our sources, these lands are also being called "Arab." It turns out, as well, that the intermediary in this correspondence between this "Great King" and Jerusalem in Syriac sources was also one "Ananias," a not unremarkable coincidence.

The story as we have it appears in Eusebius and concerns two characters, called Judas Thomas and Thaddaeus. Neither of these is properly identified in any Christian source. In the Gospel of John, for instance, Thomas is called "Didymus Thomas," i. e., "Twin" in Greek and "Twin" in Aramaic, "Twin Twin." At Nag Hammadi and in the Gospel of Thomas, he is "Didymus Judas Thomas," combining the two sorts of appellations, but, once more, clearly unaware of the tautology of "Didymus" and "Thomas." All Gospel presentations, too, of a disciple or apostle called "Thomas" must be seen as either suspect, uninformed, or dissimulating. Even in these, when he appears as the "missing" apostle, he sometimes overlaps "Judas Iscariot"; when he insists on eating and drinking with the risen Messiah, he sometimes overlaps James, as per the presentation of him in the apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews.

It is, however, only in the Syriac sources—and we would include in these, the source Eusebius is working from to produce his narrative of the Agbarus correspondence—that this appellative "Judas" is always and probably accurately joined to his other title. That in some sense this "twin" theme has to do with the "brother" theme in sources about James and the other "brothers" is probably hardly to be gainsaid, and that all also have in some sense to do with one "Judas" in some manner related either to Jesus or James, should also be clear. The attaching of "Judas" to the name "Thomas" in Eusebius' source, but not in his own writings, also bears out its authenticity, though not necessarily its accuracy in terms of *dramatis personae*—that is, it is not necessarily reliable as to characters and subject matter, only that something of this kind appears to have happened.

Where "Thaddaeus" is concerned, once again in apostle lists, he is the same as the apostle Luke is calling "Judas of James" ("Judas the brother of James" in the Letter of Jude). For some recensions of Matthew and Syriac documents, such as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, he bears the name "Lebbaeus," perhaps a garbling of "Alphaeus," as in James the son of Alphaeus in the Gospels, or of "Cleophas," the name of Mary's other husband and the seeming father of these "brothers," or a garbling of James' mysterious cognomen in all early Church sources, "Oblis"—meaning in these same sources, "Protection of the People." Eusebius, for instance, doesn't even know if Thaddaeus is an apostle or a disciple (if there is any difference) and what finally emerges in all these sources is that these two individuals, Thaddaeus and Thomas, are probably

never, only in the Syriac we would include in these, Eusebius is working from to narrative of the Agbarus—this appellative ways and probably accu- to his other title. That in this "twin" theme has to "brother" theme in sources and the other "brothers" is to be gainsaid, and that in some sense to do with in some manner related us or James, should also be attaching of "Judas" to the "Imas" in Eusebius' source, his own writings, also bears identity, though not necessarily in terms of dramatis—that is, it is not necessarily to characters and subject that something of this is to have happened.

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indistinguishable.

For Nag Hammadi texts and the two Apocalypses of James, "Addai" and someone called "Theudas" (probably "Thaddaeus") are also parallel figures. Finally, in Syriac texts, Thaddaeus is none other than "Addai" himself, as he should have been suspected all along, the eponymous figure associated with all these stories and traditions centering around Edessa and the conversion of the Great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates to something—at this point "Christianity." It should be appreciated, too, that there is another divine figure called 'Ad or Addai associated with this region in remote antiquity.

Eusebius claims to have found this story personally in the Chancellery Office of Edessa and, much as Rufinus in the next generation has done with the Pseudoclementines—probably also stemming from Syriac records—translated it himself into Greek. In this story, first there is a correspondence between this individual, "Agbar," described as "the Great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates," phraseology with interesting overtones with Paul's "mission" to these same "peoples" (*ethnon* in Greek; Gentiles in Latin) and Jesus, the courier in this correspondence being the "Ananias" we have described above and a picture of sorts (perhaps the origin of the Shroud of Turin legend) is exchanged.

Then after Jesus' death, Judas, who was known as Thomas, sends Thaddaeus down to continue the evangelization of the Edessenes, finally following up this mission by one of his own. In the several accounts Eusebius gives—his own and the official one from the records of Edessa—there is confusion as to whether Thomas sends out Thaddaeus before Jesus' death or afterwards. In any event,

we can dismiss any accounts of a correspondence between "Jesus" and "the Great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates" with Ananias as the courier and rather—if it is to be entertained at all—put this under the stewardship of James, which even according to Acts was operative from before the time of the famine (45-48 CE) until James' death in 62 CE, who also sent letter(s) and messengers down to "Antioch" (i.e., Edessa).

In Eusebius, following Hegesippus (second-century Palestinian) and Clement (third century Alexandrian), James was "Leader" or "Ruler" of the early Church in Palestine immediately after the Assumption, when he was "elected." The reason for this is quite simple, even in Acts' evasive, achronological, and somewhat refurbished account, a correspondence of James to "Antioch" carried by one "Judas" is definitively described—and this in the more reliable portions of the later part of Acts. Acts even knows the subject matter of this correspondence, described above, "things sacrificed to idols," "carrion," "fornication," and "blood"—themes I have related to the single letter found at Qumran and addressed to a pious king, called "MMT"—and which any perspicacious observer will immediately recognize as the basis of Islamic dietary law to this day.

We have already discussed the relationship of the appellatives, "Antioch" and "Edessa." At Qumran, too, there are further references to a "New Covenant in the Land of Damascus," a "Diaspora" camp community in the "wilderness of the Peoples," and a "King" in "the Land of the North," "beyond Damascus," where the fallen tabernacle of David will be rebuilt, as well as a paradigmatic

circumcision of Abraham (Genesis 17) as *a sine qua non* for conversion (War Scroll and Damascus Document).

I have put all these notices together to come out with the following conclusions:

1) Addai/Thaddaeus/Theudas/and Thomas are really the same person, one Judas. In some Syriac texts he is actually also called "Judas the Zealot" (terminology little different from "Judas Iscariot," i.e., Sicarios, as we shall see below, carrying the secondary meaning of "Circumcizer").

2) It is James who sends his "brother" Judas down to "Edessa"—one should keep one's eye on the "brother" theme in all these overlapping accounts—or, as we shall see, possibly even further east in Adiabene, probably one of the provinces owing its allegiance to this "Great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates"—this is what otherwise goes by the designation "MMT" or the Letter on "things we reckon as justifying you" from Qumran.

3) Finally, the "Antioch" in the interconnected notices in Acts and Paul's Galatians is really "Edessa" or these provinces further East, all having to do with the designation "'Ad" and, in some sense, "Addai" as well. This "Judas," too, has to do with "Thomas" or, as the Koran would have it, "Thamud."

4) The Prophet "Agabus" in Acts, who predicts the "famine," really has to do with this "King Agbarus" story and the related one of the conversion of Queen Helen—probably one of his many wives and

his half-sister, as Aramo-Syriac texts aver—further east and her legendary famine-relief activities, as well as those of her son, Izates. The letter in question is James' directives to overseas communities, themselves finding their way into Koranic dietary regulations.

5) All these episodes, including the associated references in the Scrolls and the Koran, not to mention Paul's allusions to "the Faith of Abraham" and James' to Abraham as the "Friend of God" (notices also found in the Koran and at Qumran) and how he was tested in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, have to do with the importance of Abraham for these Northern Syrian locales—where holy sites are still dedicated to his name—in particular Haran, Abraham's place of origin in Northern Syria near Edessa and seemingly the kingdom bestowed upon Izates by his father—a kingdom Josephus calls Carron, i. e., Carrhae or ancient Haran.

The conversion story of Izates and his mother Queen Helen further east also involves the participation of the same "Ananias" of Acts and the Agbarus legend and takes place both in Southern and Northern Iraq. It is found in Josephus and Talmudic sources. Three of the principal fixtures are the location of the landing place of Noah's ark in their realm, i. e., "the People of Noah," the three-year famine and their munificence in relieving it in Jerusalem, and a focus on Abraham, whose paradigmatic act of circumcising himself is evoked for Izates' conversion. In other work, I have argued that this circumcision and conversion is parodied by another episode in Acts, chronologi-

half-sister, as Aramo-Syriac texts refer—further east and her legendary famine-relief activities, as well as the case of her son, Izates. The letter question is James' directives to overseas communities, themselves finding their way into Koranic dietary regulations.

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The conversion story of Izates and his mother Queen Helen further also involves the participation of the same "Ananias" of Acts and the Barab legend and takes place in Southern and Northern Iraq. Found in Josephus and Talmudic sources. Three of the principal fixtures are the location of the landing place of Noah's ark in their realm, i.e., "the land of Noah," the three-year famine and their munificence in relieving it in Mesopotamia, and a focus on Abraham, paradigmatic act of circumcising which is evoked for Izates' conversion. In my work, I have argued that this conversion and conversion is parodied in the other episode in Acts, chronologi-

cally commensurate with that of the Agabus prophecy and Paul's activities in Damascus and "Arabia," having to do with the conversion of the treasurer of the Ethiopian Queen on his way from Jerusalem to Gaza, characterized as a "eunuch" in Acts 8:26-36.

There are several parodies here, not all of which are without malice. One is of Izates' circumcision. It is important to note that the *Roman Lex Cornelia de Sicariis* (c. 95 CE to 136) viewed circumcision as a form of bodily mutilation—in this, too, the connection of Sicarios/Isariot with the act or idea of circumcision should be clear. Another concerns the color of these "Arab" converts—a matter Agbar Uchama's cognomen, "black," makes more explicit yet. The last is of the mix-up known as well in the Koran between Saba/Southern Arabia/Ethiopia and Saba/"bather"—again drawing the implication that the conversion of this "Ethiopian Queen" did involve bathing or bathers, i.e., Eusebius' Masbuthaeans—Islam's Mughtasilah or Sabaeans.

It should be appreciated that there was no "Ethiopian" Queen at this point who sent her eunuchs to Jerusalem. What there was, was Queen Helen of Adiabene—the "Ad" of all our stories—who sent her treasury agents to Egypt to buy grain for Palestine—therefore the "Gaza" allusion, Gaza being the gateway to Egypt from Palestine. Finally, the whole episode parodies the presentation in Josephus and the Talmud, where Izates is studying Genesis 17 about Abraham's circumcision, when he is asked if he understands the significance of what he is reading, whereupon Izates and his brother both immediately circumcise themselves. In Acts, the queen's "eunuch" is reading Isaiah 53, when he is

asked the same question by "Philip," whereupon he immediately descends from his chariot and is "baptized."

If we now look at the Koranic reflections in the allusions to "Hud and Salih"/"Ad and Thamud" of these really earth-shaking events in Northern Syria and Iraq; these occur primarily in Surahs 7, 11, 14, 26, 29, 46, and 54. In almost every instance, they are immediately preceded by reference to "the folk of Noah" and the story of Noah (7:69, 11:32ff., 25:37, 51.46, 54.9, etc.), with particular reference to the matter of the ark, which we have already shown to be related to this area of Adiabene between the Euphrates and the Tigris—the area of Eusebius' "the Peoples beyond the Euphrates"—"Peoples" having particular relevance to the Paul "Gentile Mission" (not to mention the importance to the technical vocabulary at Qumran), where almost all these so-called "peoples" considered the ark to have come to rest.

They are also often accompanied by allusion to "the People of Abraham" and Abraham's trial and suffering, in particular, the testing of the sacrifice of his son—in the Letter of James and in Hebrews, this testing relates to the sacrifice of Isaac, which of course would have had particular importance to someone like King Izates, our putative respondent for the Letter or Letter(s) known in Qumran studies as "MMT." It will be recalled he had already demonstrated his interest in Abraham in the matter of his conversion via circumcision. Though Muslims generally tie this reference to the sacrifice of Ishmael, it should be appreciated that Ishmael is not mentioned as such in these contexts, only Isaac (11:50-84 and 37.101-14). It is important to note, too, that Agbar VII (c. 109-117) was also known as "Abgar

bar Ezad"—nominally Izates, whom Josephus at one point, too, even calls "Izas." The point is that one of Izates' sons does nominally seem to have been called "Abgar," thus tying these two families closely, as Syro-Armenian tradition seems to think and making the conversion episodes more or less a single whole.

Several other themes also tie these notices in the Koran to the themes of our conversion stories from Eusebius, Josephus, and the Talmud and traditions swirling about the persons of James and Judas Barsabbas ("Judas Thomas"/"Judas the brother of James"?). In the first place, there is the matter of the drought always associated with allusions to 'Ad and Hud, even going on to suggest Hud was a rain-maker. This, for some reason, Muslim tradition considers to have lasted for three years. This is the same time-frame of the great drought in Josephus and Acts' Agabus notices (45-48 CE.), an intrinsic part of the stories of the conversions of King Agbarus and his putative sister or half-sister, the legendary Queen Helen.

Connected to this is the sub-theme of "whirlwind" or "rainmaking" (11.52, 46.24, etc.)—a theme extremely strong in the Nahum Commentary from Qumran and strong in traditions about James, including his rainmaking, as well as that of another of his putative ancestors and these rainmakers, Onias the Just or Honi the Circle-Drawer.

There is also the theme of "fornication" attached to both Noah's and Salih's teaching, as well as that of righteousness and justice. One of these traditions even uses a familiar Qumranism "turning aside from the right path" or "way" to describe the warning he gives (11.56, etc.). Then

there is the "brother" theme that runs through all these Koranic traditions, not only that "Hud" is the brother of "Ad," but "Salih" is the brother of Thamud. Once the allusion to "brother" occurs in regard to Thamud without even referring to Salih's proper name; but however it is seen, "brother" is an element of all these stories, as they are presented in the Koran. In our view, Hud is a "brother" of "Salih," as Judas is the brother of James.

Finally, the countryside in question, though admittedly rather obscure, sometimes "sandhills," sometimes "whirlwind," is at one point said to abound in "hills, springs, plains, and date palms" (7.75 and 26.148-9); which is a very good description of the cattle-grazing country around Edessa and Haran and the area between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers towards Mosul or Adiabene. In our view the connections are clear: 'Ad is to be equated with Edessa, Adiabene, Addai, and, by extension, Thaddaeus (even Theudas); Hud with Judas of James, Judas the brother of James, Judas Barsabbas, Judas the Zealot, and Judas Thomas. As far as I am aware, I am one of the first, if not the first, to ever point out the relationship of "Hud" with "Yehudah," but of course it makes absolute sense, even though those who conserved the tradition long ago forgot its linguistic basis. Still, the information is real.

Even this "Barsabbas" allusion, once mentioned at the beginning of Acts, when the election to succeed "Judas Iscariot" is at issue, may be another of these allusions to "bathing" or "bathers," i.e., Sabaeans. In fact, Syriac and Muslim sources make it clear that this term means "Daily Bather"—in Greco-Syriac "Masbuthaeon" ("Sampsaeon"?). The remnants of this group are still known as

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the "Subba of the Marshes" in Southern Iraq today—that is, if Saddam has left any of them alive—as they were to both al-Biruni and the Fihrist in their day. "Thamud" is to be associated with "Thomas" in these various stories; and "Salih" with "James the Just" or "James the Righteous One," the individual who set these various traditions in motion.

Not only is the "Arab" ancestry of all these stories (an ancestry the Paulinizing narrative of the Book of Acts is quick to relegate to "Ethiopia") important; so is the connecting theme of the ban on "things sacrificed to idols," the basis not only of Koranic dietary regulations, but also that of the Qumran letter known as MMT's polemicizing directives aimed at a pious king, wishing to emulate Abraham. It is also the focus of Acts' picture of James' directives to overseas communities and Paul's diminution of these in 1 Corinthians 8, where because of them he disingenuously concludes he "will never eat meat again forever" and for him, "all things are lawful."

The conclusion is that somehow Muhammad came in touch with these Northern Syrian conversion stories and other quasi-Syriac materials from the Pseudoclementine *Recognitions and Homilies* about James—either through caravan trips to Southern Iraq, where the "Subba of the Marshes" are still to be found, or further north, to the remnants of these lost civilizations in Northern Syria. In all these contexts, the constant emphasis on "Abraham," whose homeland this was, is particularly persuasive.

Not only is Abraham a focus for the genesis of Koranic doctrine about Islam, but also for the antecedents to this—the debates between Paul and James regarding Abraham's salvationary state that permeate the history of

early Christianity. The Qumran Damascus Document also focuses on Abraham, insisting that because he and Isaac and Jacob "kept the commandments" and "remained faithful," they were to be reckoned "beloved of God" or "friends," an expression approximated in *Surah* 2 of the Koran by that of "Muslim." It is this context, which in our view throws light on these otherwise seemingly garbled and certainly very obscure Koranic references.

Furthermore, these connections will throw light on Muhammad's constant allusion, in connection with these "warning" episodes, to both "Abraham" and "the People of Noah," in the context of which he also alludes to the ark. The Koran also refers to this region as being of broad plains, richly fertile with olive trees, and the like. As it turns out, this is precisely the description of these Northern Syrian venues, Haran/"The Land of the Osrhoeans," in which the conversions, ascribed to "Judas Thomas" ("Hud"/"Thamud") and "Addai"/"Thaddaeus" ("Ad"), transpire. For Josephus, the Talmud, and early Christian sources, this is the area where the ark came to rest, or "Ararat," which, unlike modern legends, these consistently locate in the Land of the Adiabeni or Abraham's Haran.

In the Koran, too, the ark is always a fixture of background allusions to these "Arabian" prophet stories. For the Romans, all these lands were "Arab" or "Arabian" and their kings repeatedly called "Arab," that is, "Arabs" were not just from the Arabian Peninsula, but also the lands of Northern Syria and Mesopotamia known as Edessa and Adiabene—also possibly alluded to in Paul's celebrated reference to "Arabia" in Galatians.